

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

FOR REVIEW ONLY
UNPUBLISHED LITERARY WORK

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Memphis, Tennessee
February 15, 1981

Dear Fellow Addicts:

We have collected material from individuals and groups worldwide, sharing our experience of recovery. We have compiled the information in the form of a "review" copy, which is proposed as our definitive work on addiction and recovery.

This work is the product of the three World Literature Conferences which were held between October 1979 and February 1981 at Wichita, Kansas, Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee. In excess of 4,500 man-hours were expended at Memphis by more than seventy recovering addicts from thirteen states to produce the final work. In addition, the Memphis conference kept nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette recorders, two telephones and a dictaphone in almost continuous use, and used over 20,000 sheets of paper.

We are asking for your corrections or comments. It has been suggested that a group effort may be most effective.

Please return the attached review-input form promptly. The deadline for input is April 15, 1981, received at Atlanta, or at Los Angeles before the World Literature Conference IV begins April 26, 1981.

Review-input forms will be processed at the World Literature Conference IV in Los Angeles during the last week of April 1981. Everybody is encouraged to attend this conference.

Our goal is to have the review copy approved, Fellowship-wide, and to present the finished manuscript to the World Service Conference in May 1981. Following this approval, the book will be ready for publication in hardback.

Let your H.P. be your guide. We remain your trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

Tim T., Cathy T., Cordie A., Jeff B., Robyn C., Deb D., Richard D., Robert J., Jeff K., Gene L., Lee M., Kathy P., Mike P., Duane P., Mike P., Stephen S., Gary S., Morris S., Randy S., Gina H., Kevin B., Cindy H., Danny J., Brenda M., Bill B., Jeanette, Nolan W., Richard, Carol B., Dwayne L., Donna B., Allen C., Hank F., Roland C., Page C., Tina E., Shorty H., Tom M., Bo S., George S., Mary L., Peggy V., Frank I., Laurie S., Mindy M., Mollie P., Linda M., Kirk D., Bob D., Tom L., Doug W., Dan K., Jeff L., Jim M., Terica W., George R., Ted S., Jane B., Beverly B., Terri C., Dennis E., Jack H., Cindy H., Kenny H., Linda L., Bill K., Jan K., Joseph P., Bob S., Roger T.

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

HARDBACK IN JUNE!

REVIEW INPUT FORM

AFTER April 15, 1981
4th World Literature Conference
c/o
2006 Strongs Drive
Venice, CA 90291
(213) 392-8838

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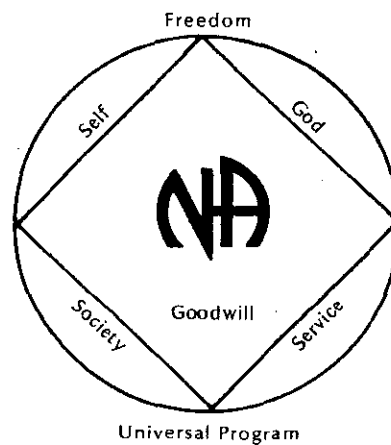
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Simplicity is the keynote of our symbol; it follows the simplicity of our fellowship. We could find all sorts of occult and esoteric connotations in the simple outlines, but foremost in our minds were easily understood meanings and relationships.

The outer circle denotes a universal and total program that has room within for all manifestations of the recovering and wholly recovered person.

The square, whose lines are defined, is easily seen and understood; but there are other unseen parts of the symbol. The square base denotes Goodwill, the ground of both the fellowship and the member of our society. Actually, it is the four pyramid sides which rise from this base in a three dimensional figure that are the Self, Society, Service and God. All rise to the point of Freedom.

All parts thus far are closely related to the needs and aims of the addict seeking recovery and the purpose of the fellowship seeking to make recovery available to all. The greater the base, as we grow in unity in numbers and in fellowship, the broader the sides and the higher the point of freedom. Probably the last to be lost to freedom will be the stigma of being an addict. Goodwill is best exemplified in service and proper service is "Doing the right thing for the right reason." When this supports and motivates both the individual and the fellowship, we are fully whole and wholly free.



*We cannot change the nature of the Addict or Addiction . . .
We can help to change the old lie "Once an addict, always an addict,"
by striving to make recovery more available.
God, help us to remember this difference.*

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
World Service Conference
Literature Committee

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N.A.W.S.C.-L.C.

Review Copy

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FORWARD

"The full fruit of a labor of love lives in the harvest, and that always comes in its right season..."

The material for this book was drawn from the personal experiences of recovering addicts within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The text is based on an outline derived from the pamphlet (our "white book"), "Narcotics Anonymous." The first eight chapters are based on the topic headings in the "white book" and carry the same title. We have included a ninth chapter, 'Just for Today,' and a tenth chapter, 'More Will Be Revealed.' The remainder of the text is comprised of personal stories and appendices.

Following is a brief history of the book:

Narcotics Anonymous was formed in July 1953 with the first meeting held in Southern California. The Fellowship grew erratically, but quickly spread to various parts of the United States. From the beginning while membership was still very small and the need was seen for a "book on recovery" to help strengthen the Fellowship. The pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published in 1962.

However, the Fellowship still had little structure and the 1960's were a period of struggle. Membership grew rapidly for a time, and then began to decline. The need for more specific direction was readily apparent. N.A. demonstrated its maturity in 1972 when a World Service Office was opened in Los Angeles. The W.S.O. has brought the needed unity and sense of purpose to the Fellowship.

The opening of W.S.O. brought stability to the growth of the Fellowship. Today, there are many thousand recovering addicts in hundreds of meetings all across the United States and in many foreign countries. Today, the World Service Office truly serves a worldwide Fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous has long recognized the need for a complete text on addiction--a book about addicts, by addicts and for addicts, which would serve us much like the A.A. "Big Book" has served that fellowship.

This effort was strengthened shortly after the formation of W.S.O. with the publication of The N.A.

Tree, a pamphlet on service work. This pamphlet is the original "service manual" of the Fellowship. It has been followed by subsequent and more comprehensive volumes, and now the N.A. Service Manual.

The manual outlined a service structure which included a World Service Conference. The W.S.C., in turn, included a Literature Committee. With the encouragement of W.S.O., several members of the Board of Trustees and the Conference, work began.

As the cry for literature, particularly a comprehensive text, became more widespread, the W.S.C. Literature Committee developed. In October, 1979, the first World Literature Conference was held at Wichita, Kansas, followed by conferences at Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee.

The W.S.C. Literature Committee, working in conference and as individuals, have collected hundreds of pages of material from members and groups throughout the Fellowship. This material has been laboriously catalogued, edited, rewritten, assembled, dismembered and reassembled. Dozens of area and regional representatives working with the Committee have dedicated weeks and thousands of man-hours to produce the work here presented. But more importantly, those members have conscientiously sought to insure a "group-conscious" text.

In keeping with the spirit of anonymity, we, the Literature Committee, feel it appropriate to express our special gratitude and appreciation to the Fellowship as a whole, especially the many of you who contributed material for inclusion in the book. We feel that this book is a synthesis of the collective Group Conscience of the entire Fellowship and that every single idea submitted is included in the work, in some form or another.

This volume is intended as a textbook for every addict seeking recovery. As addicts, we know the pain of addiction, but we also know the joy of recovery we have found in the Fellowship and on the program of Narcotics Anonymous. We believe the time has come to share our recovery in written form with all who desire what we have found.

Appropriately, this book is devoted to informing every addict: JUST FOR TODAY, YOU NEVER HAVE TO USE AGAIN!

Therefore,

"With gratitude in our cleanliness, we dedicate our N.A. book to the loving service of our Higher Power that through the development of conscious contact with God, no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life."

We remain trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE-III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

At Memphis, Tennessee
February 8, 1981

INTRODUCTION

This book is the shared common and personal experience of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome you to read this text, trusting that you will choose to share with us the new life we have found. We have by no means found a "cure" for addiction. We offer only a proven plan for daily recovery.

In N.A., we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty-five years, more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are grateful to the A.A. fellowship for showing us the way to a new life.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, as adapted from A.A., are the basis of our recovery program. We have only broadened the perspective of addiction. We follow the same path with a single exception; our identification as addicts is all-inclusive in respect to any mood-changing, mind-altering substance. "Alcoholism" did not cover the total spectrum as comprehensively as does addiction. We believe that we have been guided by a Greater Consciousness as a Fellowship, and are grateful for the Direction that has enabled us to build upon an already-proven program of recovery.

We have come to Narcotics Anonymous by various means and believe that as our common denominator is that we failed to come to terms with our addictions, however varied. Because of the degree and variety of addictions found within our Fellowship, we have approached the solution contained within this book in general terms. We pray that we have been searching and thorough, so that every addict who reads this volume will find the hope we have found.

Based on our collective experience, we believe that every addict, including the "potential" addict, suffers from an incurable disease of body, mind and spirit. We were in the grip of a hopeless dilemma. The solution of which is spiritual in nature. Therefore, this book will deal in great part with spiritual matters.

We are not a religious organization. Our program is a set of spiritual principles through which we are recovering from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Throughout the compiling of this work, the prevailing theme has been the conscious prayer and meditation:

"GOD, grant us knowledge that we may write according to Your Divine precepts; instill in us a sense of Your purpose, make us servants of Your will and grant us a bond of selflessness that this may truly be Your work, not ours, in order that no addict, anywhere, need die from the horrors of addiction."

Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It was for this reason that we began this work. We must always remember that as individual members, groups, and service committees, we are not, and should never be, in competition with each other. We work separately and together to help the newcomer and for our common good. We have learned, painfully, that internal strife cripples our Fellowship; it prevents us from providing the services necessary for growth.

It is our hope that this book will help the suffering addict find the solution we have found. Our purpose is to remain clean, just for today, and to carry the message of recovery.

Thank you,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE - LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

CHAPTER ONE

WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

The user may be unaware that a problem exists until, for example, the drugs run out and they begin to feel the early stages of withdrawal. Or, they keep using but start to notice if they try to stop, that they are unable, or when using they have lost control over the amount. We admitted that we used drugs, but many of us did not think we had a problem.

As practicing addicts, we were keenly aware of the difference between right and wrong. Many of us were convinced that we were right and the world was wrong, and used this belief to justify our self-destructive behavior. Many of us developed a loser's point of view which enabled us to pursue our addiction without the restraints of concern about our well-being. Simply, the loser's point of view focuses on the negative in all things.

We realized that our record had not been good, but that was due to being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or so we thought. We were yet to realize that our "bad luck" was caused by situations we had placed ourselves in, through the direct result of our drug use.

1 As practicing addicts, we could really get down and if
2 we experienced a periodic jolt of self-awareness, it seemed
3 as if we were two people instead of one, like Dr. Jekyll and
4 Mr. Hyde. We became capable of depravity--of betrayal to
5 ourselves and to others. Temporarily clean, we ran around
6 trying to get it all squared away before our next spree.
7 Sometimes we could do this very well, but later it seemed less
8 important, and at the same time, more impossible. After years
9 of trying to make ourselves happy with cars, sex and dope, we
10 were unhappy and less satisfied than when it all started.

11 Some of us first saw the effects of addiction in the people
12 we were close to. We became very dependent on people to carry
13 us emotionally through life. We were always left disappointed
14 and hurt when they had other interests, other friends and
15 loved ones. We regretted the past; we feared the future. We
16 were constantly searching for "the answer"--searching for
17 meaninglessness and purposelessness. While using, we lacked
18 the ability to cope with day-to-day affairs. As our addiction
19 caught up to us, we found ourselves in and out of hospitals,
20 jails and institutions more and more. Because of these experi-
21 ences, we began to realize how screwed up our lives really
22 were. Drugs could no longer hide the pain. We just wanted
23 an easy way out. Suicide was on many of our minds. Our sui-
24 cide attempts were often feeble, and only helped to contribute
25 to our feelings of worthlessness. Part of ourselves could see
26 what was happening; another part would not accept it. We were
27 caught in an illusion of "what if," "if only," and "just one
28 more try."

29 We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before
30 considering the possible connection between drugs and our
31 misery. We had used all sorts of drugs over the years and
32 experienced numerous living problems as the result of our
33 using and yet did not consider ourselves addicted. The problem
34 was that most of the information available to us, before coming
35 to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, came to us from
36 misinformed people or others who also used heavily but did not

consider themselves to be addicted. We did not see ourselves as being addicted, as long as we could periodically stop using for a day, a week, or even a month or more. We looked at the stopping, not the using. Of course, as our addiction progressed, we thought of stopping less and less. Many of us had reached the point where we saw ourselves hopelessly deteriorating; by that time we asked ourselves, "Could it be the drugs?"

Things did not get bad for some of us, at least on the outside. We never considered ourselves addicts, although some of us have used, misused and abused drugs for half of our lives or more. The term "drug addict" conjured up visions of street crime, fear of the law, and needles. Our belief was that the drug addict lived in a skid-row environment. We believed we could not be addicts since we could not fit into that picture. We looked at our differences rather than our sameness. Yet the things we had in common put us all in the same dimension, the dimension of addiction.

Did we want to stop using and could we do it alone? What did we use and how did we use it? Did we "con" doctors for prescriptions, telling ourselves that it was O.K. to use these drugs because they were legal? Did we have more than one prescription being filled at the same time by different doctors? Did we need something to help us get going in the morning, or something to slow us down at night? Were we using illegal drugs and thinking there was nothing that could be done to kick the habit? Were we in trouble with friends, family, and/or the law because of drug-related incidents?

Something inside said, "No more." We had begun to have silent thoughts that maybe the dope was killing us. In a rare moment of clarity, we were able to look at the whole scene in all its insanity. We realized that drugs were enslaving us instead of setting us free. We were prisoners in our own mind, condemned to slow execution by our own sense of guilt. We had all but given up on ever getting help. Our previous attempts to stay clean had always failed, causing us many years of pain and misery.

1 Our futures appeared hopeless until we found clean addicts
2 who were willing to share. In the Fellowship of N.A., the
3 desire to stop using was all that we needed in the beginning.
4 Our recovery began with our first admission that we needed
5 help. Denial of our addiction is what kept us sick and honest
6 admission of our addiction enabled us to stop using. We were
7 able to open up and ask for help by attending meetings. We
8 went to meetings and heard people sharing their feelings and
9 realized that we had felt those feelings ourselves. We were
10 no longer alone. People told us they were addicts and that
11 they were recovering. If they could do it, so could we. We
12 feel from our experience that each individual has to answer
13 the question, "Am I an addict?"

14 We began to accept ourselves as addicts when we made the
15 connection between our drug use and our problems. We see many
16 differences between us, but more importantly, we see similarities.
17 The differing definitions of addiction are based on our "research"
18 and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are
19 many areas of honest disagreement in defining addiction. Some
20 definitions seem to fit the facts better than others. We know
21 our own viewpoint, but need to listen to others in the hope
22 that we might come to a better understanding of addiction and
23 the addict.

24 Addiction is a contradiction to living. It is a state of
25 mind which relies on convincing ourselves that drugs are neces-
26 sary to maintain our sense of well-being. For us, an addict is
27 a person who uses drugs, in any form, to the extent that the
28 individual cannot live normally with or without them. On one
29 hand we sought feelings of superiority, and on the other, we
30 accepted the most intolerable existence on earth.

31 Some of the highs felt great, expecially in the beginning,
32 but the things we had to tolerate to support our habits reflect-
33 ed desperation. We sank to the depths of stealing, lying,
34 prostituting ourselves, and cheating our friends. We manipu-
35 lated people and conditions and tried to control all of their
36 actions. We failed to realize that the need for control sprang
37 from the fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on

past failures and disappointments, prevented us from making 1
meaningful choices. 2

Our addiction involved more than drug use. It aggravated 3
our character defects and reinforced personality disorders. 4
Failure and fear of failure began to invade every area of our 5
lives as our addiction progressed. We, in the grip of a com- 6
pulsion, were often forced to survive in any way we could, 7
at all costs. 8

All through our usage we kept telling ourselves, "I can 9
handle it." Maybe this was true in the beginning, but not 10
now. We avoided people and places that did not condone our 11
using. We spent our money on drugs, and if there was noth- 12
ing left, we simply did not eat. We assumed everyone else 13
was crazy, and that we were the only sane ones. The thought 14
of running out of drugs left us with a sense of impending 15
doom. Peace of mind was non-existent. The only relief was 16
a comparatively short-lived "high." We had a distinct de- 17
sire to consume drugs beyond our capacity to control them. 18
Our using defied all rules of common sense. We not only 19
had an abnormal craving for drugs, but we yielded to it at 20
the worst possible times. We did not have sense enough to 21
know when not to begin. We went through stages of dark des- 22
pair and we were sure that there was something wrong with 23
us. Other times, we were under the illusion that we had 24
things under control. We came to hate ourselves for wast- 25
ing the talents with which we had been endowed and for the 26
trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently, 27
we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could 28
help us. When loaded, we had no concern for the rest of the 29
world. 30

The mental aspect of addiction comes with our inability 31
to deal with life on its own terms. We tried drugs and com- 32
binations of drugs in an effort to cope with a seemingly 33
hostile world. We dreamed of finding the right medication 34
or fix, the magic elixir, that would solve our ultimate 35
problem--ourselves. This reliance on drugs had harmed us 36
emotionally. The fact is that we cannot successfully handle 37

1 any mind-changing or mood-altering substance. The addict
2 who only smoked pot or did non-narcotic drugs is in as much
3 danger as the "junkie." Our thrills turned out to be a habit
4 which eventually turned on us, almost killing us. We no longer
5 had an addiction; our addiction had us.

6 Drugs ceased to make us feel good. We could not get the
7 euphoria we craved. When we did seek help, we sought the
8 absence of pain.

9 If you think you might have a drug problem, you probably
10 do. Few of us set out to become addicted, because when we
11 used, we thought we were in our normal state. We sought eu-
12 phoria, the highest state of pleasure, at the outset of our
13 addiction. In the final stages of our disease, we used to
14 keep from getting sick. We used in order to survive because
15 it was the only way of life that we knew.

16 Many of us fall into the old pattern of thinking--remember-
17 ing only our "good" drug experiences; the fact that drugs could
18 make us feel great. Such selective thinking can destroy our
19 lives and our capacity to live.

20 Modern drug technology and media attention have made a
21 social anti-hero of the addict. Since many of us were street
22 addicts, we dealt in illicit drugs and lived criminally. This
23 could have something to do with our being different. Many of
24 us have participated in sub-cultural or bizarre behaviors that
25 may have given us different experiences than those of the non-
26 addict. The fact that those of us who have become addicted
27 come from all levels of society is no guarantee that we will
28 not end our addiction in jail or the graveyard. Miracles are
29 performed everyday when the laws of nature are suspended. The
30 most natural thing for an addict to do is to use. Everyday an
31 addict does not use, a miracle happens. Yet an active addict's
32 prognosis is poor.

33 Ironically, drugs can also drive addicts past normal human
34 limits, often helping them to win great fame or recognition,
35 until their obsession burns them out. The drug-induced state
36 can allow a person to exclude normal background awareness and to
37 focus on a single point. At first, this can be like a handy

magnifying glass used at will. Later, it can become a horrible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up continually until we find ourselves powerless to control what is happening. Prescription addicts are usually slow to recognize that they have a problem. Legal doses of prescribed medication can addict a person because of unknown side-effects, combinations with other drugs or an inborn susceptibility to addiction. We could get high to relieve the pain of living, through the use of prescriptions, at school or at work. We found it difficult to face life so we used drugs as a means of escape.

Addiction isolated us from people except for the getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more. Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking, we cut off all outside interests from our lives. Anything not completely familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and isolation became our life.

Non-addicts have great trouble understanding our dilemma. It is often nearly impossible to make sense of our behavior and the consuming drive to use, even after repeated and prolonged efforts to stay clean. Identification can guide us in our recovery, since we can see a little of ourselves in every addict. We thought of our addiction as hopeless before finding the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Addiction is a treatable disease: as soon as we begin to "treat" our addiction by working the Twelve Steps that have worked repeatedly, we experience very positive results. When our addiction is treated as a crime or moral deficiency, we become rebellious and are driven deeper into our isolation.

Addicts who would otherwise waste away in institutions very often respond to the love and fellowship offered in N.A. Ours is a proven program of recovery. We have no choice but to help one another, for the assurance and strength of our own recovery lies in the helping of other addicts.

The disease of addiction can also be seen in its social aspects. Addiction in its broadest sense is a disease of

1 our times. It embraces all our social ills. Drug manufacture
2 and the innovation of new drugs in modern times have created
3 an availability of potentially addictive drugs never before
4 known in the history of man.

5 One of the ancient dreams of man seems to be coming true;
6 the ability of modern drug technology to combat disease and
7 alleviate human suffering. Hidden in this blessing, however,
8 is a cruel reversal of effect which is our addiction. The
9 innate susceptibility to our disease through genetic factors
10 and complete knowledge of the sources of our behavioral inclin-
11 ations is of no concern in our recovery through N.A. The "why"
12 is not important; the "what to do" is our chief question.

13 We feel it is important to share our experience, strength
14 and hope with others who may suffer from our disease, letting
15 them know what they can do, if they desire to recover.

16 Although some of us have not been street addicts, many of
17 us have, and we consider the street addict the most conspicuous
18 and the most vulnerable to the more severe abuses resulting from
19 the stigma with which addiction is branded. In many locations,
20 street addicts are processed as habitual offenders when treat-
21 ment of their disease could restore them to productive lives.

22 We continued to use time and time again, despite the symp-
23 toms of withdrawal. There are many different symptoms of with-
24 drawal from drugs. We can't list them all. We have, however,
25 been addicted to thousands of drugs and know first hand how
26 they feel and what the initial abstinence is like. In this,
27 we can reassure each other and the newcomer that it will get
28 better if they don't use. If we do use, in the face of with-
29 drawal, the next time it will be worse.

30 Addiction is chronic, progressive and fatal. The cycle can
31 be broken by not taking that first fix, pill, drink, or toke.

32 Like other incurable diseases, addiction can be arrested.
33 We agree that there is nothing shameful about being an addict
34 provided we accept our dilemma and honestly take action. We
35 are willing to admit without reservation that we are "allergic"
36 to drugs. Common sense tells us that it would be insane to go
37 back to the source of our "allergy." We, as recovering addicts,

can tell you that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. We 1
regained good physical health many times only to relapse. 2
Our past records show that it is impossible for us, as addicts, 3
to use with control, no matter how well we may appear to be 4
in control of our feelings. 5

Social adjustments failed to bring about recovery. We 6
thought a suitable job or social relationship could be the 7
answer to our dilemma. Addiction, in its progression, causes 8
us to flounder and fail, consuming us with anger and fear. 9

Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience 10
and love, are sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our liv- 11
ing skills may be reduced to the animal level, if we have 12
suffered long enough. The person within is submerged and 13
the capacity to be human is lost. This is an extreme state, 14
but most of us have been there. 15

Learning to live without drugs is complicated by the fact 16
that it is so hard for many of us to accept our disease. 17
Again, susceptibility and availability have combined in the 18
addict to form dependency. Many of the doctors among us 19
came into the Fellowship with an attitude of denial. We 20
have found in the progression of our addictions that we had 21
been devastated by the disease to the point where denial was 22
futile. Part of the risk run by society in keeping the lid 23
on our addiction is the social stigma that keeps the addict 24
who might seek help from seeking it because of a fear of 25
never being able to live it down. 26

Addiction is the disease and Narcotics Anonymous is a 27
proven path of on-going recovery. Our experience shows that 28
those who keep coming to meetings regularly, stay clean. We 29
continue in our recovery until we die. In our addiction, we 30
practiced dying. In our recovery, we practice living today! 31
We can feel, care, love and be loved. We no longer have to 32
be isolated, and in time, can feel free to go anywhere and 33
do almost anything except use. We do not use because we do 34
not want to. Today we have a choice. 35

Many of us sought answers but failed to find any we 36
could use until we found each other. Most of us have become 37

1 very grateful in the course of our recovery. We have a disease
2 that we can recover from. Our lives can return to being useful,
3 in the course of our abstinence and through the working of the
4 Twelve Steps of N.A., explained in this book. The use of any
5 sort of medication may lead us back to active addiction. We
6 must be careful when seeking treatment from any doctor not
7 totally acquainted with our disease. We strongly suggest to
8 one another that we break our anonymity to the doctor admin-
9 istering drugs to us and trust that our medical records will be
10 kept confidential. One of the danger zones in our recovery is
11 that when we get ill and are prescribed legitimate medication,
12 it may lead us back to our drug of choice. We call this relapse.

13 All too many times, doctors who meant well, but did not know
14 of our disease, enabled our addictions. We cannot recover over-
15 night and we cannot expect sincere physicians to review their
16 options or methods of treatment overnight. Our place is to help
17 the addict who still suffers, particularly those who are seeking
18 help.

19 All of the psychological and social commentary ever written
20 on this subject has failed to answer this question thoroughly.
21 Rather than enter the area of medical theory and legalities, we
22 feel that it is more worthwhile to discuss the answers we have
23 found. Instead of concentrating on the problem, let's look at
24 the solution.

25 Narcotics Anonymous concerns itself with recovery. We all
26 know how to use drugs. We know the effect they have had on us.
27 The primary thing we are interested in is how to stay clean, how
28 to cope with life without using, how to handle unpleasant feel-
29 ings and emotions--in other words, how to get better. It was
30 conceivable in our addictive thinking that something would work
31 for us without any work on our part. That was how the drugs
32 worked. How wrong we were. It has been our experience that the
33 program works as long as we work it, just for today, to the best
34 of our ability.

35 The mind begins to accept new ideas which lead to a new
36 way of life as the grip of drugs and our past way of thinking
37 and doing begins to relax. We find ourselves no longer pressed

between those who use and those who don't in this new way of 1
life. Our world constantly expands to include new associa- 2
tions and eventually we become members of society. Problems 3
that had no solutions became transparent and unreal in the 4
light of our new understanding. Old grudges and resentments 5
fade as we loosen our sick point of view. A warm feeling of 6
belonging replaces the hole in our gut left by our addictions. 7
It is no accident--it's the way the program works. A miracle 8
takes place as the drugs are washed from our bodies by daily 9
abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects of 10
our using. We come to understand that our recovery is a 11
gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are made aware 12
of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only that 13
we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we 14
stay clean, the more we will want to clear away the shame 15
and falseness of our lives. It is a great gift to be a 16
human being. 17

What we have just been describing are some of the bene- 18
fits involved in recovery. There is only one alternative 19
to recovery and that is the progression of our disease. 20
The progression of our addiction has been compared to an 21
elevator that is always going down. We have found that we 22
can get clean at any level we want. Unfortunately, the 23
nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to 24
rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with the 25
fact. If you are an addict, you can find a new life through 26
the program that would not otherwise be possible. 27

Many drugs require no extended period of use to trigger 28
allergic reactions, although physical and mental tolerance 29
can play a role. It is not how much we use that makes us 30
addicts, but what it does to us. Certain things follow as 31
usage continues. Setting aside the physical effects of 32
addiction, as the regularity of usage increases, we become 33
accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts; we forget 34
what it was like before we started using. We forget the 35
social graces, acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget 36
how to work, forget how to express ourselves and show con- 37

1 concern for others and we forget how to feel. We, as recover-
2 ing addicts, have to relearn things forgotten and learn what we
3 have missed.

4 We may lose jobs, get divorced, lose friends and find our-
5 selves unable to account for these changes, as our disease pro-
6 gresses. Generally, our use of drugs increases with all these
7 changes or during intervals between changes. We can continue in
8 this condition indefinitely, or as our using increases, progress
9 rapidly in our addiction. If at any point we make the basic con-
10 nection between our use of drugs and the way things have been
11 going for us, we can begin recovery by admitting our need for
12 help.

13 We addicts value personal freedom highly. Perhaps because we
14 want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of
15 our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed.
16 We are never quite sure that our choice of action is based on a
17 conscious desire for continued clean time or an unconscious wish
18 to return to using.

19 Our addiction developed in us an emotional instability. We
20 became very sluggish or glum without drugs. Some of us felt we
21 had to have drugs to deal with our feelings. We felt, as if our
22 world was hollow, dull, meaningless; that there was no purpose
23 to life but to use and to find ways and means to get more. Some
24 of us eventually landed in the mental hospitals, fearing for our
25 sanity. What we learned behind the walls of the various insti-
26 tutions was that the most sincere and constructive efforts of
27 medicine and psychiatry had few answers for us that we could use
28 in achieving ongoing recovery. We, in the later stages, are
29 usually the very last to recognize our need for help. The prin-
30 ciple of one addict helping another pyramids and the solution to
31 our dilemma has begun.

32 We have also learned that there are few alternatives for the
33 addict. If we continue to use, the problem will become progres-
34 sively worse; we are on the path that leads to skid row, hospitals,
35 jails, institutions or to an early grave.

36 Incarceration and institutionalization sometimes led us to
37 the realization that the drugs were letting us down. Where these

drugs once had given us the feeling that we could handle what- 1
ever situation that might come down, we became aware that these 2
same drugs were largely responsible for our having gotten into 3
our very worst predicaments. Some of us hit many institutions 4
and few or no jails. Some of us may spend the rest of our 5
lives in jail for a drug-related crime or a crime committed 6
under the influence.

Addiction is a disease which manifested in us at an inde- 7
terminable point in our lives. Some recovering addicts believe 8
that the disease was present long before the first pill, fix, 9
drink or toke. Some of us believe that the disease is here- 10
ditary, due to parents, grandparents or other relatives who 11
are addicted. How we got the disease, however, is of no imme- 12
diate importance to us. What concerns us at present is how we 13
can continue our own recovery while helping the addict who 14
still suffers. 15

We have found through our experiences that addiction has 16
three major phases, the first of which is practicing addic- 17
tion. We were using in a manner which seemed to be social or 18
at least controllable with little indication of the disaster 19
which the future held for us. This phase varies in duration 20
from addict to addict. We have found that it is very diffi- 21
cult to help anyone in this phase. 22

At some point, our using became uncontrollable and defi- 23
nitely anti-social. This phase of uncontrollable using is 24
suffering addiction and usually began when things were going 25
well and we were in situations that allowed us to use as fre- 26
quently as we wanted. It is marked by a decline and usually 27
the end of good living as we knew it. We went from a state 28
of drugged success and well-being to complete spiritual, 29
mental and emotional bankruptcy. This state of decline 30
varies in length. We can only say that for some it was a 31
matter of months or even days and for others it was a matter 32
of years. We who are recovering and thus alive today, tried 33
to moderate, substitute or even stop using. Those of us that 34
did that did not seek to change died from the disease, went 35
to prison, or were committed to mental institutions as hope- 36

1 lessly insane. Some of us who sought out changes were graced
2 by the life force of the universe and found the N.A. program.

3 It was when we were suffering that we were willing to stop
4 using. It was much easier to help suffering addicts when we
5 were in the latter part of the suffering stage for it was easier
6 for us to see the destruction, disaster and delusion of our
7 using. Many times when the problems caused by drug usage were
8 staring us in the face we could not see it as a problem, until
9 we reached our bottoms.

10 The third major phase is in our recovery. We, as recover-
11 ing addicts in the N.A. Fellowship, practice living and enjoy-
12 ing life on a day to day basis by living the Twelve Steps. We
13 realize that we are never cured and carry the disease within us
14 to the grave. We addicts, recovering in N.A., are convinced
15 that there is only one way for us to live, and that is the N.A.
16 way. Due to our Fifth Tradition and Twelfth Step, our primary
17 purpose in life is to stay clean by carrying the message to the
18 addict who still suffers.

19 We can die from untreated addiction. But before we die, the
20 disease takes from us our pride, our self-esteem, our families
21 and loved ones. And finally, it takes our very will to live.

22 We of Narcotics Anonymous were raised from hell to find that
23 the program is a way of life. We know that a new life is laid
24 out for us every day if we want it and don't use. A new place
25 awaits us in the society that, during our using, offered only
26 misgivings. We come to know success. We have found all this
27 through dependence on a Power greater than ourselves, a group
28 of our fellow addicts, and spiritual principles.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. 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."

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

The structure of Narcotics Anonymous is quite unlike any 1
health or welfare agency known to us. Although N.A. prac- 2
tices may vary from place to place, all N.A. services are 3
performed voluntarily by the addicts themselves and without 4

1 cost. N.A. does not accept money for its service, is not
2 funded by any public or private sources or agencies and
3 accepts no outside contributions.

4 Addicts respond instinctively to honest sharing. The
5 fact that the addict can feel the unconditional love and judge
6 for themselves the "qualifications" revealed in the stories
7 of recovering addicts, awakens the notion that at last there
8 might be hope. The newcomer loses his fear when he discovers
9 that N.A. members give away the message of cleanliness in
10 order to stay clean. We of Narcotics Anonymous are currently
11 trying to bring about more communication, understanding, re-
12 spect, and cooperation between N.A. and any professional per-
13 son who works with addicts--so that more and more addicts may
14 be able to recover. With local groups in many communities,
15 we are part of an international fellowship.

16 In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we make use of
17 things that have worked for those who have gone before us:
18 the Twelve Steps, the principles and the many positive tools
19 that enable us to make recovery possible. We have one primary
20 purpose--to stay clean and to help others who may turn to us
21 for help. We are united by our common problem, addiction.
22 Meeting, talking with, and helping other addicts, we are some-
23 how able to stay clean and to lose the compulsion to use, once
24 a dominant force in our lives.

25 We are grateful also to see new people coming to meetings
26 from the streets. There is nothing that compares to a new
27 person freely talking about the pain and the endless hustle that
28 goes on out there. As a result, Narcotics Anonymous had had
29 more than twenty-five years of trial-and-error experience,
30 face-to-face, with literally hundreds of thousands of addicts.
31 This mass of intensive firsthand experience with all kinds of
32 problem drug users, in all phases of illness and recovery, is
33 unparalleled in therapeutic value. Narcotics Anonymous is here
34 to share freely with any addict who wants it.

35 Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for
36 whom drugs in one form or another had become a major problem.

We had become so physically, mentally and spiritually ill 1
that we became crazed, depressed and terrified people. We 2
were sick people. The growing fellowship of N.A. supports 3
us in our efforts of recovery. It gives us new friends who 4
understand where we have been. 5

Our message of recovery is based on our own experience. 6
Before coming to the Fellowship, we exhausted ourselves 7
trying to use successfully, or trying to find out what was 8
wrong with us. After coming to the Narcotics Anonymous 9
Fellowship, we find ourselves among a very special group of 10
people. Many were a great deal worse off than we were. 11
Here we found hope. If the Narcotics Anonymous program 12
worked for them, it might work for us. We began to ask 13
questions and listened a little more closely to the sugges- 14
tions. After all there's a chance we could get a little 15
relief. 16

We do not think we are the only people who have alterna- 17
tives to the problem of addiction, but we know that the N.A. 18
program works for us. We have seen it work for every one 19
who honestly and sincerely wanted to stop using. The main 20
point is that we meet people, addicts like ourselves, yet 21
they are clean for months or years. We watched and listened 22
to them openly and realized that these people had found a 23
way to live and be happy without drugs.

In all honesty the most we can do for the newcomer is 24
to share our experience, strength and hope and be ready to 25
help when asked. If we go beyond this we risk becoming 26
enablers. Most of us can remember doing nothing as long as 27
we could get someone else to take care of us. We don't want 28
the help we can offer to rob the new person of that essen- 29
tial ingredient of living which setting their own house in 30
order can bring. We addicts have no choice but to help one 31
another. In helping others our own recovery is aided. We 32
don't criticize them better we love them better. As several 33
great men have pointed out, there is more to it than a 34
simple love. We are really talking about survival in a 35
world where we have ceased to be functioning members of 36

1 society. This program has given us a belief in a loving God
2 that works through people. Never should we claim to have all
3 the answers, but we can share our experience and the things that
4 work for us. N.A. offers alternatives and suggestions that
5 have worked for others.

6 We don't want to settle for the limitations of the past.
7 We want to examine and re-examine all our old ideas, and con-
8 stantly improve on them or replace them with new ones.

9 We, in N.A., are men and women who have discovered and
10 admitted that we are powerless over our addictions. We have
11 learned that we must live without drugs if we are to avoid the
12 disaster we created for ourselves and those close to us.

13 The consequences of our addictive using (and thinking) have
14 also varied. Some of our members had literally become dere-
15 licts before turning to N.A. for help. We had lost families,
16 possessions and self respect. We had committed many offenses--
17 against society, families, and employers. Others among us had
18 never been jailed or hospitalized, nor had we lost jobs because
19 of our using. Even those men and women finally came to the
20 point where they realized that using was interfering with nor-
21 mal living. When they discovered that they could not live with-
22 out drugs, the, too, sought to help themselves through N.A.,
23 rather than prolonging their pain. The program works a miracle
24 in our hearts. We become new people. The Steps and abstinence
25 give us daily reprieves from our self-imposed life sentences.
26 We become free to move about without compulsion or guilt.

27 Communication is a very important part of our program.
28 Without it we would not have the chance to share ideas and new
29 aspects of the program with each other. What one group or area
30 learns can and should be shared with other areas. This is how
31 the Fellowship of N.A. has grown and spread over the past
32 twenty-five years. We need each other.

33 Our meetings contain a certain atmosphere of empathetic and
34 universal feelings which all addicts have in common. In this
35 atmosphere of recovery, we found we were very much at home and
36 were able to start a new way of life with these people who

called themselves addicts. The unconditional love we find 1
at meetings makes it possible to relax and review our assum- 2
ptions about ourselves and reality. Working the Steps will 3
give us a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, 4
correct old defects, right old wrongs, and lead us to help 5
others. As we begin the process of change by honestly lis- 6
tening to the stories of people we meet in an N.A. meeting 7
or in private fellowship, we will want to try out some of 8
the solutions that have worked for others. Maybe their 9
solution is part of our solution. Trying to be all things 10
to all people, we have often forgotten what we really think 11
and feel. As we begin to come out of our fog, the layers of 12
phoniness will peel off like the skin of an onion. When the 13
layers are gone, our real selves will remain. 14

As we attend meetings and hear the experience, strength, 15
and hope of others, we will come to notice that we are not 16
the only ones with problems. We will eventually hear some- 17
one who flat out makes us feel lucky by comparison. We will 18
grow to know gratitude, to see where we came from and how 19
far we have progressed. We have all tried many ways to over- 20
come our addictions, and sometimes temporary recovery was 21
possible but always it was followed by an even deeper in- 22
volvement with addiction than before. 23

Let new ideas flow into you. Ask questions. The prin- 24
ciples of living incorporated in the Twelve Steps may seem 25
strange to you, but they work. This program works for those 26
willing to work it.

We have found that trying to help another addict is good 27
for us whether the addict we try to help uses what we have to 28
offer or not. For this reason, N.A. groups attempt to con- 29
centrate primarily on this person-to-person service, without 30
getting involved in any outside enterprise no matter how 31
worthwhile. 32

We feel loved. More and more we feel we would rather 33
be with each other when we are thinking negatively than by 34
ourselves. Good comes from being with others; loneliness 35
and negativity fall by the wayside. Something memorable, 36

1 precious, and beneficial stems from clean togetherness. There
2 is a security of being real; of having brothers and sisters on
3 the road to recovery is a comforting feeling. We recover to-
4 gether.

5 The only requirement to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous is
6 a desire to stop using. We don't have to be clean when we get
7 here, but after the first meeting, we suggest that you keep
8 coming back to the meetings and coming clean. We don't have
9 to wait for an overdose, or jail sentence, to get help from
10 N.A.; nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is
11 no recovery. It is possible to arrest the need to use with the
12 help of the Twelve Step program of N.A. and the Fellowship of
13 recovering addicts in N.A. We want to reach out to whoever
14 reads this and to lay our lives and our hearts on the line to
15 show what this program and the spirit of N.A. has done for us.
16 In other words, if you think you have a drug problem, it is
17 likely that you do; and our program might have something special
18 to offer.

19 We want desperately for the place where addicts recover to
20 be a safe place, free from outside influences. We feel safe
21 at our closed meetings. Everyone is an addict. We feel totally
22 free to express ourselves because no law enforcement agencies
23 are involved. No one judges, stereotypes, or moralizes us. We
24 are not recruited and it doesn't cost anything. N.A. does not
25 provide counseling or social services. The rooms are filled
26 with men and women from all walks of life and persuasions. We
27 do have one must in N.A.: NO DRUGS OR PARAPHENALIA BE ON YOUR
28 PERSON AT MEETINGS.

29 In a sense, the Program is a way for addicts to find the
30 Higher Power that traditional religions have pointed to. The
31 difficulty here is that we can quickly fall prey to the notion
32 that we were not sick, but merely misinformed, if we stop doing
33 the things that began our recovery. In the days before N.A.
34 began to serve the needs of the growing numbers of addicts in
35 our population, spontaneous recovery through religion was rare
36 and quick to fade. Claim of a spiritual awakening is worthless

if the life of the individual is not changed for the better. 1

Upon entering the Fellowship, some notices a strong spirit- 2
ual glow among members. Then we could see and feel that a 3
Higher Power was at work in N.A. After having a few months 4
in the Fellowship, we see how the spiritual need for a Higher 5
Power keeps us clean.

Our program is in fact a way of life. We learn the value 6
of principles such as humility, surrender, and service. The 7
idea that we have to do it alone is obsolete. It helps things 8
go more smoothly when we find sponsors to confide in and let 9
them help us. We learn the art of helping others appropri- 10
ately, without creating resentments. 11

We, of Narcotics Anonymous, do not promise to have all 12
the answers, but we've found that our lives steadily improved 13
if we didn't use and learned to maintain our spiritual con- 14
dition. In time we met an addict seeking recovery and dis- 15
covered ourselves really able to respond to their needs. 16
We gave others what we found. The truth is that the more 17
we give in this way, the more we have to offer. Our own 18
needs are met when we learn to live for others. Through 19
practicing our honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to 20
try, we develop humility, tolerance, and patience. We are 21
able to love the unlovable and discover self-acceptance. 22
We are not likely to create problems in our daily living. 23
We finally realize we have a choice in the matter of our 24
lives. 25

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, our new friends 26
and our sponsors help us to deal with our feelings. In N.A. 27
our joys are multiplied by sharing our good days with our 28
fellows, and our sorrows are lessened when we share our bad 29
days. For the first time in our lives, we don't have to 30
experience anything alone. Not only do we have the group 31
but hopefully, as time progresses, we will develop a rela- 32
tionship with a God of our own understanding that will 33
always be with us. 34

We learn to experience feelings and realize that the 35
feelings themselves can do us no harm, unless we act on 36

1 them. We learn to call someone if we have a feeling we can-
2 not handle, and by sharing that feeling with a friend, we
3 learn to work through it. Chances are that our friend has
4 had a similar experience and can relate what worked for him.
5 By close work with a sponsor, we can utilize the Twelve Steps
6 of the program as a guide to dealing with situations we have
7 not dealt with in the past. Sponsorship is a give and take
8 partnership, with both gaining strength from the relation-
9 ship. It was suggested that we look for a sponsor as soon
10 as we became acquainted with members in our area. We look
11 for someone who has been down a path similar to ours, under-
12 stands where we are coming from, and has learned to cope with
13 the same types of situations. We, who are recovering, must
14 share with others. We have to in order to maintain our pro-
15 gress in the N.A. program and our ability to function without
16 drugs. Being asked to sponsor a new member is a privilege,
17 so don't hesitate to ask a person with whom you can identify.
18 Sponsorship is a rewarding experience for both, and we are
19 all here to help and to be helped. Get phone numbers and use
20 them. Ask questions about the program and get acquainted with
21 the people.

22 Many books have been written about the nature of addiction.
23 This book primarily concerns itself with the nature of re-
24 covery. If you are an addict and have found this book, please
25 give yourself a break and read it!

CHAPTER THREE

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these--all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible.

In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we were irre-	1
sponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our	2
humiliation, guilt, inferiority and feelings of inadequacy.	3

1 Many of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work or went
2 to work loaded. Many of us stole to support our habit. We
3 hurt the ones we loved, whatever it took to get that fix, pill,
4 drink or joint. We denied all these things and told ourselves
5 we could handle it. We were looking for something new in life,
6 possibly a way to be accepted. Eventually we started looking
7 for a way out. We didn't face life on life's terms. In the
8 beginning, using was fun. It became a habit and then it was
9 necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was
10 not apparent to us. We continued on the path of destruction,
11 unaware of where it was leading us. We had the disease and
12 did not know it. We avoided reality through the use of drugs.
13 The pain and misery was postponed. When we came down, our
14 problems came back, and were compounded with additional prob-
15 lems that had built up. We felt the need to use more often as
16 our disease progressed.

17 We knew we needed help, but had nowhere to go. Most of
18 us explored different alternatives. Doctors didn't understand
19 our dilemma. Usually they helped our disease by giving us
20 prescriptions. Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us
21 anything in hopes that we would stop using. We tried substi-
22 tuting one drug for another and this only created a vicious
23 cycle. We tried limiting our usage to "social" amounts, but
24 our success with this was short-lived or non-existent.

25 Some of us sought spiritual guidance through churches,
26 different religions, meditation and cultism. Some of us
27 sought cure by geographical change, blaming our surroundings
28 and living situations for our problem. This attempt just gave
29 us new people to take advantage of. Some of us sought approval
30 through sexual activities and change of peers. This approval-
31 seeking got us back where we started from, or worse. Some
32 tried marriage, divorce and desertion of our families. Many
33 tried psychiatrists and institutions. All these attempts at
34 controlled usage or abstinence were futile.

35 We had reached a point in our lives where we had become
36 a lost cause to society. Our worth to our jobs, families and

friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed 1
and unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We 2
didn't know what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, 3
we had to use more and more to mask the feeling of hate. 4
We were sick and tired of pain and trouble. We were fright- 5
ened and ran from the fear, but no matter how far we ran, 6
the fear followed us. We were hopeless, useless and lost. 7
Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure had become 8
our way of life and self-esteem was non-existent. The 9
peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are, 10
acted on us. To some of us, our appearance didn't matter. 11
We had no pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we 12
looked. For some, personal hygiene became a thing of the 13
past. For others, it became an obsession. We tried to 14
cover up our inner pain with outside appearances. Any hope 15
of being anything different disappeared. Helplessness, 16
emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were complete 17
failures. Personality change was what we really needed. 18
Change from a self-destructing to a self-affirming pattern 19
of living was imperative. We started experiencing how 20
powerless we really were. Nothing seemed to relieve the 21
paranoia and fear. We hit bottom and became ready to ask 22
for and accept help. 23

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and 24
found the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first 25
N.A. meeting in utter defeat. We were searching for some- 26
thing, but we did not know what. After sitting in a meet- 27
ing, we felt that people cared and were willing to be 28
patient with us. Although our heads told us we would never 29
make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by 30
insisting we could. We found that no matter what our 31
thoughts or past actions were others had preceded us. 32
Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not 33
alone. We were told that if we put things ahead of our 34
clean time, the program would not work. Nothing happens 35
in the room but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We 36

1 learned old friends, places and ideas were threatening to our
2 recovery. We had to change our playmates, playgrounds and
3 playthings.

4 When we came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we
5 faced many disturbing realizations. One: we were powerless
6 over our addictions and our lives were unmanageable; two:
7 we are not responsible for our disease but we are responsible
8 for our recovery; and three: we can no longer blame people,
9 places and things for our addiction. We had to own up to our
10 problems and our feelings.

11 In N.A., we learned that members concentrated on recovery
12 and how they felt, not what they had done in the past. We
13 found that the ultimate weapon for recovery was the recovering
14 addict. Having realized that we were unable to maintain on
15 our own, some of us immediately began experiencing depression,
16 anxiety, hostility and resentment. We began to feel emotional
17 pain that we had always been afraid to feel. We began to grow
18 and open up into our new lives that we had found in N.A. Many
19 of us felt that our lives, due to petty frustrations, minor
20 setbacks and losses, were not getting any better. An honest
21 look was often a grateful one. It was in those times that many
22 of us found out who we were. It allowed us to make important
23 discoveries like "it's O.K. to hurt and feel the pain."

24 Today we have feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, sad-
25 ness and friendship. Before we were either elated or depressed
26 with very little in between. Our negative sense of self was
27 replaced by a positive concern for others. Our own problems
28 seemed to resolve themselves. It is a great gift to be a human
29 being, and the opportunities we seek are determined by our own
30 sense of self-worth. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we degrade
31 ourselves in our own eyes. We have had enough of self-destruc-
32 tion. We want to learn to do the things that will transform
33 us into self-affirming people.

34 The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't
35 normal. When we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass
36 away and we start to learn to live again. Continued abstinence,

belief in a God of our understanding, and participation in the program will restore us to sanity.

What a change from how we used to be! That's how we know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that ever convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, instead of trying to change the people and situations that irritated us. It gave us a Twelve Step blueprint for doing just that. By working the Steps, we came to accept our Higher Power's will and this acceptance led us down the road of recovery. We lost our fear of the unknown through practice of the Twelve Steps. We were freed to live and enjoy life just for today without the old ghosts of our addiction haunting us in the morning of every new day.

We all have our personal stories of recovery, and everyone has their own way of working this program. This is the way the program works. It is available to each addict seeking recovery. Our personal natures differ, so our experiences of recovery vary.

Recovery is a beautiful chance that many addicts thought had passed them by until they found the Fellowship of N.A. It's the chance to live again. Recovery from the disease of addiction encompasses many things: carrying the message to the suffering addict; being with people we really love and care about; spiritual principles; a Higher Power of our own understanding; a sincere desire for ongoing recovery; open-mindedness; loving service and, of course, the vital spiritual experience that results in and perpetuates the expansion of Narcotics Anonymous.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW IT WORKS

If what you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovering possible.

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 inure 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 those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember --EASY DOES IT.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are Honesty, Openmindedness, and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the problem 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. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

The substitution of alcohol has caused a great many addicts to form a new addiction pattern, which in its progression brings as many problems as before. We seem to forget that alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. It would appear that we are people with addictive personalities who are strongly susceptible to alcoholic addiction.

Are we sure we want to stop using? Do we understand and
believe that we have no real control over drugs? Do we recog-
nize that in the long run, we don't use drugs--they use us?
Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop
using or control our using failed? Do we know that drugs
have the power to change us into liars, thieves, and schemers?
Do we know in our guts, that as successful drug users, we
have failed? We admit to ourselves that everytime we hurt
someone, we were loaded, or trying to get loaded.

When we came to N.A., we were physically, mentally and
spiritually bankrupt. We hurt long enough and badly enough
that we were willing to go to any lengths to stay clean.
To live by the example of those who had faced our dilemma,
and had found a way out, seemed to be our only hope.

1 When we first came into the Fellowship of N.A., we were
2 often resentful at the suggestions some of the members made
3 to us. Regardless of who we are, where we have come from, or
4 what we have done, we are accepted in N.A. Our addiction
5 gives us all a common ground for understanding one another.

6 When we were using, reality became so painful that obli-
7 vion was preferable. We had to keep other people from know-
8 ing about our pain. We isolated ourselves, and lived in
9 prisons built out of our own loneliness. Through this des-
10 peration, we sought out Narcotics Anonymous.

11 After attending a few meetings, we began to feel like we
12 finally belonged somewhere. It was in these meetings that we
13 were first introduced to the Twelve Steps of N.A. We work
14 them in the order they were written, and we use them on a daily
15 basis. They are our solutions. They have become our survi-
16 val kit, for addiction is a deadly disease. Our Steps are
17 suggested only, but they are the principles that make our
18 recovering possible.

STEP ONE

We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction,
that our lives had become unmanageable.

19 The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean.
20 We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit
21 our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we
22 open the door to a power greater than ourselves.

23 We have an incurable, progressive, terminal disease called
24 addiction. It doesn't matter whether we just take a few pills,
25 fix eight times a day, suck on a pipe, drink bottles of cough
26 remedy behind drug stores, or have one tranquilizer with our
27 first martini each day--we have certain things in common, no
28 matter to what degree or what kind of addict we are.

29 When we hit bottom, we were searching for an answer--look-
30 ing for a way out. We reached out and there was an answer.
31 Until we took Step One, we were full of reservations. We felt

different. Upon working Step One, we affirmed our surrender to the principles of N.A., and only then did we overcome the alienation of being a drug addict. We became a part of society.

Where is help? How did we get it? What was it? We went to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. We are inclined to be skeptical. We needed proof. In that N.A. meeting was our proof. There we found people like ourselves with the same, or worse, patterns of drug dependency and failure, yet they were clean. They smiled. Their eyes were clear. They cared for each other. They introduced themselves to the newcomer and made them feel welcome. During the meeting, we heard a little bit about ourselves. We understood and believed that we had no real control over drugs. We accepted the fact that every attempt we had made to control our using had failed. We knew in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something we didn't want to be, and we of all people had surely had enough of self-destruction. We wanted first to learn, then to do the things that would help us become self-affirming people.

We had to take Step One. We had to admit that we are powerless and we had to continue going to meetings to hear other addicts talk about this powerlessness. Do we understand and believe that we have no real, long term control over drugs? Do we fully accept the fact that every attempt on our part to taper off, or stop using, or to control our using had failed? Do we know in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something that we don't want to be: liars, thieves, schemers?

Step One means that we don't have to make excuses for the way we are, and that is a great freedom. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. It took a while, for some of us, to realize how unmanageable our lives had become; for others, this was about the only thing of which we could be sure. In a way, we were like gamblers, and we didn't like the odds against us. This is the way we recover when we

1 hit bottom; it's like the slide has stopped. With the ad-
2 mission of complete defeat, we stopped it right there.

3 After struggling through the daily burden with the monkey
4 on our backs, we reached despair. When we were beaten, we
5 became willing. The pain of working the program did not seem
6 as great as the pain of addiction, so we surrendered. The
7 hole in our gut was filled with a new understanding of our
8 place in the world and love for others. As we got clean and
9 worked this Step, we were released from our chains. We are
10 now free people. None of the Steps work by magic. We do not
11 just say the words of the Steps; we live them.

12 Some of us found getting clean a battle. The program is
13 simple. No one ever said it was easy. Recovery is a contact
14 process. We don't have to hug each other but it helps. We
15 read this book and attend N.A. meetings. We see for ourselves
16 if the Fellowship has something to offer us. It is not where
17 we are that counts, but where we are going!

18 None of us stumbled into this Fellowship brimming with love,
19 honesty or open-minded willingness. We have all reacted the
20 point where it seemed we could not longer continue because of
21 intense pain: physical, mental and spiritual. However, life
22 was not unbearable; it only seemed unbearable because of our
23 old familiar ways and our thinking. We found that we had no
24 choice but to change, or go back to using. All that was re-
25 quired was willingness. When we gave it our best go, it
26 worked for us as it has worked for others. When we could stand
27 our old ways no longer, we began to change. All that was re-
28 quired is that we try. Only under attack by severe and un-
29 yielding pain did the walls begin to crumble.

30 We began to see where we had rationalized the most errant
31 sort of nonsense in order to justify the mess we had made of
32 our lives. We could admit that we were truly powerless over
33 our addiction and that our lives were unmanageable. We could
34 admit complete defeat, and the help came.

35 This was a great paradox for us--we who were so proud of
36 our self-sufficiency and will power. But life had brought us

little happiness. We had used our will power a lot. The more
we exerted our will, the worse things got. Often, when things
got really bad, we had said, "This time, I have got to get my
act together." By Sheer will power we had gotten clean, temp-
orarily. When we began to see that will power alone wasn't
going to pull us through anymore, we tried countless other
remedies--counselors, psychiatrists, hospitals, lovers, new
towns, new jobs--everything we tried, failed. We quit for a
day, a week or a month perhaps, but sooner or later we took
that first pill, fix, drink or toke and we were gone again--
worse than ever. None of our best efforts got us anywhere in
the long run. Our unaided will was not enough.

We had nothing left to lose. We gave up--quit struggling--
surrendered, completely and unconditionally. Then and only
then did we begin to recover from the disease of addiction.
Recovery begins with the first admission of powerlessness.
From that point forward, we can see that every clean day is
a successful day, and that any seeming failure is only a temp-
orary setback.

We quit fighting. We accept our addiction and life the
way it is. We became willing to do whatever was necessary to
stay clean, even those things we didn't like doing. We had
been beaten by our addictions, and left miserable and desper-
ate. We were addicts. Drugs would no longer do for us what
they had once done.

We had been beaten into a corner by our own actions, and
we were in the grip of an overwhelming addiction. We had
found hope. We began to see that the Steps of the program
would be our source of strength and that the obsession for
drugs will eventually disappear. We saw that we could learn
to function in the world we live in, that we, too could find
meaning and purpose in life, and that we could be rescued from
insanity, depravity and death.

STEP TWO

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

1 We have a disease: progressive, incurable and terminal.
2 The most amazing single fact about the disease is that we went
3 out and bought it on the time plan! That is insane. Think
4 about that--you, me, everyone we meet in N.A.; the junkie
5 snatching purses on the street, and the sweet ladies hitting
6 two or three doctors for their perfectly legal prescriptions.
7 All of us have this one thing in common--we buy the disease
8 that kills us and, one way or another, we usually pay for it,
9 a bag at a time, a few pills at a time, or a bottle at a time
10 until we die. That is at least part of the insanity of addic-
11 tion. The price may seem higher for the girl who prostitutes
12 herself for her fix than it is for the woman who merely lies
13 to her doctor; but ultimately, both pay with their lives. Ask
14 yourself this question: Do I believe it would be insane to
15 walk up to someone and say, "Would you please sell me my own
16 death--on the time plan?" or "May I please have a heart attack
17 or a fatal accident?" If you can agree that this would be an
18 insane thing comparable to giving yourself an injection of
19 deadly poison, only slower, you should have no trouble with
20 the Second Step.

21 The Second Step is the most important thing that must hap-
22 pen for us to achieve any sort of ongoing recovery. The First
23 Step leaves us where we need to come to believe in something
24 that can help us with our powerlessness and sense of helpless-
25 ness. Belief became the most imporrant thing for us to work
26 on. We have some type of belief and unless we examine it and
27 seek to improve it, it may be insufficient to give us recovery.
28 Certainly our belief didn't help us with our active addiction.
29 We now have a workable idea of a Higher Power.

30 You may be one of us who says, "I need help with my drug
31 problem and I can see that N.A. has that alright, but the
32 Second Step says this Power greater than ourselves will restore

us to sanity and I'm not crazy. I just can't handle drugs." 1
Many of us started out with that attitude. Our first instinct 2
is to say "no way." But when we approach it with an open mind, 3
and talk and listen to others, we begin to see evidence of 4
some power that cannot be fully explained. Confronted with 5
this, most of us will at least admit to the possibility of a 6
greater power. Eventually, we will come to some kind of per- 7
sonal understanding we can use.

Belief is the beginning. It is helpful to stop at this 8
point to review our thinking in this respect. We should not 9
take the chance that our understanding of a Power greater than 10
ourselves is sufficient. The Power can be the group itself or 11
it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want 12
to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your 13
Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Power 14
cares about you. If you can accept the fact that a large num- 15
ber of addicts like yourself, have found a way, in the program 16
of Narcotics Anonymous, to live clean, then you only have to 17
believe what you see in order to experience Step Two. 18

N.A. has many members. This collective Spiritual Power 19
is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What 20
is impossible for one alone is often light work for many, be- 21
cause the many are a greater power than the one alone. You 22
don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power 23
greater than yourself! Just look around with an open mind 24
and you will see a positive Power all around N.A. You can 25
call it love, or harmony, or peace, or cleanness, or good, 26
or you can call it God. It doesn't matter, and by looking 27
and listening as openly as you can, you find that N.A. has 28
the Power to help addicts. 29

The Higher Power we use in N.A. is a lot like this: We 30
begin by simply admitting to the possibility of a power greater 31
than ourselves. From the very beginning, we discover that 32
power in our lives, and that Power lives in the Fellowship. 33

We had no trouble admitting that addiction had become a 34
destructive power greater than ourselves. It logically follows 35
that there can also be a constructive power greater than our- 36

1 selves. When drugs are washed from our bodies through daily
2 abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects, a
3 miracle takes place. Many fortunate things occur mysteriously,
4 but there are no accidents. We come to understand that our
5 recoveries are a gift from a Power greater than ourselves.
6 There is a spirit that is guiding all living things. Call it
7 Higher Power or whatever you like. If you choose, call it
8 nothing at all, but find it, and learn to benefit from its
9 power. You will gain a new life--free from drugs and the pain
10 they have caused.

11 We have begun to see only recently how much a Higher Power
12 has to offer. Clean living is only the beginning of a new life.
13 Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of accept-
14 ance.

15 We gradually begin to find some order in the universe, and
16 accept that "some power" was supplying us with a conscience we
17 had never had before, and was somehow giving us the power to
18 overcome the compulsion to use. It certainly wasn't us, indi-
19 vidually. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of
20 life know what our real needs are and will take care of us when
21 undisturbed by self-will.

22 We learn to keep a watchful eye on our daily H.A.L.T.S.
23 maintenance: We eat when Hungry; we talk with a recovering
24 addict when Angry or Lonely; we rest when Tired; and when we
25 begin to take ourselves Seriously, we get to an N.A. meeting
26 and share. Sanity is having our priorities in order. We don't
27 use drugs; we go to meetings; and through the N.A. program, we
28 learn to rely on God to provide what we need on a daily basis.
29 We have been restored to sanity as far as the obsession to
30 use is concerned.

31 The important thing to remember as the urge to use occurs
32 is that just because the mind is asking for drugs, doesn't mean
33 the body is. We are so into denial and over-controlling our
34 emotions that the occasional thought of drugs may be the only way
35 our mind knows to get our attention. The mind signals drugs
36 when the body may actually be asking for vitamins, food, rest or

companionship. So we need daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance. 1
Most addicts have strong feelings about their Higher Power 2
and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding 3
of Higher Power. The strength to move into action comes from 4
our Higher Power. 5
Asking for help in specific terms usually precedes getting 6
that help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready 7
to receive the help we need. 8
We need to accept this step to start our road to recovery. 9
When our belief has grown to some point of comfort, we are 10
ready for Step Three.

STEP THREE

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives
over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

As practicing addicts, our will and our lives we're con- 11
trolled by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We 12
were trapped by our need for connections and cash. Then, when 13
we got the drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe 14
a few days. During that time our total being, the mind, body, 15
the soul was dominated by the drug. 16

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages 17
of addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and 18
then the drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the 19
higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our 20
nerves were jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. 21
Either we suffered withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all 22
addicts, the day comes when there is no longer a choice. We 23
must have more drugs. Whether we are under the influence or 24
not, our will, our lives and every single action is directly 25
controlled by drugs. 26

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, 27
we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are 28
told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care 29
of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step, 30

1 anyone can take it. We don't have to be religious. All that
2 is required is a willingness to believe. We had to be will-
3 ing to do anything to get that next fix. What have we got to
4 lose?

5 We have only to believe what we see with our own eyes in
6 the transformed lives of other N.A. members. That's all it
7 takes--an open mind. If the word God bothers you, as it did
8 many of us in the beginning, substitute Recovery, Good, Love,
9 N.A., Peace or anything positive, just so you mean it.

10 None of these Steps of N.A. work by magic. They work when
11 they are lived. The Steps of N.A. are easier to live by than
12 the law of the needle, bottle, pill or joint. If you want to
13 stay clean and are willing to do a few simple things and are
14 honest with yourself, we guarantee that you can recover.

15 We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave
16 our best effort to the program, it worked for us as it has
17 worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say "We
18 turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It
19 says, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over
20 to the care of God, as we understood Him." We made the de-
21 cision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a
22 probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. We did. For
23 the first time since that first high, we have made a decision
24 for ourselves. If you understand God to be simply whatever
25 keeps the rest of us clean, that's fine. Ask that Power to
26 take care of you as it takes care of us--even if it makes you
27 feel stupid! Go off by yourself and say silently, "God, I've
28 made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems and I ask
29 you to take care of me and show me how to live."

30 When you honestly try, it will work. Many of us start our
31 day with that prayer or a similar plea: "Thy will be done."
32 The release by letting go and letting God helps us develop
33 what works here and now. We can experience this release daily
34 by using the N.A. program.

35 In the Third Step, we simply recognize that there is a
36 force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force.

We let good things happen to us. Every action we took in regard to drugs was an effort to get comfortable. It did not work, or we wouldn't be where we are today. When we turn to the God of our own understanding for care and direction and guidance, we learn the real meaning of comfort.

If we have come this far in the N.A. program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. However, the change may not be as fast nor as dramatic as we wish. We turned to drugs because we are people who demand instant gratification and drugs gave us that instant satisfaction. We are impatient people. It is one of life's great problems for us. Just because we stop taking drugs, the problem doesn't immediately go away.

We find that we will continue to have living problems. There are bills to be paid. We still have to function in society. Most of us still have families. We still have many of the same fears, doubts and insecurities. In fact, because we are now facing life without anesthesia, these problems appear to be more difficult and painful than ever. Do not lose heart. At these times in our recovery, the Third Step is our greatest source of strength and courage. We are no longer bogged down by addiction. We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a power greater than ourselves. We are now a part of the Ultimate Reality which has brought Order out of Chaos. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, remorse, self-pity, anxiety, depression and a thousand other ills.

Day by day, we discover the magnitude of the Third Step. This is the Step where we come into contact with sanity we are promised in Step Two. Reliance on a spiritual way of life is now possible for us. Our addiction is no longer a roadblock to God-consciousness. We are slowly beginning to lose those paralyzing feelings of hopelessness. We who have lived in darkness and horror for so long begin to walk freely in the sunlight of reality.

1 We find that our mood-swings are less dramatic. We have
2 natural highs followed by occasional lows. We are beginning
3 to gain balance and harmony. We have learned to stop fight-
4 ing and are learning to live. The only price is to quit
5 fighting, surrender quietly and let the God of our own under-
6 standing take care of us.

7 We have come to enjoy clean living and want more of the
8 good things that the N.A. Fellowship holds for us. We know
9 now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want
10 all we can get. We are now ready for our first honest self-
11 appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.

STEP FOUR

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

12 Step Four helps us see exactly what our problems are and
13 shows us our strengths.

14 Let's face it, when we were using, we weren't very honest
15 with ourselves. We are finally beginning to become honest when
16 we admit our addiction has whipped us and that we need help.
17 It took a long time to get where we could admit we were beaten.
18 We are probably not going to recover--physically, mentally or
19 emotionally--overnight. Step Four is going to help us toward
20 recovery more than we can imagine. Most of us were surprised
21 to find that we had many good points in our inventory. Ask
22 anyone who has some time on the program and who has the kind
23 of life you want for yourself, they will tell you that the
24 Fourth Step was a turning point in their lives.

25 Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step
26 as if it were a confession of how horrible they are--what a
27 bad person they had been. This is not the purpose of the
28 Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old,
29 useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the neces-
30 sary strength and insight to enable us to grow in this new way

of life. A binge of emotional sorrow over real or imagined 1
wrongs will not help us. In fact, it can be quite harmful. 2

Our purpose is to be rid of guilt--not wallow in it! 3
We must be done with the past, not cling to it. We want to 4
look our past in the face and see it for what it was--and then 5
to release it so that we can live today. The past, for most 6
of us, has been a ghost in the closet. We have been afraid to 7
open that closet for fear of what that ghost may do to us. 8

You don't have to do this alone. Your will and your life 9
are now in the hands of the Source of all strength--tap into 10
the Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looks im- 11
possible to most of us. It is--if we are operating under our 12
own "power." Take a few quiet moments before writing and pray 13
for "the power to carry it out." 14

Don't write the inventory with any particular person in 15
mind. If you do that, you may wind up "slanting" what you 16
write in order to please them. Only time will tell, and the 17
Fifth Step will take care of itself. Stay here in the Now-- 18
you are on Step Four. We cannot do Step Five until we have 19
completed Step Four. 20

You may approach the Fourth Step in a number of ways. It 21
is advisable that before you start, go over the first Three 22
Steps with your sponsor. Be comfortable with your understand- 23
ing of these steps. Allow yourself the privilege of feeling 24
good about what you are doing. Don't be driven as you were 25
so long driven by drugs. We have been trashing about for a 26
long time and have gotten nowhere. Now, we are going to take 27
it easy and not let things frighten us. 28

With pen and paper, we begin the moral inventory. If the 29
word moral bothers us, we call it a positive/negative inven- 30
tory, or a good/bad inventory. The way to write an inventory 31
is to write it! Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, 32
theorizing the inventory will not get it written. Sit down 33
with a notebook, pray, pick up your pen and start writing! 34
All we seek to do is find out which things about ourselves 35
need changing. If we were grocers we would not hesitate to 36

1 separate the rotten fruit from the good and throw out the
2 rotten fruit. The N.A. program has the Fourth Step with which
3 we examine ourselves.

4 It is important to remember where we came from so that we
5 don;t return. We had to go through what we did to get to where
6 we are now.

7 A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, but
8 we never write too much. The inventory will fit the indivi-
9 dual, we simply write until the brain is emptied. Anything we
10 we think about is possibly inventory material. We realize how
11 little we have to lose and how much we have to gain. We plunge
12 into this step without reservation.

13 We remove these thorns in the side by listing them on paper.
14 As recovering addicts we sit down with paper and pen and pray
15 for God's help in revealing the defects that are causing pain
16 and suffering. We pray for the courage to be fearless and
17 thorough so that this inventory may help us put our lives in
18 order. When we pray and take action it always goes better for
19 us.

20 As using addicts, we lived under a regime of fear. In
21 attaining our new life, we want it free of unreasonable fear.
22 A lot of times we try to look good in front of other people,
23 but deep down inside we are really afraid of who we are and
24 where we came from.

25 We write down our fears, our resentments and our guilts.
26 We examine in depth our relationships with people, places and
27 situations asking ourselves what we have demanded of these re-
28 lationships. Often the answers will show that we are placing
29 unreasonable demands on reality. We find that we are demanding
30 other people to stop being who they are.

31 Most of us have found that we were neither so terrible nor
32 so wonderful as we supposed. Ultimately, we are just human,
33 with the same fears, longings and troubles as everyone else.
34 One of the greatest benefits of the N.A. program is discovering
35 that we need never be alone again. Others have felt as we feel.
36 Others have failed where we failed. They are here now in the

strength of the Fellowship, ready and eager to help us. 1

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing 2
our past performance and our present behavior to see what we 3
want to keep and what we want to be rid of. This Step has 4
the reputation of being difficult. In reality, it's quite 5
simple. 6

As recovering addicts, we now have the right to reach for 7
levels of greater comfort and we can reach them, when we get 8
a handle on what we've been doing wrong. If we want to feel 9
good, we have to stop doing the things that make us feel bad. 10

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we 11
would not be human. The important thing is that we do our 12
best. We use the tools available to us, and because we do 13
not want to lose any of what we have gained, we will want to 14
continue in the program. It is our experience that no matter 15
how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting 16
effect, unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough 17
Step Five. 18

STEP FIVE

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another
human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

After taking a thorough Fourth Step, we have to deal with 19
what we have found in our inventory. We have decided what 20
our defects are, but we still don't know how to deal with them. 21
We are told that if we keep these defects inside us, they could 22
lead us to using again. We have to beware of half-measures 23
on this Step. Holding on to our own "garbage" would even- 24
tually sicken us and hold us back from really taking part in 25
this new way of life. If we take a Fifth Step, but we really 26
don't get honest, we will have the same negative results that 27
dishonesty brought us in the past. 28

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this, and 29
will help to free the fear of facing ourselves and another 30
human being. Many of us, before we take Step Five, fear that 31

1 God will turn away from us, when we reveal ourselves to Him.
2 It seemed unnecessary to some of us to admit the exact nature
3 of our wrongs to God. "God already knows all that stuff", we
4 rationalized. True, God does already know all that stuff, but
5 until we face God with it, we will never really believe that
6 He does. The admission must come from our own lips to be truly
7 effective for us.

8 For years, we have avoided seeing ourselves as we really
9 are. We were ashamed of ourselves and felt isolated from the
10 rest of the world. Now, we've got this shameful past trapped
11 on paper. We can sweep it out of our lives, if we face it and
12 admit it. It would be tragic mistake to have it all written
13 down and then just shove it into a drawer.

14 We have feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we
15 really were, we would surely be rejected. Maybe this was be-
16 cause we had already rejected ourselves. We were so self-
17 centered that we didn't realize just how much we had in com-
18 mon with our fellow addicts. Before coming to Narcotics
19 Anonymous, we had felt that no one could ever relate to us
20 or understand the reasons behind the things we had done. We
21 quickly realized that we had been unrealistic in feeling that
22 way. N.A. people did understand us.

23 We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth
24 Step. Although there is no hard rule about what kind of per-
25 son we should choose, it is important that we trust that per-
26 son. Only complete confidence in the person's integrity and
27 closed mouth can make us willing to be thorough in this Step.

28 Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, but
29 most of us feel most comfortable choosing a fellow member of
30 N.A. We know that a fellow addict would be less likely to
31 judge us with malice. People often select clergymen, or mem-
32 bers of the medical profession, because these people are
33 accustomed to keeping confidences in their work. Whoever we
34 select, we make certain that they know what we are attempting
35 to do and why we are doing it. We are often amazed at how
36 willing most people are to help us. We never knew that people

actually cared enough about us to want to help in our re- 1
covery. 2

Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the 3
person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we proceed 4
with enthusiasm. We want to be very definite and thorough. 5
We realize that this is a life and death matter. 6

There is a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and 7
an equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our 8
part in situations. If we are anything like we were when we 9
first entered the N.A. Fellowship, we will still tend to want 10
to "sound good". This is a luxury we can't afford. This Step 11
must cut into our character defects and expose our motives and 12
our actions for what they really were. We have no right to 13
expect these things to reveal themselves. It isn't easy, 14
but it is simple. We want to tell the truth, cut and dry, 15
as quickly as possible. We do not procrastinate. 16

We will never be able to name all of our past mistakes, 17
so we need not expect our first spoken inventory to be per- 18
fect. If we choose, we will be continuing the process of 19
self-assessment for the rest of our lives. For now, we will 20
try to get most of the "garbage" out in the first session. 21

For many years, we have covered up our low self-esteem 22
by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. 23
Unfortunately, we ended up fooling ourselves more than anyone. 24
Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the 25
outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on 26
the inside. "One thing you can't hide, is when you're 27
crippled inside." The masks have to go. 28

Once we had taken this Step, we felt lightened and re- 29
freshed. We were finally free to be ourselves, because we 30
were not trying to cover anything up. It was a great relief 31
to be rid of all our secrets, to share the burden of past 32
guilts. Usually, as we share this Step, the listener will 33
share some of his story too, and we will find out that the 34
things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or dif- 35
ferent weren't all that unusual. We see, by the acceptance 36

1 in the eyes of our confident, that we can be forgiven, even
2 loved, just the way we are. Even though our examination of
3 ourselves usually reveals some things about ourselves that
4 we don't particularly like, facing these things and bringing
5 them out in the open makes it possible for us to deal with
6 them constructively. And, now that they are out of the closet,
7 ready to be faced and dealt with, we realize that these things
8 about ourselves can be changed. We cannot make these changes
9 alone. We need our Higher Power's help, and the help of the
10 Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

STEP SIX

We were entirely ready to have God remove these
defects of character.

11 Let us go back to the First Step for a minute. Remember
12 that we had to surrender completely to obtain relief. We had
13 to admit we were whipped. In examining ourselves as honestly
14 as possible it is probable that we have discovered some things
15 about ourselves that we don't like. Perhaps we call them de-
16 fects. Whatever we call them, we recognize that we must change
17 if we are to -row. The Sixth Step is the same situation; we
18 can't do it ourselves; but we know that God as we understand
19 Him can do it for us.

20 Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our angers,
21 our fears? Do we really understand that they are a deadly
22 poison in the heart of an addict? Many of us cling to our
23 fears, doubts, and self-loathing or hatred of others, because
24 there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It
25 seems safer to hold on to the old familiar pain than to let go
26 of it for the unknown. Letting go of character defects should
27 be done with love. Fear and hate cannot give us new lives. We
28 should approach old defects with patience and understanding,
29 for they have served us well in days past. They have kept us
30 from situations we couldn't handle before we found the program
31 and a source of power. We should be more grateful that our

defects are not more pronounced or of a more harmful nature. 1
When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept 2
them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life. 3

We look to the Fellowship for the kind of life we want for 4
ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Without 5
exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of our ability." 6

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember 7
that we are human and should not place great expectations on 8
ourselves. We should be serious when we say "entirely ready 9
to have all these defects removed." This is a step of willing- 10
ness. That is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is 11
as if to say that we are now willing to move along spiritual 12
lines toward a destination we couldn't imagine. Being human 13
we will of course fall short. 14

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if 15
we are too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or too serious 16
(H.A.L.T.S.). We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfec- 17
tion. Adequacy can be achieved, but perfection cannot. We 18
can reach and awaken the force of life within ourselves; it 19
can do anything, even give us a new life. The breakdown of 20
old ideas and old ways seems to be beyond our conscious con- 21
trol. The only control of the situation we seem to have is 22
a choice of acceptance. What areas we change in, how fast 23
we change, and in what order all seem to be predetermined by 24
our very nature. If we accept God's will, we will be able to 25
follow the necessary path to a better life. 26

Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. The tools 27
we use to maintain our willingness are practice and prayer. 28
How sincerely we work Step Six will be proportionate to our 29
desire for change. We often feel that we will never be ready 30
to have all our defects removed, but we should remember that 31
the main point is that we are on a journey, and the destina- 32
tion isn't what matters. Willingness to serve God is what we 33
strive for. 34

Without these defects, life is ever sensational and deeply 35
wonderful. We learn that we are growing when we make new 36

1 mistakes instead of repeating old ones. Life with these de-
2 fects may cause perpetual frustration, tension, and relapse.

3 We decide what our priorities are and envision life free
4 from defects. We recognize our defects and surrender to the
5 simple suggestions that the program offers us.

6 We feel that the Sixth Step is the honest willingness to
7 let go of those shortcomings about ourselves. We become ready
8 to part with the fears and doubts of that other life.

9 We continue to attempt to manage our lives and will need to
10 go back to Step Six to renew our readiness to have our defects
11 removed.

STEP SEVEN

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

12 Having decided we want God, as we understood Him, to relieve
13 us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities,
14 we have arrived at the Seventh Step.

15 We have all spent much of our lives being anything but
16 humble. We have been humiliated by many of the things that
17 happened to us while using, but most of us avoided true humility
18 until we worked the First Step. Then again, in the Third Step,
19 we asked God to direct our will and our lives. Now, in the
20 Seventh Step, we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

21 The key to this Step is an understanding of the humility.
22 Humility is a part of staying clean, as food and water are to
23 staying alive. As we struggled along in our addiction, we
24 devoted our energy towards satisfying our material needs. We
25 always had to have a satisfaction of our basic desires, such
26 as power and prestige. We never thought of spiritual growth
27 or asking a Higher Power for direction. Drugs were our Higher
28 Power.

29 We couldn't handle the trials and tribulations of life all
30 by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives
31 that we realized that we couldn't do it alone. By admitting

that we achieved our first glimpse of humility. 1

If the defects we have discovered are real and we have a 2
chance to be rid of them, we would surely experience a sense 3
of well being when we rid ourselves of them. Some will want 4
to get on their knees for this Step. Some will be very quiet 5
or put forth a great mental effort to show intense willingness. 6
The word humble applies because we approach this Power greater 7
than ourselves to ask for the most wonderful gift of the pro- 8
gram; the freedom to live without the limitations of our past 9
ways. However we want to handle it, we go all the way. 10
Think of what we have to lose! As soon as we feel ourselves 11
willing, we should go ahead and ask God to remove our short- 12
comings. 13

When we were using, our spiritual and emotional growth 14
came to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal 15
person. Now that we are clean, there are many situations in 16
our daily lives that are difficult to understand. By prac- 17
ticing the virtue of humility and asking for help, we can get 18
through even the toughest times. "I can't, we can!" It is a 19
sign of growth. 20

We have to realize that people can give us direction and 21
that our way of thinking is not the only way. We must punc- 22
ture our egos and realize that we have much more work to do. 23
When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is 24
one of defensiveness. If we truly want to grow, we will take 25
a good look at what is pointed out. We must realize we are 26
not perfect and there are things we must change. 27

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this 28
program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we 29
become ready to let God remove our defects of character; we 30
humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. This is our road 31
to spiritual growth, to change our character, day by day, to 32
gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the 33
isolation and loneliness of addiction into this mainstream of 34
useful Fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from 35
action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to 36

1 get out of ourselves and strive for achieving the will of our
2 Higher Power. Our will didn't work.
3 If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning
4 of this Step, it will seem an unbearable chore, impossible to
5 complete and unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles.
6 Like all the Steps, the point of this one is freedom. None of
7 these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. We
8 are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection; for perfection
9 is a divine quality.

STEP EIGHT

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and
became willing to make amends to them all.

10 The last five Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, the Eighth
11 through the Twelfth, are the "get out and live" Steps. Just
12 as the First, Second, and Third Steps give us the necessary
13 tools to begin a clean life, and the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and
14 Seventh Steps complete the process of self-forgiveness and
15 the beginning of new attitudes. The Eighth Step starts the
16 procedure of forgiving other people, being forgiven by them,
17 and learning how to live in the world as a drug-free human
18 being.

19 The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we will-
20 ing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; once,
21 and for all, clear away the shadows of fear that our past
22 holds for us?

23 The preceding Seven Steps looked pretty rough until we
24 took the plunge and go into them. This one is no different.
25 It seems hard now, but once we've done it, we'll wonder why
26 we didn't do it long ago.

27 The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of
28 honesty about our relations with other people. We had to feel
29 better internally before we could even bear to think about
30 whom we had harmed and how we had harmed them, and exactly
31 what was the way we perceived ourselves.

This Step is a good test of our new found humility, we
consult with our sponsors in this matter. Again, as in the
Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless
and dangerous self-loathing. Our purpose is to achieve free-
dom from the guilt we have carried so far, with so much pain,
so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggres-
siveness nor fear.

We admit we are at fault regardless of what the other per-
son did to arouse our hostility. We admit that we hurt them,
directly or indirectly, through some action, some lie, some
broken promise, neglect or whatever.

It will not make better persons to judge the faults of
another. The thing that will make us better is to clean up
our lives by relieving ourselves of guilt. The Eighth Step
is a mighty stride away from a lie dominated by guilt and
remorse.

We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate
list. In preparing to make the Eight Step list, it is help-
ful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or
mental damage. Another definition is inflicting pain, suf-
fering or loss.

The damage may be caused by something that is said or
done, and the harm resulting from these words or actions may
be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the
person who is inflicting the harm. The degrees of harm can
run from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to in-
flicting bodily injury or even death.

We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and
add to it any more people we can think of and we face that
list honestly and openly and examine our fault. Are we will-
ing to make amends? In many cases we cannot do it, it is not
possible nor practical in some instances. We may not know
who it was we wronged. In other instances we might run the
risk of involving a third person, some companions of our days
of using who do not wish to be exposed. We do not have the
right nor do we need, for any moral reason, to endanger that
person.

1 Just about anyone that comes into contact with an active
2 addict risks being harmed. Many members mention their parents,
3 spouses, children, boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts,
4 casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, land-
5 lords, and total strangers.

6 A problem many of us seem to have with the Eighth Step and
7 the admission of the harm we did is the belief we were victims,
8 not victimizers in our addiction. Avoiding this rationaliza-
9 tion is crucial to the Eighth Step.

10 We had to think of disassociating what had been done to us
11 and what we had done. We were forced to cut away all our jus-
12 tifications and all our ideas of being a victim.

13 The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separat-
14 ing it from the Ninth Step. Projecting about the Ninth Step
15 can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming
16 willing. We do not even think about making amends, but just
17 concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to
18 make a list and to become willing.

19 "We try and work this Step as if there were no Ninth Step."
20 The Eighth Step is actually an action Step. And like all the
21 action Steps it offers immediate benefits. "The main thing
22 this Step does for us is to build awareness that, little by
23 little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves, and how
24 we deal with other people."

STEP NINE

We made direct amends to such people wherever possible,
except when to do so would injure them or others.

25 We want to get free of our fear, but we don't wish to do so
26 at the price of anyone. It is very important that we take
27 guidance from our sponsors or spiritual advisors in this
28 matter.

29 We recommend turning over our legal problems to lawyers.
30 Professional help is available to help us with our financial
31 and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on
32 problems and responsibilities that we are not equipped to handle.

In some cases we may be beyond our means. If it is, we can only proceed with direction. 1 2

Timing is an essential part of this Step. We should make amends when the opportunity presents itself, as long as to do so will not cause more harm. When it gets to the point that we cannot hold the hurt any longer, amends will be made. 3 4 5 6

In some old relationships an unresolved conflict exists. We enter the old conflict and resolve it by making our amends, and step back from future antagonisms and ongoing resentments. In many instances of past wrongs we will need to go somewhere and humbly ask forgiveness. These are the old tapes that would keep playing back as long as we live. Sometimes, this will be a joyous occasion when some old friend or relative proves very willing to let by-gones be by-gones and welcome us back to the land of the living. However, some people are not so willing to let go of their bitterness. We can only make our amends to the best of our ability and they can either accept it or deny it. We feel relieved, instead of feeling knocked down and drained in our lives. Our addiction put a negative attitude about us in others. Step Nine helps us with our guilt and others with their anger. 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

This Step should not be avoided. If we avoid this Step we are simply reserving a place in our program to get loaded. Pride, fear, and procrastination often seem an impossible barrier and stand in our way of progress and growth through the Ninth Step. The important thing is to take action and be ready to accept the reactions of those persons we have harmed. We have made amends as best we could. 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

There are some things we can make direct amends for; some we can only make partial amends for; and some that we remember nothing about. 29 30 31

We can make amends by our actions. They don't always have to be verbal. Staying clean is also an amend because we're no longer part of the problem. Now we're part of the solution. 32 33 34 35

1 When it came to making amends for all the things we did
2 there was a lot to be done. In the progress of our recovery
3 we were restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively
4 relating to others. We will less often view people as a
5 threat to our security. Real security in our gut and in our
6 recovery will replace the physical ache and mental confusion.
7 We will want to address ourselves to these people with love
8 and patience. Fear of relapse will make many of our most sin-
9 cere well-wishers reluctant to accept our recovery as real.
10 We must remember the pain they have known. In time, many
11 seeming miracles will occur. Many of us that were separated
12 from our children succeed in re-establishing deep emotional
13 bonds. However, estranged mates can be dangerous to our re-
14 covery if they don't learn some of our program. If the re-
15 lationship is real, it will survive. Re-acceptance into the
16 family of our birth, is eventual for most. Clean time speaks
17 for itself. Patience is the great method of the Fellowship.
18 The unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will
19 to live and each positive move on our part will be matched by
20 an unexpected opportunity.
21 The benefit of this Step is to be able to face people we
22 have harmed with a clear conscience. By discovering and ad-
23 mitting our faults, we experience a miracle.

STEP TEN

We continued to take personal inventory, and when
we were wrong promptly admitted it.

24 We as addicts, suffer from a problem deeper than the drugs
25 we took. Because of this, we must live by spiritual principles.
26 Step Ten and all the Steps are to be applied to every area of
27 our lives.

28 There is no area of our lives that the disease does not
29 affect. The truth is that fear is present in every area of
30 our lives. So, in our experience, the program can and must be

worked continuously in every area of our lives. If this were 1
not so, then the disease could not creep into an "unrelated" 2
area of our lives and kill us. 3

Step Ten is a continuation of a fearless and searching 4
look within ourselves in order to repair disorders that fear, 5
pride, jealousy, and other ruinous defects can cause. It helps 6
us avoid the occurrence of relapse due to other areas which 7
we may be reluctant to look. "If you take the drugs away from 8
a drug-crazed maniac, you still have a maniac." Since our 9
problems entail much more than using, we cannot recover until 10
we recognize the need for taking a good look at our attitudes 11
and motives.

Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage 12
of getting our own house in order. We can recognize ourselves 13
as the heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for 14
many years and we are not able to change into complete saints. 15
Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed. 16
We must remain teachable if we are going to stay clean in this 17
program. The smart ones who argue a lot usually die. The 18
open-minded ones get to live. We do not entertain the thought 19
of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive for 20
stability in our lives so that we can live happily and be at 21
peace with ourselves. 22

Step Ten helps us to do this. The process of inventory, 23
the good and the bad about ourselves, is essential. As addicts, 24
we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing 25
the wrong thing at the wrong time. Many forms of the disease 26
manifested in self-centeredness, fear, resentment, and so on 27
can drive us into a place that we feel we cannot get out of 28
clean. 29

Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we 30
still growing, or are we slipping back into the old fears and 31
resentments? It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer 32
these and similar questions. Those defects of character which 33
we found in the Fourth Step are deeply ingrained in us. The 34
thing we do is check for the surfacing of defects early on 35
by working Step Ten daily.

1 How to take inventory that is effective will depend on the
2 severity of the particular trouble we are having. We look at
3 our actions during the day and we practice the art of looking
4 at where we were wrong, considering what we could have done
5 differently, and the amends we need to make. We find it help-
6 ful and humbling to admit to another human being where we were
7 wrong.

8 These are practical applications and theory has no place
9 here. We work it or we will die.

10 There is the inventory we can pause and make when we run
11 into trouble during the course of the day. Stopping, thinking
12 and remembering that by the grace of God we are clean is a
13 basic. Often, when we get home, write out a resentment, ex-
14 plaining how we feel and how we became angry, and the part we
15 played. We find out how to restrain ourselves later so we
16 don't repeat that action.

17 We do, however, remember that God, not us, is responsible
18 for our change. The line between where God does or does not
19 help us is absolutely irrelevant. All glory to God as we
20 understand Him is our attitude here. We find when we have
21 practiced this, we benefit; for pride can creep in and we
22 addicts cannot handle success very well. We usually fall into
23 the mode of the hero, and when this happens, our self-center-
24 edness eats us alive and we can die.

25 In Step Ten we strive for genuine humility. In this
26 humility we can better interact with others. We are not
27 readily angered, frightened, or maddened by greed or lust.
28 We remember our part in the divine partnership with God and
29 we are more tolerant and patient with other people.

30 Step Ten is worked while the day's ups and downs are fresh
31 in our heads. We list wrongs we have done. We do not ration-
32 alize our actions. We honestly chalk up our achievements.
33 Thus, we get our own house in order. We feel more room to
34 grow. The mess is cleaned up. We know ourselves better and
35 there is strength.

A warning about rationalization is that it has killed more 1
of us than anything else. At times, our motives will be ob- 2
scured by clouded thinking. We can pray for humility and use 3
it as a light to examine our real motives. Did we act out of 4
negative emotion? If so, then we can work the program on it. 5

If we want to share it at once with another person, we do. 6
Others can help us see our clouded thinking for what it is. 7
Love and pain will keep us in the middle of the road. We have 8
defects, but a willingness to live as our Higher Power would 9
have us is freedom. In life we will be tested in patience and 10
tolerance. We must keep spiritually fit to act in a spirit of 11
love and helpfulness. When we are willing to grow toward 12
these ends, wonderful things are ahead. 13

Continuing to take personal inventory means that we form 14
a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, our attitudes, 15
and our relationships on a regular basis. We try to come up 16
with honest evaluations and to put out more or less energy 17
in certain areas we are concerned with. 18

It is very important to keep sharing with other people so 19
that when we come up with a rationalization for negative be- 20
havior, we can be told about it. This highlights the preven- 21
tative part of the Tenth Step. You ask yourself as you go 22
through the day, "Am I being drawn in by some old pattern of 23
fear or resentment?", "Am I too tired?", "Am I too hungry?", 24
"Is my thinking getting cloudy?" It's a vaccination against 25
insanity on a continuing basis. 26

We have discussed the preventative side of the Tenth Step. 27
The love was there all the time, waiting for us to accept it. 28
Though we still face human pain, life finally begins to get 29
meaningful. Clean living is possible when we rely on a 30
Higher Power daily to provide us with spiritual progress, 31
establishing us in useful living. 32

In the Third Step we made a decision to turn our will 33
and our lives over to God as we understand Him. We renew 34
this effort daily in the Eleventh Step. Most of us rebelled 35
against this in the beginning, as if on a self-willed trip. 36

1 The first time we hear someone say, "Let go and let God," it
2 sound idiotic. "No," we said, "If I let go I'll disappear or
3 get taken advantage of." What happens instead is, the more we
4 improve our conscious contact with God through prayer and medi-
5 tation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I
6 don't know what to do. Please teach me." It's a fact. When
7 we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin
8 to find a peace unmatched to a drug-induced high. We begin
9 to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people.

10 The Eleventh Step helps us, in the face of a problem, to
11 be aware of God. The underlying principle of this Step is God-
12 consciousness. We try to avoid asking for specific things. It's
13 hard because we're so sure that we know what's right for us.
14 We now know if we pray to do God's will, we will receive what's
15 best for us. A person who has realized their powerlessness
16 and seen the vision the Higher Power has for them will see why
17 we pray only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to
18 carry it out. Our deepest longings and recurring images of the
19 kind of people we'd like to be are only glimpses of God's will
20 for us. Our outlooks are so limited we can only see our imme-
21 diate wants and needs through a loving God. It is our own real
22 dreams that come true.

23 When we pray a remarkable thing happens; we find the means,
24 the ways, and energies, to perform tasks far beyond our capa-
25 bilities. By the surrender of our own power, we gain a far
26 greater power that will see us through. It is important we
27 keep faith and renew it through daily prayer.

28 It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to
29 learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis
30 to insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not
31 force his goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask.
32 This is not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the force that
33 comes from our own choice.

34 Many times, our efforts have produced in us feelings of
35 peace and serenity that we have never known before. We know
36 that in doing God's will, our lives will be fulfilled.

STEP TWELVE

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we sought to carry the message to addicts and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

The idea of a spiritual awakening takes many different forms in the many different personalities we find the Fellowship. This awakening does have some things in common throughout the Fellowship. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering has cleansed us of some of our illusions. In time we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts.

This great Step is to be proceeded by the working of Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to stay clean without the benefit of "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps," and they are no longer with us. The ones who continue to "practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey is a feeling of gratitude.

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still-suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person because by this time we recognize that by helping others--giving away that which has been given to us--is our best possible insurance against relapse to the vague, torturous existence of a practicing addict. We call it "carrying the message" and we do it in a number of ways.

The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean with the help of God and the Fellowship. Our new way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street and remember us as furtive, frightened loners. They notice the grayness and fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive. A

1 spring comes into our step and a twinkle into our eyes. The
2 message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do live it,
3 we give it more meaning with our lives than any words can
4 express.

5 Learning the art of helping others when it is appropriate,
6 without creating resentments, is a marvelous benefit of the
7 N.A. program. Remarkably, the Twelve Steps guide us from a
8 state of humiliation and despair to a state wherein we are able
9 to act as instruments of God's will. We receive the gift of
10 being able to help fellow suffering addicts when no one else
11 can. No greater change of personality is possible; it is
12 God's love present in our lives. We see it happening among us
13 every day. This miraculous one hundred and eighty degree
14 change is evidence of spiritual awakening.

15 We attend N.A. meetings and make ourselves visible and
16 available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and grate-
17 fully of our time, our services and our experiences to our
18 fellow addicts. We do not shirk when called upon to practice
19 these principles. We know that the more eagerly we wade in
20 and work to stay clean, the higher we're going to get and the
21 richer our spiritual awakening will be! Helping others works.
22 We do these things because they are the things that grant the
23 new lives we are enjoying.

24 In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principle
25 of giving away the N.A. message of recovery in order to keep
26 it. This is like reaping what we sow. The old habit of using
27 drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, and helping
28 others to get clean. Even a member with one week in the N.A.
29 Fellowship can turn to a newcomer and say, "Live One Day At A
30 Time", or "An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company."

31 When we share with someone, we may say, "Lord make me an
32 instrument of Thy Will." We don't do it alone, and we don't
33 have to. It is just a matter of getting another N.A. member
34 to go with us on the Twelve Step call to carry the message to
35 a suffering addict. We don't set ourselves up as God. That
36 is why it is spiritual. We get to be an instrument of God's

grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such 1
a call. Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people 2
on God's earth! Those who have been in the pits of despair, 3
now strive to help other people to find a new and better way 4
to live. 5

We help newcomers, whether they are detoxing or just be- 6
ginning to learn the principles of N.A. We do what we can to 7
make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them 8
feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish 9
these ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about 10
their problem. Next we can share our experience, strength, 11
and hope and then accompany them to their first meeting. 12

The selfless service that comes from this work is the 13
very principle of Step Twelve. It is clearly an awareness of 14
God's grace working that provides so much of what the prac- 15
ticing addict needs. Just as the grace of a loving God was 16
given to us, we now have the opportunity to share this gift 17
with others. One Twelve Step call of this nature can make a 18
life worthwhile. There are plenty of such calls for those of 19
us in N.A. 20

The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these 21
principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean 22
and live these Principles, we are doing Twelfth Step work. 23
We are attracting people to us and the N.A. Fellowship by our 24
example of being clean. We no longer wish to participate in 25
the problem. We now serve God. In this manner of service, we 26
renew our vow to turn our will and lives over to the care of 27
God. Even if we have no such understanding, we will acquire 28
it through seeing others recover. Fellow addicts show that 29
God is loving and we will know a life free of drugs that we 30
never dreamed possible. The Steps do not end here, they are 31
a new beginning. 32

All will be well as long as we remain abstinent and trust 33
in a Higher Power of our understanding. Living just for today 34
relieves the burden of the past and alleviates fear of the 35
future. Clean, we learned to take whatever actions were neces- 36

1 sary and to leave the results in our Higher Power's hands.
2 We learned to trust God with our fate and to let Him help us
3 do our best each day. The most important thing we can do is
4 stay clean today, through reliance upon a Higher Power.

5 We want freedom. Clean, we see that the greatest freedom
6 we can achieve is acceptance of God's will. But, we recognize
7 that we are human and subject to mental and spiritual sick-
8 ness. Each day, we ask our Higher Power to help us stay clean,
9 for that day. Each night, we give thanks for the gift of
10 recovery. Thus we begin to practice spirituality.

11 We are clean, but by no means perfect and our lives remain
12 unmanageable. We become egotistical from time to time. It
13 is hard for people in the Fellowship to reach us at these
14 times, but not impossible. Our newly found friends usually
15 call our bluff, and cut through the dishonesties. When things
16 get rough, and spiritual contact is difficult, we learn that
17 it won't last. If we do not use, and continue to maintain
18 spiritual contact within the Fellowship, we can get through
19 these trying times, and grow stronger.

20 Trusting others doesn't come naturally to us, but we must
21 learn to trust because an addict alone is in bad company. The
22 needed strength wasn't there until we found N.A., which showed
23 us how to make faith work for us. We had a lot of energy, but
24 we channelled it into self-destruction. Now, we can put the
25 same energy that we had used to perpetuate our pain into
26 strengthening our faith and becoming healthier, more loving
27 people. We first learn to love our N.A. groups. Later, through
28 service, we learn how to put our energy to work, and the more
29 we serve, the better we get at channelling energy.

30 Remember, we didn't become addicted in one day. We can't
31 possibly solve all our problems at once, no matter how much
32 energy we have. Take it easy! The only way we recover is to
33 apply what we learn from each other, on a daily basis. Our
34 growth is a lifetime process. We never stop learning, and we
35 never stop needing one another's guidance and support. So,
36 we say, "Keep coming back; it works!"

Addiction is physical, mental, and spiritual. Therefore, we believe that we must develop faith in a Higher Power before we can hope to recover from its destruction. When we have a strong faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and use that faith in our daily lives, that Power will be able to reach us and supply us with the strength and guidance that we need to recover.

The N.A. program is a spiritual program. Our members who are living a spiritual program have learned enough of their spirit to develop and maintain a conscious contact with a Higher Power. We become more spiritual as we share ourselves with our fellow addicts. We gradually change from being dull and uncaring to feeling clean, and unclouded by earthly concerns. Most of us experience steady growth towards serenity and towards God, as we understand God. Some have profound spiritual experiences, dramatic and inspirational in nature. Regardless of which category we fit into, we all go through a profound change in our basic natures, which is much deeper than anything merely physical or mental. After a while it becomes obvious, even to outsiders, that a real and lasting change is taking place in us. The most obvious change is the simple fact that we are staying clean. When we rely on God to guide our thoughts, changes are inevitable in our feelings and actions.

As new members, the talk of God we hear in meetings scares many of us. We are suspicious and skeptical because of disappointments we have had with religion. We assume that someone will try to take away our freedom to believe as we choose.

That is not the case. Spiritual and religious freedom is one of our most basic principles. Each of us are free to work out our own concept of God, or reject the concept of a God. We each build our relationships with our Higher Power in our own way in our own time. Many of us come into N.A. as atheists or agnostics. Some of us come in as religious fanatics. Nobody is here to correct or change one another. We operate in an atmosphere of complete acceptance and respect

1 for one another's beliefs. We try to avoid the arrogance of
2 self-righteousness, because it is one of the deadliest forms
3 of self-deception. Even though we avoid pushing any ideas on
4 anyone, we do suggest, strongly, that each person make an honest
5 attempt to find a Power greater than themselves.

6 From our experience, we have found that addicts who stay
7 clean, find and develop a relationship with a Higher Power.
8 We are taught to "act as if" we believe in God, by applying
9 spiritual principles and practices to our lives. Three "musts"
10 are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. Agnos-
11 tics and atheists generally start out by just talking to "What-
12 ever's there."

13 There is a spirit or an energy that can be felt in the meet-
14 ings, and it is sometimes the newcomer's first perception of
15 God. This spirit, or whatever it is, relaxes and helps us to
16 get honest with each other. We let go of our egos and learn
17 from our fellow addicts. Honest sharing speeds our recovery
18 and makes us believe that this Power is taking care of us, and
19 working for our good. We no longer blame God and others for
20 our problems, and see that our problems have been of our own
21 making.

22 After we accept that we created our own hell and that there
23 is a God that wants to help us, we begin to make progress in
24 solving our problems. Through open-minded effort, we "act our
25 way into right thinking", letting our Higher Power find us,
26 rather than searching for God with only our minds. We come to
27 rely on a growing daily relationship with a God of our under-
28 standing. One way to develop our conscious contact with God
29 is to make up a "gratitude list", count our blessings and
30 thank our Higher Power for them. Another way is to practice
31 accepting conditions as they are, and trusting that they will
32 improve if they're supposed to. We do these exercises several
33 times a day, until they become a routine part of our lives.
34 In this way, we begin to face life on God's terms, and that
35 gives us the necessary sense of peace for us to live clean
36 successfully.

We must re-evaluate our old ideas, so that we can become
acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life.
We cannot throw out old ideas without replacing them. We
believe that the old self-destruction and self-centeredness
can only be replaced with spiritual principles. The three
basic spiritual principles are honesty, open-mindedness, and
willingness to try. We say that they are the "HOW" of our
program.

Rigorous honesty is the most important tool we have in
learning to deal with the past and to live today. Although
honesty is a difficult tool to practice, it is a most reward-
ing one. We practice honesty under all conditions because it
is the antidote to our diseased thinking. We lose the fear
of being cornered. Our lack of fear and our new found faith
serves as a firm foundation for courage in the future.

Being honest is not a natural thing for us to do. We
don't expect to practice total honesty in all things overnight.
It is a gradual process in our daily living.

The situations that seem hardest to maintain our honesty
have produced the most rewarding results. When we are honest
in really difficult situations, the feelings of happiness and
serenity are overwhelming.

We have never before experienced gut-level honesty because
we covered up our feelings by using. We must learn to get to
the bottom of each emotion we have, and face it, so we can be
our true natures. Our lives become so much simpler, when we
get to know ourselves.

"Cash register honesty", is a good beginning in develop-
ing self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on facing and living
by the truth. When we honestly evaluate what we really have,
we can learn to appreciate it. The gifts of recovery are
things that we can carry with us everywhere.

Managing our own lives got us to the program of Narcotics
Anonymous. What we knew about living when we got here had
almost killed us. We came in sick people who knew very little
about how to be happy and enjoy life. Complete open-minded-

1 ness is necessary for us to learn a new way of life.

2 Being open-minded allows us to hear something that might
3 save our lives. It allows us to listen to opposing points
4 of view, and come to conclusions of our own. Open-minded-
5 ness leads us to those very insights that have eluded us
6 during our lives. It is this principle, open-mindedness,
7 that allows us to participate in a discussion without jump-
8 ing to conclusions or predetermining who is right and who
9 is wrong. We no longer have to make fools of ourselves by
10 standing up for some non-existent values. We have learned
11 that it is O.K. to be ignorant, for when we are ignorant we
12 are teachable and can learn how to live our new life success-
13 fully.

14 However, open-mindedness without willingness, will get us
15 nowhere. We must be willing to go to any lengths to get our
16 recovery. We never know when the time will come when we must
17 put forth all the effort and strength we have to stay clean.

18 Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try, work
19 hand in hand. The lack of one of these principles in our pro-
20 grams can kill us. Living a personal program without these
21 principles, will make recovery difficult and painful for us when
22 it should be beautifully simple.

23 Remember too that H.O.W. are spiritual principles which
24 mean that they can be relied on to get us out of trouble that
25 dishonesty, closed-mindedness and unwillingness got us into.

26 If it were not for this program we would be dead. This
27 program is a vital part of our everyday living. We go to
28 any lengths to help this Fellowship and it helps us.

29 If you come to Narcotics Anonymous to use people to help
30 you continue your habit, then we cannot help you. We cannot
31 play dishonest games anymore. A closed mind is a barrier
32 against any change. On the other hand, a spirit of open-
33 mindedness, coupled with an admission of powerlessness, seems
34 to produce a positive change when asking for help. If you
35 have a drug problem and are willing to try it our way, we
36 will share with you how we stay clean.

In this Fellowship, the importance of togetherness is 1
expressed by some sayings: "United we stand, divided we 2
fall", and "I can't, we can!" These slogans tell us that if 3
we don't stick together and help each other, then we will 4
surely die. 5

We have a deadly disease, that before coming to the pro- 6
gram we did not know about. We were in the depths of despair, 7
degradation and lost in a destructive chaos. We came in puking, 8
sweating and shaking. Some of us stayed. Was it through our 9
own merit? We think not! Our way got us here. Recovery was 10
done through the help of others, the tools they shared with 11
us, and a Higher Power. 12

From the isolation of our addiction, we were thrust into 13
a fellowship of people with a common bond: addiction, N.A. 14
is like a lifeboat in a sea of isolation, unwillingness and 15
chemicals. We share the good times and the bad, victories 16
and failures, all without defeat as long as we don't pick up 17
the first fix, pill, drink, or joint. We get all our faith, 18
strength and hope from people sharing their recoveries. 19

We usually react angrily as recovering addicts if anyone 20
tells us what to do. In N.A. meetings, we share what it was 21
like in our practicing addiction, our suffering that brought 22
us to the turning point and how we stay clean today. By tell- 23
ing our own story, someone else is bound to be suffering from 24
a similar problem and our experience tells them how to deal 25
with it--what works for one, might work for another. Most 26
addicts are able to accept this type of sharing, even from 27
the very beginning. In time, we have a new source of strength 28
that will guide us in our recoveries. 29

By sharing in regularly scheduled meetings and one-on-one 30
with recovering addicts, we learn that part of our approval- 31
seeking behavior helps to keep us clean. Meetings are an 32
important part of recovery. Those who attend meetings regu- 33
larly and work the steps stay clean. We need the approval 34
of people around us. Attending meetings encourages us to 35
stay clean and reminds us what it was like to be a newcomer 36

1 and re-enforces how progressive the disease of addiction is.
2 This force in the meetings isn't just the people there, but
3 also something within the people. We return to these meetings
4 and use them like medicine in the form of unconditional love.

5 A meeting is like a fence around our clean time. It pro-
6 tects us during all of our recovery. At first, the members in
7 the meetings helped us through our remorse and self-pity by
8 accepting us just the way we were and showing us the necessary
9 care and love to begin to live clean. By returning to meet-
10 ings, we came to believe in a loving God as he expresses Him-
11 self in the group conscience, that continues to save us from our
12 addiction and help us in our daily living.

13 Finally, throughout our lives, we surround ourselves with
14 fellow members who continue to let us know we can count on them.
15 One of the advantages of the N.A. program is that it places us
16 in an intimate, regular contact with recovering addicts who can
17 most understand and help us in our recovery.

18 Our experience is that those who begin sharing innermost
19 feelings, emotions and thoughts with other recovering addicts,
20 rather than giving a drug history, tend to make more rapid
21 growth. When we tell our stories, whether one-on-one or in
22 groups, we can get out of the superficial personalities we
23 thought other people believed us to be. Only another addict
24 can understand and accept us as we are. We recover through
25 this process. The Steps guide and the meetings give us the
26 opportunity to say and hear thoughts and feelings that would
27 otherwise be held in.

28 On the outside world, a lot of the rules that apply will
29 not work with our new life in the Fellowship. Expressing our
30 need for help at the time of crisis seems like a logical thing
31 to do, but we are sometimes illogical. To us, at first, it
32 feels like insanity to give another person knowledge of our
33 pain. As we become more closely involved with others we will
34 learn to share our pain and it will lessen. Part of the horror
35 of addiction is being cut off from this human experience. Our
36 fears and guilt kept us from receiving the benefits afforded

to everyday people. Sharing enables us to return to the 1
realm of human experience, increasing our capacity to feel 2
the problems of another addict. 3

By sharing our experience of recovery with newcomers, 4
both by sponsorship and at meetings, we help ourselves stay 5
clean. We find ourselves being constantly reminded of things 6
that help us want to stay clean. Being able to serve as an 7
instrument of a loving God and participation in the recovery 8
of others keeps a sense of wonder and gratitude in our lives. 9
Giving comfort and encouragement to others encourages and 10
comforts us. Today, we have people in our lives who stand 11
by us when it's rough and help us do what we can do and not 12
worry about what we can't. Getting out of ourselves gives 13
us more perspective on life and makes it easier to live with 14
reality. We no longer feel like we have to run from our- 15
selves. This program has given us a sure way to explore 16
ourselves, rooting out defects and learning to live. 17

If you want to change your life--risk sharing! It is 18
by taking risks we have almost lost our lives, by asking 19
for help in the same way, we can change. 20

If we find ourselves in a bad place or we sense a bad 21
scene coming, we call someone or get to a meeting. We have 22
learned to seek good counsel from qualified people before 23
making difficult decisions. By reaching out and practicing 24
the virtue of humility, and asking for help, we can get through 25
even the toughest of times. I can't, we can! It is not a 26
sign of weakness, it is a sign of growth. In this way, we 27
as recovering addicts find the strength we need when we need 28
it most. It is a way of life for the addicts who want to 29
learn to live clean and have discovered one another. We 30
share our mental and spiritual resources for the good of 31
everyone. 32

Recovering addicts take great pleasure in helping other 33
suffering addicts recover. Recovery as found in Narcotics 34
Anonymous must come from within and no one can get clean for 35
anyone else. 36

1 In the course of carrying the message, each of us comes
2 to our own understanding and if we have difficulties we trust
3 our groups and the Twelve Steps of the program to guide us.
4 These things should be used to help others.

5 The Steps guide us into our place in society. We begin
6 by straightening out our internal disorder and obtaining
7 release from the defects that prevent us from being all we
8 should be. We emerge as individuals reconceived with a new
9 awareness and the ability to take our place in the world.
10 Our viewpoint changes from that of a loner to a participating
11 member. We emphasize setting our own house in order and
12 trying to do more than our part. We trust in our Higher
13 Power to give us strength and to meet our needs. If we feel
14 that we have more than our share of difficulty, we should
15 share more with others and remember to be grateful for the
16 good things we already have. If we're not grateful for the
17 things we've got, we won't be grateful for the things we are
18 yet to receive.

19 Responsibility is a key word here. There are certain
20 situations that demand more than we have to give. We should
21 avoid these or seek help if we find ourselves already in
22 such a situation. We are no longer asked to do the impossible.
23 Most of us are accustomed to getting bored and disinterested
24 when we find ourselves without major problems. We want to
25 change. Serenity not prayed for is likely to appear as bore-
26 dom. In the past we have relied on desperation to give us
27 the strength to periodically re-order our lives. There is
28 another way.

29 When we accept that we are responsible for our problems,
30 we realize that we can be equally responsible for our solu-
31 tions. It simply takes clean time for us to realize who we
32 are and what we want to do. What we can do is remember that
33 we are addicts. Being clean is abnormal to us, and we must
34 learn how to live in an on-going manner. A great magic is
35 found when we help others. As clean addicts in the Fellowship
36 of Narcotics Anonymous, we help ourselves by helping others.

Our attention focuses on the solutions, and our old ideas break 1
up and dissolve like icebergs in the tropics. When the com- 2
pulsion to use is lifted from us, and we begin to think of 3
others before ourselves, a true miracle begins. Working the 4
steps, practicing the principles and using the tools, we begin 5
to see ourselves in a new light. We find ourselves helping 6
others and securing help for our own problems. We redefine 7
ourselves. We become feeling people, capable of responding 8
appropriately to our environment. We put spiritual living 9
first and exercise patience, tolerance and humility in our 10
daily lives. The further we get from the last pill, fix, 11
drink, or toke, the more we see of our past and the more we 12
realize the miracle of the release from our disease of addic- 13
tion. 14

What we have today is the wonderful fact of our recovery 15
and all that it means to us. Each day we live clean, awakens 16
us to the freedom we had all along, but failed to realize. 17
We succeed now where we had known only failure before. Many 18
of our dreams, forgotten and obscured by our addiction, re- 19
turn and help us regain the sense of wonder and excitement 20
at the miracle of living clean. The old compulsions fade 21
and the habits of mind associated with addiction weaken and 22
are broken. A great many things become possible for us. 23
Since we live clean and grow, we are able to take our place in 24
the world. 25

If we want to reap the benefits of staying clean, we find 26
it necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. 27
Hidden fears and needs are still potential driving forces. 28
Just because we don't recognize fear or anger doesn't mean 29
that it isn't influencing our lives. We found it important 30
to examine places where we grew angry or our beliefs were 31
tested. The areas we didn't want to question were those 32
that most needed to be looked at. 33

We also found it important to examine the other side of 34
the coin, the so called "good" qualities like truth. Truth 35
seems to be something that is impossible to understand until 36

1 it becomes obvious. Truth is something we never suspected
2 until we knew it. There are no exceptions--only incomplete
3 truths. Everything we know is subject to revision, especially
4 what we know about truth.

5 Another desirable quality is love. We love the ambitious
6 for they can inspire us; we love the failures for they can
7 teach us; we love the kings for they are but human; we love
8 the meek for they are divine. We love the poor for they are
9 so many. We love the rich for they are lonely. We love the
10 young for the faith they hold; we love the old for the wisdom
11 they share. We love the beautiful for their eyes of sadness;
12 we love the ugly for their souls of peace.

13 We think of love as a shield against the attacks of other
14 people, and as a weapon to blast through walls of hate, and
15 to open closed hearts and closed minds. We feel protected by
16 our love, through adversity, discouragement, anger, and in-
17 security. We even feel uplifted by love, in the moments of
18 despair that still sometimes come to haunt us. As our love is
19 strengthened, we become stronger, and better able to meet
20 life's trials.

21 In dealing with the other people in our lives, we develop
22 a loving attitude. We forgive more easily, anger more slowly,
23 expect less, and give more to our brothers and sisters. We
24 come to see all people as our brothers and sisters. We have
25 learned this kind of unconditional love from our fellow addicts
26 in Narcotics Anonymous.

27 Through the love we have received in our Fellowship, we
28 begin to feel lovable ourselves. From there, we can truly
29 start to love and respect ourselves. This feeling of self-
30 love is totally alien to the egotism that we used to bolster
31 ourselves with, as practicing addicts. It is one of the things
32 that brings a sense of calmness to us, a feeling of solidarity
33 that comes from knowing the truth about ourselves, and accept-
34 ing it. In the old days, we knew, deep down inside, that we
35 were faking it whenever we indulged in our delusions of grandeur
36 and self-importance. Now, because we are beginning to love

ourselves unashamedly, we can love other people more com- 1
pletely, because we no longer feel like we have anything to 2
hide from anyone. 3

Our egos used to control us in all kinds of subtle ways. 4
For one thing, it seemed important for us to compete with 5
others in almost all of our endeavors. Some of us even refused 6
to try something that we might not be the best at. We watched 7
other people closely, not with any concern for their well- 8
being, but to check and see if we were measuring up to their 9
standards. Some of us had no idea who we were, or who we 10
wanted to be. We only knew we didn't want to be ourselves. 11
Now, we realize that we were unwisely comparing our insides 12
to others' outsides, which could only work to frustrate us in 13
the long run. 14

The Twelve Steps to recovery, that N.A. outlines for us, 15
hold the answer for all of our ego-trips and insecurities. 16
They seem to hold the only answers for us that we can really 17
use. In living these Steps, we first begin to let go of 18
old egotism. We then open up to a Higher Power, so that we 19
will lose all fear of facing ourselves and of facing other 20
people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of 21
action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our Higher 22
Power, ourselves, our loved ones, and even the "cold, cruel 23
world." We develop a solid base to work from, which assures 24
us that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete 25
assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With 26
that kind of attitude, we have a real basis for living happily, 27
and we are able to really be of help to the addict who is 28
still suffering. 29

The Twelve Steps led us to a point of recovery that 30
seemed to make the world change before our eyes, for the 31
better. By practicing the N.A. principles in all our affairs, 32
we attract other addicts to us, addicts we are now capable 33
of helping. 34

Humility is a word that now loses its old negative con- 35
notations for us. In the days of our active addiction, we 36

1 were humbled by the drugs and the behavior patterns of get-
2 ting and using. We learned to place ourselves last, and the
3 addiction first. In a way, how we live now is similar to
4 that. We place our recovery first and our own petty desires
5 and egos last. We begin to actually want to do what is best
6 for all concerned, especially in our N.A. groups. We have
7 found that the best results in staying clean can come, only
8 when we serve to unify our groups by attending meetings, and
9 by serving N.A.

10 In our past, we were usually irresponsible. After we
11 face ourselves in the inventory steps, and make amends to
12 others in our amends steps, we can no longer allow other
13 people to "pay our way" for us. We want to serve.

14 Earlier, we mentioned that it was important that we learn
15 to trust each other in N.A. In our groups, we all need to
16 open up; first, selfishly, for our own recovery, and later
17 candidly, for the inspiration of the newer members. We need
18 to maintain an atmosphere of confidence by not using oppor-
19 tunities to look down on our fellow members, or gossip about
20 them. Speaking up in meetings and on a one-on-one basis with
21 a sponsor are absolutely necessary for our survival, and a
22 break of confidence could cost another addict their life.

23 Those of us who are consciously working and using the
24 Twelve Steps to recovery in our lives are seldom bothered by
25 gossip. Our lives are lived like "open books", and really
26 don't feel like hiding anything, or judging anyone. We no
27 longer feel a need to put up a front, because we are doing
28 the best we can.

29 However far we are in our recovery programs, we each need
30 to draw on the strength of the other people in the group. We
31 bring that strength out with us, into our every-day lives.
32 We apply what we learn in the meetings to all our affairs,
33 using these teachings as a basis for living, but returning,
34 again and again to our groups, both to help and to be helped
35 in our recovery from addictions.

One of the simplest and most important parts of our whole recovery process is the concept of "live a day at a time." Often, we have to extend that idea to "live a moment at a time." In the course of our daily lives, we usually tend to forget to keep things simple, and we build our problems into unmovable mountains.

Patience is not exactly one of our strong points either. We are experts at making ourselves so frustrated that we lose perspective completely. That is why we need our slogans, and our N.A. friends to remind us to face what we can, as we can, and no sooner. We try to avoid setting goals for ourselves that are too high for us to reach. They set us up for defeat. We become willing to lower our goals, allowing ourselves to give our Higher Power credit for all things we accomplish, and to be grateful for them, even when we would rather accomplish more. Not only are many of us impatient with ourselves about what we expect to accomplish, but we are impatient about what we expect to have. During our active using, we often lived way beyond our means, out of necessity. Unfortunately, not all of us lose our extravagance and greed easily, even after we stop using.

It isn't easy, but, if we want to live happily, we have to learn to live ethically, and within our means, facing what we have and what we have not, with honest acceptance and gratitude.

In both, the case of accomplishing things and of acquiring things, we usually need to develop a habit of lowering our goals, to a more reasonable point, and reaching them in our own time. After a while, our ability to produce and to use what we have improves. As that happens, we gradually start raising the goals again, but only with the guidance of our Higher Power. As we do this, we insure our own success in meeting the goals we have set for ourselves, letting go of fear and impatience and raising our self-esteem.

We mentioned humility earlier, as a quality for us to shoot for, particularly in the confines of our Fellowship. For most of us, it is much more than that. It is an attitude

1 that must be developed, before we can ever expect to live happily
2 in the world. Humility is an honest self-acceptance, which
3 leads to further acceptance of the conditions around us. It
4 goes hand in hand with the qualities of patience and toler-
5 ance. As we recognize our own humanity, we become much better
6 able to recognize others, to let them make mistakes, and to
7 be themselves. We bring this new humility with us everywhere
8 we go, because each of us touches many lives.

9 One of our greatest enemies is resentment. It has the
10 power to kill. The only way to be rid of resentment is to
11 develop humility, in the form of forgiveness. We can't lose
12 our resentments, by using our own will-power, no matter how
13 hard we may try. Only through earnest prayer, and through
14 dealing with our resentments up front, can we start to forgive
15 the people we have hatred toward.

16 The benefits of forgiving our enemies are many. First, we
17 are able to use our thinking time on more important subjects,
18 instead of plotting our revenge, or writing little scenarios
19 about what we "ought to say or should have said." So, having
20 all this time, we are free to improve ourselves. We even-
21 tually start to see the very same defects that we had found
22 so intolerable in the other people in ourselves. We can do
23 little exercises in tolerance by making up our minds to let
24 people be themselves, and not lifting a finger to change them.
25 Sometimes, the best revenge we can have over a manipulative
26 or unpleasant person is in not allowing them to "pull our
27 strings" by making us react unkindly to them. If we really
28 believe that a person is wrong, we have no business letting
29 that person have control of our emotions. We are not re-
30 sponsible for another person's behavior, but we learn to
31 take responsibility for our reactions. Remember, we can't
32 change other people. We can, through the program of Narcotics
33 Anonymous, change ourselves.

34 We have just been talking about the qualities of patience,
35 tolerance, and humility. We also mentioned acceptance.
36 Actually, all of the first qualities mentioned are mere

aspects of acceptance. Those are the main ways that we use 1
acceptance in our lives. But, acceptance goes forward, to 2
the new member that comes into our Fellowship. 3

Alienation and isolation are symptoms of the mental part 4
of our disease. To the practicing addict, life is just a 5
movement between connections and oblivion. Normal concerns 6
are pushed to the side, as the disease progresses. Our 7
behavior confounds our friends and relatives, so we seek the 8
company of the only people who understand us: our fellow 9
addicts. As the drugs consume our physical reserves, we 10
pass into the desperate state where getting and using is our 11
main activity. 12

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT CAN I DO?

Begin your own program by taking Step One from the previous chapter "How It Works". When we fully concede to our innermost selves that we are powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery. Many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible at the start. Go to Step Two, and so forth and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind, you have gone through complete withdrawal and have stopped using for the present. Now, with a clear mind, try this way of life.

Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of N.A. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet come to our meetings. Here you will find the answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using for today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period of time. If the obsession or compulsion becomes too great, put yourself on a five minute basis of not using. Minutes will grow to hours and hours to days and so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you. You have stopped using and have started to live.

- 1 It all begins with that first admission and surrender. From
- 2 that point, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day
- 3 won. At first we can do little more than attend meetings.
- 4 Probably we cannot remember even a single name, word or
- 5 thought from our first meeting. What we do remember is the

feeling we got. That no matter what we have done or what
course our addiction had taken, we can relax and enjoy the
love that fills the room at every meeting which follows the
Twelve Traditions. Meetings strengthened our grip on
recovery.

Having begun attending meetings regularly, we were
introduced to the Twelve Steps. Working the Steps got us
out of our old attitudes. When we admitted that our lives
had become unmanageable, we didn't have to argue our point
of view. We didn't have to be right all of the time. We
could relax and allow others to be wrong. We found a new
source of energy to put the wreckage of our lives back in
working order. Things that we have done to hide our illness
no longer seemed worth it; and we were free to open our
minds to new ideas. Destructive behavior could be corrected
as soon as we loosened our grip on our old ways. We found
that the fear of change was replaced by a sense of wonder
and adventure. Freedom to change seems to come mainly
after our acceptance of ourselves.

Freedom from our destructiveness covering up the wreck-
age of the past has been the main stumbling block in relat-
ing to others. By recognizing the defects in our characters,
and letting go of them spiritually, we were ready to have
sanity restored to us. In applying these spiritual princi-
ples to our lives, we should keep an open mind. Patience,
humility and tolerance are well worth any price that we must
pay for them. It would seem that the path to spiritual
recovery involves spiritual principles. Spiritual indiffer-
ence will surely lead to relapse.

As we went to meetings regularly, we also learned the
basic value of talking to other addicts who shared our
problems and goals. As we became responsible for our own
recovery, we became responsible for our fellow addicts. We
found this responsibility was two-edged. As recovering addicts
we must share what we have found with other addicts, because
we know how important it is for one addict to talk with

1 another. If sharing the pain we have been through helps
2 but one person, it will have been worth the suffering. The
3 other edge is our own need to preserve our recovery. We
4 found from experience that our own recovery is strengthened
5 when we share it with others, who ask for help. If we
6 keep what we have to share, we lose the meaning. Words
7 mean nothing until we put them into action.

8 We often miss what we are looking for because it isn't
9 hidden. Most addicts have great insights and abilities that
10 offset their weaknesses. Gratitude for our assets shouldn't
11 keep us from growing in areas where we are weak. Being
12 grateful begins when we realize that something other than
13 ourselves blessed us with what we have.

14 Facing problems is a necessary ability to stay clean.
15 If we have had problems in the past, it is unlikely that
16 simple abstinence will eliminate the defense mechanisms
17 and emotional walls that enabled us to live in past days.
18 In searching for the end we often miss the journey.

19 These old ways have to go if we are to find new lives.
20 We will successfully face the days to come if we take advan-
21 tage of the help the program of Narcotics Anonymous has to
22 offer. Help from one addict to another; help that says, "I
23 had something like that happen to me and I tried so and so".
24 Not preaching or judging but sharing the experience, strength,
25 and hope that comes to anyone who accepts our way of life.
26 The willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions will
27 help open the door to our recovery. One discovery leads to
28 another, and soon we are established in a new way of life
29 where people, places and things are kept in proper perspec-
30 tive. The old "all or nothing" point of view will no longer
31 seem a useful idea.

32 Now we have learned that we can, and must, go to our
33 Higher Power for help in solving problems. Fortunately,
34 many problems can wait. The program doesn't work when we

adapt it to our life, we have to adapt our life to the 1
program. 2

When you can feel the program beginning to work, don't 3
freak out. Personality change is a natural progression set 4
in motion by our surrender to the program. The slogans 5
are the sayings that seemed to help us most when we first 6
came to the Fellowship. They apply to the little, dangerous 7
daily situations that seemed so heavy at first. Things go 8
smoother if the newcomer finds a sponsor to confide in, 9
someone whose judgement he can trust. We do not think it 10
weak to put a little faith and trust in a person with more 11
experience on the program. 12

We may still, however, feel that we cannot have a 13
happy life without drugs. We may suffer from the fear of 14
insanity and feel we have no escape from using other than 15
an insane and depressed existence. We may fear the re- 16
jection of all our friends if we go cleaning up our act, 17
this is common. We could be suffering from an overly 18
sensitive ego and many of those things within us that we used 19
drugs to escape from. 20

Obsession is the fixed idea that takes us back to a 21
particular drug, trying to regain the ease and comfort we 22
once knew. We know that the comfort we once experienced 23
from using can no longer be obtained. When we accepted 24
that we were addicts, we realized that never again could we 25
use successfully. Try not to think about drugs, old 26
friends or old hang outs. But when the obsession hits us, 27
we improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power 28
through fellowship in N.A. 29

Just as we went to any length to get drugs, so must we 30
go to any lengths to learn to get clean. This involves 31
the honesty to admit our need for the help of others, who 32
have been where we have been, and have learned to live with- 33
out chemicals. The essence of addiction is that it is 34

1 easier to change our perception of reality than the reality
2 we perceive.

3 Cash register honesty, honesty in giving a "fair day's
4 work for a fair day's pay", can help us begin. As the
5 benefits of basic honesty in the world begin to roll in,
6 we are ready to consider honesty at a deeper level. Self-
7 honesty is being in touch with the way we really feel and
8 the way we spend our time.

9 As we began to learn how to change our perception of
10 reality, we, as newcomers, were encouraged to avoid making
11 any major decisions on our own. The ego of the addict
12 must be busted for him to have a chance at recovery.
13 "Terminal hipness" and "fatal cool" are symptoms of the
14 addictive personality. We should be very intent and watch-
15 ful. Old ideas and street practices won't help us stay
16 clean.

17 After establishing our new desire to live clean in
18 the Fellowship and acquainting ourselves with the tools
19 which have helped other suffering addicts to recover, we
20 can then proceed with the business of living.

21 At least one meeting a day for ninety days seems to be
22 a good guide for those who are going to any lengths. There
23 is a special calm that settles over a person with our disease
24 when they find out there are many others who share their
25 difficulties, past and present. We should begin to work the
26 Steps in earnest, going over each Step word by word. Reading
27 our literature and talking over the implication of each Step
28 with our new friends and our sponsors and asking God's help
29 improves our understanding of the program. A meeting a day,
30 getting and using phone numbers, and reading literature each
31 day are good forms of insurance for cleanliness. It has
32 been said that no one who has asked their Higher Power for
33 help in the morning and worked the steps has ever gotten

loaded that day.

Guilt and worry keep us from living in the here and now. The denial of our disease, or reservations, keep us sick. We lack humility, clinging to old ways. Not from preaching nor from judgement, but from sharing our experience, strength and hope do we recover. Our willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions to problems will help open the doors to recovery.

Let us apply our efforts to the obtainable and let the rest go. As we do the job at hand the balance changes and new opportunities for improvement present themselves. Opportunities now in sight did not even exist until we got the ball rolling. Life then becomes for us what we always wished it to be -- a constant state of awakening. As soon as we became acquainted with the Fellowship and the basic ideas of the program. We began to put these ideas into action. A good tool to remember is to counter our natural tendency to saddle ourselves with concerns that go beyond the twenty-four hours of each day.

Living clean each day at a time will reveal to us the things that truly come from within and give us better understanding over things that would interrupt our flow.

Recovery will provide for our re-entry into society. We can always find people who have had difficulties similar to our own and do succeed. It is difficult to get rid of the notion that we must be great or do great to be O.K. As we recover we will often find ourselves saying and doing things that suddenly make no sense to us, even if we've been doing them for years. We literally see our mistakes. This is necessary for our recovery. Self-condemnation has little place here. When we see our errors, we should simply correct them.

As we go about the task of changing our lives, we are

1 confronted with our character defects. Letting go of
2 character defects should be done with love. It is impor-
3 tant we think, to be gentle with ourselves when putting
4 our ego to rest.

5 In our addiction, we feared change because we had
6 lost control of our lives and most changes were for the
7 worst. Clean, we had to learn to face another enemy -
8 boredom. If we allow ourselves to stagnate and cling to
9 our old ways of desperation and fear, our chances of a
10 real and lasting recovery decrease. We had to reach out
11 and to accept the love and understanding the Fellowship
12 had to offer. Clean, we face the world together. No
13 longer do we feel backed into a corner and at the mercy of
14 events and circumstances. We can expect to succeed in
15 many areas of our lives where we have known only failure
16 and despair. Our new friends and the tools for living in
17 the program of Narcotics Anonymous will enable us to
18 experience these changes. Working the Steps will broaden
19 our horizons and practicing the principles will reduce our
20 commitments to some manageable level. Our new friends and
21 awakened spirits will help us. Our common effort is
22 recovery.

23 Being clean we will eventually have to learn to cope
24 with success. Success scares us because in the past it
25 preceded failure. We could not afford to feel good because
26 we remembered the pain of disappointment. It was better,
27 we concluded, to keep moving on and holding back. Actually
28 this made a great deal of sense when we were using. Now,
29 it makes no sense at all.

30 In time we may become a trusted servant. We can parti-
31 cipate in Twelfth Step work, and try to share the message
32 of recovery, with the addict who still suffers. It has
33 been our experience that personal problems will be resolved

when we are willing to accept responsibility for them. It 1
is good form to allow others in the group to help us with 2
them from time to time. Service will get us out of our- 3
selves, and our concern for others will be reflected in 4
our own ability to accept concern from others. When we 5
find ourselves opening up and facing difficulties that 6
used to have us on the run, we will experience periodic 7
surges of good feeling that can give us the strength to 8
begin seeking God's will for us. 9

Well before we surrender, we have ceased to feel as 10
if we are participating in the human race. Our tenuous 11
grasp on reality is invaded by fears and self-hatred, 12
which leads to paranoia, and away from the rest of human- 13
ity as a whole. 14

When we finally became desperate enough to seek help, 15
we, once again, sought out the company of our fellow 16
addicts. But, this time, the addicts were clean. The 17
acceptance we found in the Fellowship was amazing to us, 18
since we had known only loneliness. N.A. reawakened old 19
memories of what it felt like to be a member of the human 20
family. Slowly, we opened up, reached out, warmed up, and 21
let ourselves love and be loved. The original desire to 22
be clean leads us to a desire to help others. Touching, 23
sharing, and loving are actual tools of recovery for us. 24

The only way we keep from continuing a habit is not to 25
take that first fix, pill, drink or toke. People like us 26
know that one is too many and a thousand are never enough. 27
We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we 28
use drugs in any form, we release our addiction all over 29
again or create a new one. 30

Abstinence is the basis of our program. Any mood or 31
mind-altering chemical, prescription or not, is poison to 32
our bodies. Those who relapse and live to make it back, 33

1 keep us well informed of the fact that there is nothing so
2 bad that a relapse can't make it a whole lot worse.

3 If we clean our bodies by daily abstinence we should
4 clean our minds of preconceptions based on past experien-
5 ces. It is those who stay clean when it seems like it
6 isn't worth it who make it. It means remembering that we
7 are just one fix, pill, drink or toke away from total
8 disaster. It's amazing the power that total abstinence
9 has in changing our life. The bottom line of Narcotics
10 Anonymous is staying clean. When we realize that we can't
11 use drugs in any form and live, we are ready to admit our
12 powerlessness. It takes some of us a while to realize
13 how unmanageable we were and are still. For others this is
14 the only thing that which we can be sure. We as adults are
15 allergic to all drugs, although individual tolerance can
16 play a valuable role. Generally the effects of any amount
17 of usage are immediate and devastating.

18 Some of the most common excuses for using are loneliness,
19 self-pity, and closed-mindedness. Past thinking patterns,
20 known as "stinkin' thinkin'", have proven lethal. Our
21 experience shows that we do recover from these old games.
22 We simply live each day at a time without drugs. We believe
23 the solution for the problem of having drug-fogged minds,
24 sick bodies and tormented emotions is in a spiritual way of
25 life. This is why the Twelve Steps are used as a program
26 of recovery and ultimately a method of trusting in a Higher
27 Power that we can have faith in.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

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. N.A. 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.

1 We come to this program from homes and apartments,
2 offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks
3 and gutters. We come from many different places, but they
4 all share loneliness, pain, and fear. Somehow addiction
5 draws us together in Narcotics Anonymous.

6 We came to this program for many different reasons.
7 Those of us who stay, do so for the same reasons--to stop
8 using and stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and the
9 fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see
10 what this program is all about. We start trying to do the
11 things we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to
12 the Twelve Steps and try to work them the best we can. The
13 result is a degree of freedom that we never have known before.
14 We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them;
15 and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves
16 that has been destroyed.

17 We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving
18 it away. So we seek out and give our hand to other addicts
19 who have problems like ours and want help. Usually one of
20 the first things we try to do when we're working with a
21 newcomer is to get them to a meeting. After all, that's
22 what worked for us.

Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's
so special? Usually, about all we can say is that there is
a feeling there, a feeling of strength and hope and love;
an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special
to most of us. They're a place where we feel safe; a
place where we fit in. But what keeps it that way? One
would think that any time people like us get together the
results would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, self-
willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together
peacefully and safely; but we do. The reason that we can
is that we have Twelve Traditions that help to keep our
groups "safe" and free.

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes
slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little infor-
mation here and there as we talk to members and visit various
groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service
that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on
N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow
our traditions. Because we hear about "suggested steps" and
"no musts" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume
that this applies to our groups the way it applies to the
individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not suggested,
and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that keep
our fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with
others in N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems.
That isn't to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems.
We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communi-
cation problems, differences of opinion, internal controver-
sies, problems with individuals, groups outside the fellow-
ship. However, when we apply these principles we avoid
some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predeces-
sors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to

1 the Traditions; and our own experiences have shown that these
2 principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday.
3 Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and
4 external forces which could destroy us. They are truly
5 the ties that bind us together, but they don't work auto-
6 matically. It is only through understanding and appli-
7 cation that they have power.

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.

8 It makes sense that our First Tradition concerns unity
9 and our common welfare. One of the most important parts of
10 our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts
11 also seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related
12 to the survival of our groups and of our fellowship.

13 Before coming to N.A., most of us tried to clean up or
14 stay clean on our own. Many of us sought treatment or
15 professional help. These efforts were unsuccessful for us;
16 it wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery
17 seemed possible. This program can do for us what we could
18 not do for ourselves. We came and saw this program work in
19 the lives of other addicts. Their recovery gave us hope
20 for ourselves. We became part of a group and found that we
21 could make it, too. We also learned that those who did not
22 continue being an active part of the Fellowship faced a
23 rough road and often relapsed. Most of us agree that without
24 N.A. we would be in real trouble. We know we can't do it
25 alone, and nothing else ever worked for us. For our own good
26 we try to do what is best for the group.

27 This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the indi-
28 vidual's throat. Most of us had never experienced the kind

of attention and personal care that we found in the program. 1
We are accepted and loved for what we are; instead of "in 2
spite" of what we are. The individual is precious to the 3
group, and the group is precious to the individual. No one 4
can revoke our membership or punish us, or make us do any- 5
thing that we don't choose to do. We are taught this way 6
of life by example rather than direction. We share our 7
experiences and learn from each other. In our addiction we 8
consistently placed our personal welfare before anything 9
else. Here we found that in the long run what's best for 10
the group was usually good for us. We chose to conform to 11
the common good because that's what worked for us. 12

Our personal experiences while using differed from 13
member to member. However, as a group we found many common 14
themes in our addiction. One of these shared symptoms was 15
our need to prove self-sufficiency. We convinced ourselves 16
that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on 17
that basis. The results were disastrous, and, in the end, 18
each of us had to admit that our self-sufficiency was a 19
lie. We found that we could no longer control our using, 20
nor could we manage our own lives. This surrender was the 21
starting point of our recovery, and is a primary point of 22
unity for the Fellowship. 23

Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but 24
we find that in recovery we also have much in common. We 25
share a common desire to stay clean. Each of us has learned 26
to depend upon a Power greater than ourselves, which is our 27
source of strength. Our purpose is to carry the message 28
to the addict who still suffers. We have our Traditions, 29
the rules that protect us from ourselves. We share many 30
things, and each is a point of unity for us. 31

Unity is a reality in Narcotics Anonymous. This isn't 32
to say that we don't have our disagreements and conflicts; 33
we do. Whenever people get together there are differences 34

1 of opinion and impressions. However, when the chips are
2 down we pull together. Time and time again we've seen
3 this; in times of crisis or trouble we set aside our
4 differences and worked for the common good. How often
5 have we seen two members who usually don't get along very
6 well working together with the newcomers? How often have
7 we seen a group doing menial tasks to pay the rent for their
8 meeting hall? How often have we seen members drive hundreds
9 of miles to help support a new group? These activities and
10 many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must
11 be, because without these things N.A. could not have sur-
12 vived. Without N.A. few of us would have survived, and
13 fewer still would have found recovery.

TRADITION TWO

For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--
a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group con-
science, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not
govern.

14 In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves
15 from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is another example of
16 this. By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered
17 people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money,
18 power, and sex. An important part of our recovery is
19 learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our
20 misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities,
21 how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to
22 rechannel our energies toward constructive ends. In other
23 words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living
24 program". Early in our recovery we learned that we did a
25 pretty poor job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our
26 best ideas got us here". This seems apt as we look back
27 and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into

trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless 1
over our addictions and could not manage our own lives. 2
Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanagers 3
all, not one of us capable of making consistently good 4
decisions. When we realized this had related to our new 5
group oriented way of life we often experienced a sort of 6
gut-level panicky feeling. 7

At this point our old timers usually come forward to 8
reassure us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and 9
addicts. This is a spiritual program and He won't let us 10
screw it up", they say. They go on to explain that in N.A. 11
we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our 12
Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. 13
In working the Steps we need to come to depend on a Power 14
greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and 15
utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turned our 16
will and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, 17
he will express Himself on a group level. When a decision 18
needs to be made for a group, each of the members should 19
take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our 20
common welfare. If we do this, then the results will 21
truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group. 22

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but some- 23
times we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work 24
out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that 25
we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When personali- 26
ties and self will creep into our efforts then the results 27
suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions 28
are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a 29
vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, 30
powerful personalities, or popularity. Some of our most 31
painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made 32
in the name of "group conscience". Our experience has 33

1 shown that there had been nothing spiritual about some of
2 our decisions.

3 "We took a Group conscience and decided that..."Wait
4 a minute! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes.
5 One group decided that members must be graduates of a
6 specific treatment program, another felt that only heroin
7 addicts should attend, another accepted only Christians.
8 Another decided that residents of a halfway house could
9 attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others
10 sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the
11 collection. Another decided to pay its officers wages.
12 One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings
13 would be able to get a job at a local counseling center
14 and so on and so on. We've made a lot of bad decisions and
15 pawned them off as Group conscience. This worries many of
16 us. How can we really tell if our decisions are really
17 Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful
18 mistakes?

19 There is one truth which helps guide us. True spirit-
20 ual principles are never in conflict; they always comple-
21 ment each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group
22 will never contradict any of our other spiritual principles.
23 Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try
24 to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centered-
25 ness. Then we review our decisions to make sure they are
26 not in violation of any of our Twelve Traditions. If we
27 take another look at our decision and try to resolve it.
28 This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent
29 problems many times.

30 The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leader-
31 ship in N.A. We have seen that we try to rest authority in
32 the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this,
33 we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian
34 leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship,

leadership by example and by selfless service works, and 1
that direction and manipulation fails. The way we desig- 2
nate our trusted servants insures this. We choose not to 3
have presidents, masters, chairmen or directors. Instead 4
we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives. 5
These titles in themselves imply service rather than 6
control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes 7
an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain 8
member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't 9
stay, and members stop coming. The group must then change 10
or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing 11
process. Those who stay grow through the experience; but 12
what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere of recovery 13
in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we 14
must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and 15
personalities. 16

Those of us who have been involved in service for a long 17
time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors 18
open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time 19
letting go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, 20
sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes 21
the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor 22
self-image and low self-worth. With time and some successes, 23
we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier egos. 24
We enjoy these feelings for they are healthy for us. We 25
like recognition and attention and we often deserve them. 26
However this sometimes gets out of hand. We begin to pursue 27
these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in 28
trouble. With more time and maturity we grow in humility 29
and learn to deal with these new feelings in a more realis- 30
tic and spiritual way. Another situation which often causes 31
us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no 32
one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are 33

1 afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new
2 members, something terrible is going to happen. We may
3 even have tried to get others involved before without
4 success. It doesn't matter, whenever we are unwilling
5 to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when
6 we become afraid of change, we are playing God. Our friends
7 may tell us to let go and work the Third Step, but some-
8 times we are deaf to their love. In these cases it is our-
9 selves who must go and grow. But again, what about those
10 we lose in the process? Still another situation which
11 causes leadership problems is when senior members are
12 thrust into positions of power. Sometimes a group or part
13 of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down
14 gracefully. The members time and time again draft the same
15 leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they
16 rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard
17 because it seems that only a crisis will do the job.

18 Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve. This goes
19 against the grain because we've been told never to refuse
20 an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our
21 program. To refuse to lead because it's not what's best
22 for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility.

23 Most of those involved with service sooner or later
24 have to deal with these problems. At first they are unaware.
25 They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention.
26 After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part
27 of them revels in the spotlight, while another part is very
28 uncomfortable because they know they are just another member.
29 This period is often followed by a period in which they deny
30 their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and
31 gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them
32 to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship.
33 They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater

whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable or dis- 1
pensable. Along with this they also accept that they do have 2
special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. 3
They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to 4
control the group nor to set themselves apart. It is at this 5
time that their long service truly contributes the most. 6
They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. 7
Even though their services are less dramatic than when their 8
group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation 9
of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellow- 10
ship can grow. 11

TRADITION THREE

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

This Tradition is very important for both the individual 12
and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic 13
ideas of our program. Desire is the key word in this 14
Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. In 15
our story and in our experience of trying to carry the 16
message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one 17
painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict 18
who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They 19
can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, 20
threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't 21
stop using until they want to. The only thing we ask of 22
our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they 23
are doomed, but with it miracles have happened. 24

This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction 25
does not discriminate, why should recovery? Our disease 26
does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, 27
economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate 28
themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is con- 29
trolled by drugs." The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and 30

1 when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open
2 arms. We don't care who or what they are or even what they
3 used. As long as they want to stop using there's a place
4 for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that
5 place. Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected
6 by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many
7 of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program
8 which accepted us when we wanted help. We originally came
9 to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have
10 stayed have done so for the same reason--the desire to stop
11 using. Many of us didn't even know that addiction was a
12 problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without
13 drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point
14 in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we
15 only wanted a little relief. It wasn't until after we came
16 to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that
17 recovery was possible for us. Membership in N.A. isn't
18 automatic when someone walks in the door; it isn't every auto-
19 matic when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The
20 decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the
21 individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can
22 become a member of N.A.

23 We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction,
24 other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers
25 are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs.
26 Individuals come with problems that express themselves in
27 various ways. They don't clearly fit into our fellowship.
28 Many of these people become valuable and active members of
29 several fellowships while others single out the fellowship
30 with which they are the most comfortable. Our primary pur-
31 pose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers;
32 where they find recovery is not our basic concern. We know
33 of members with a history of drug abuse who have found
34 recovery in other fellowships. We support these members and

rejoice in their recovery, and addict who has found freedom
and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours. Although we
would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out
or force them to join N.A. This would not be in keeping
with our spiritual aims.

The twelve step fellowships do not compete. We are mutually
supportive and cooperate for the common good. For us re-
covery is more important than membership. However, some
newcomers seem to have trouble finding a fellowship or
fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop
around, to attend various meetings and find out where they
most fully identify. They might ask themselves: "Where do
I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there
members who are living the kind of life I would like to live?
and Where am I most comfortable?" We have also met members
who are uncertain about where they really belong. We suggest
that they ask themselves three questions:

- 1.-What message do you carry? (What is the nature of your
recovery and what have you recovered from?)
- 2.-Who are you trying to carry this message to?
- 3.-Where are you trying to carry this message?

We suggest that the answers to these three questions should
not be in conflict; we cannot give away anything we haven't
got. We cannot carry any message that is not our own.

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We
feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict
can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and
whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want to.
We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict
stop using. However, we have learned that recovery is a
reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever
imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can
find what we have found; but knowing that only those who
have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer

1 will join us in our new way of life.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole.

2 The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious
3 possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What
4 is it to be autonomous? Websters defines autonomous as
5 "having the right or power of self government", "undertaken
6 or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable
7 of existing independently", "responding, reacting or developing
8 independently of the whole". Autonomy is all these
9 things to us and more. Our groups are truly self-governing
10 and are not subject to outside control. Each group can
11 exist on it's own if it must. Each group has had to grow
12 on its own and stand on its own two feet. One might ask:
13 Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about
14 our service committees, our offices, our activities, our
15 hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A.? The
16 answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They
17 are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery
18 and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics
19 Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting
20 together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles
21 to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live.
22 All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the
23 result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their
24 help and experience so that our road may be easier. Whether
25 or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit
26 of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats.
27 Some have taken offense to this, they say that when they
28 started out they were told they had to register their group.
29 This may be true, but many groups exist that have never registered.
30 We ask groups to register because we can't recognize
31 them unless we know that they exist. Once a group registers

they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions 1
and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the 2
group. Whether or not they take our suggestion is their 3
decision. In this starter kit it says that we must abide 4
by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics 5
Anonymous. This is also true, but these Traditions are part 6
of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A. Without 7
the Traditions, N.A. does not exist. It really is up to 8
the group, in the end they must choose for themselves.. 9
They are autonomous. 10

But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, 11
and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also 12
creative freedom. It gives our groups the freedom to act on 13
their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to 14
serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. 15
It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most 16
precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard 17
our autonomy so carefully. 18

We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would 19
seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to 20
do, regardless of what anybody says. Well, yes and no. 21
Each group does have complete freedom except when their 22
actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. 23
This is the other half of Tradition Four and the way we 24
use our sutonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. 25
Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. 26
In the past group autonomy has been used to justify the 27
violation of other Traditions. This should never be allowed 28
to happen because as we have said spiritual principles are 29
never in conflict with other spiritual principles. If a con- 30
flict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere 31
along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true 32
principles. 33

When we use our autonomy for the good of our group we 34

1 must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups
2 or N.A. as a whole. Again we are given a simple rule of
3 thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are
4 clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't
5 represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to
6 other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take
7 the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead
8 of time, then all will be well.

9

TRADITION FIVE

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

10 "You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the
11 message? I thought we were here to clean up? I thought our
12 primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?" For
13 the individual this is certainly true, our members are here
14 to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life. How-
15 ever, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our
16 groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts
17 together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring,
18 sharing, and service can do its thing. The purpose of this
19 Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is
20 maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups
21 newcomer and service oriented. The fact that we require
22 each and every group to focus on carrying the message pro-
23 vides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want
24 help. Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible
25 what seemed impossible for us--recovery.

26 The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that
27 we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
28 This is no coincidence. Working with others is one of our
29 most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict
30 helping another is unparalleled." For the newcomer this is
31 how they find out about N.A. and how they stay clean; and for

the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have
learned. The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for
carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. When
a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his
interpretation and personality. The problem with litera-
ture is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the
strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, with all per-
sonalities, the message is a recurring theme; an underlying
reality.

What would happen if our groups had other primary pur-
poses? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost.
If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If
we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers.
If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart
addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get
healthy. If our group purpose was anything other than carry-
ing the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? We hear this question answered
many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength
and hope and this is our message - that an addict, any addict,
can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find
a new way to live. Their message is hope and the promise of
freedom. When it's all said and done, our primary group
purpose can only be to carry this message to the addict who
still suffers because this is all we have to give.

TRADITION SIX

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.

Our Fifth Tradition defines our primary purpose and our
Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to
preserve and protect this spiritual aim. This Tradition tells

1 us that we ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A.
2 name to any outside enterprise. And then we are warned
3 exactly what can happen if we ignore this advice. This
4 Tradition is the basis for our policy of nonaffiliation
5 and is extremely important to the continuation and growth
6 of N.A. Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point
7 of controversy within our Fellowship.

8 Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really
9 says. First thing a group ought never to endorse. To en-
10 dorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements
11 can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements
12 everyday in T.V. commercials. Direct endorsements can also
13 be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional
14 sales material. A direct endorsement is often used to try
15 and persuade someone to do something. An implied endorse-
16 ment is one that is not stated. Although we don't usually
17 recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our
18 stories. We say, "The big kids used it and if they used it,
19 it had to be good." The next thing we ought never do is
20 finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply
21 funds or to help support financially. The third thing
22 warned against is lending the N.A. name. This means letting
23 someone use the name, Narcotics Anonymous, for something
24 that is not Narcotics Anonymous. It also means letting an
25 outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes.
26 Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics
27 Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify
28 a finding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been
29 letting them use our name. These are the "ought nevers" in
30 the Sixth Tradition.

31 This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility
32 is any other facility or place that involves N.A. members.
33 It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling
34 center, a clubhouse, or anyone of a number of such places.

Oftentimes, people are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities. Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with N.A. and N.A. with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference. The second "who" outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any fellowship. Most of these are pretty straight forward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse N.A. with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems. Let's face it; Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional Health Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction, the other twelve-step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation". The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "...lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose". If you say this quickly it almost sounds like "money, power and sex;" our old enemies. If you say it real quickly, it might sound like "people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common. They often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. They are the sort of

1 things we get involved with and run with until we are con-
2 sumed. For the individual, this type of abuse can be
3 devastating, but for the group, even the slightest touch
4 can be disasterous. When we as a group waver from our
5 primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.

6 The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort
7 of read and let it go at that. It's hard to understand.
8 But when we really take a look, when we really try to
9 understand, it's simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger
10 of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our
11 name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money,
12 property and prestige; and we can foresee the results of this
13 abuse and the heartache it can bring.

TRADITION SEVEN

Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining
outside contributions.

14 Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way
15 of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change.
16 In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places and
17 things. We looked to them to support us and to supply the
18 things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts,
19 we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has
20 shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the
21 inner strength we get in our relationship with Him. We who
22 were unable to function as human beings now find anything is
23 possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now
24 become realities with God's help. Addicts as a group have
25 been and still are, millstones around society's neck. In
26 N.A., our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their
27 own two feet, but demand the right to do so.

28 Money has always been a problem for us. We could never
29 find enough to support ourselves, our habits and our self-
30 gratification. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold

ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the empti- 1
ness inside. In our recovery, money is often still a problem; 2
we stopped trying to support our habits; we got to work and 3
often find unexpected success. We clean up the wreckage 4
of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. 5
However, financial security can still seem to run like water 6
through our fingers. We've got a lot of growing up to do 7
and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are 8
things most of us usually have to learn from scratch. 9
Learning how to live can hurt a lot, but for most of us it's 10
a great adventure. 11

N.A. needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, 12
supplies to buy and literature to pay for. We pass the hat 13
to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to 14
support our services and to further our primary purpose. 15
Unfortunately, there's usually pitifully little left over 16
after a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford 17
it kick a little extra in to help. Sometimes a few get 18
together and put on some activity to help raise funds. These 19
efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been 20
given to do would have had to be left undone. N.A. remains 21
a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes 22
frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we 23
know the price would be too high to bear. 24

Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our Fellow- 25
ship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together 26
we learn that we really are a part of something greater than 27
ourselves. 28

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline 29
outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self- 30
supporting. We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, 31
no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no 32
such thing as a free ride. Everything has its price, regard- 33
less of intent. Whether the price is money, promises, 34

1 concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or
2 anything else; it's just too high for us. Even if those
3 who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still
4 would not accept their aid. The price would still be
5 too high. Nor will we charge for our services for to do
6 so would distract from our spiritual purpose. We cannot
7 even afford to let our members contribute more than their
8 fair share. Because for us the price is paid within our
9 groups: disunity, controversy, insanity and death. We
10 will not put our freedom on the line again; not for "an
11 easier, softer way", not for anything; never again!

TRADITION EIGHT

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional,
but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

12 Some have described N.A. as a fellowship made up of the
13 failures from other programs. To a great extent this is
14 true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought re-
15 covery in many other programs, in many other ways. "Jail
16 did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry
17 seemed to have no answers for us that we could use." We
18 ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do any-
19 thing with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them
20 with open arms." Somehow N.A. works when other programs
21 and methods have failed. What is it about us that makes
22 this so? We don't have any secret or special methods. We
23 don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have
24 many of the things that others offer addicts. What is it
25 about N.A. that makes us the most widespread and success-
26 ful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's some-
27 thing simple. Perhaps it's because we don't have these
28 things, that it is possible for us to succeed where others
29 have failed. What do we have? We have our steps; we have
30 mobility; we understand and care; and we are motivated; we
31 have each other.

The basis of our program is the Twelve Steps. We got these Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough of them to give them freely. A.A. got the Steps from various sources. The Steps are based on spiritual principles that have been known and followed for centuries. Most religious or spiritual orders utilize these same principles in some way. These principles are certainly not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and that makes them special. Spiritual principles are basic truths that do not change with time or place; they simply work in all cases.

This program has been called a "hip pocket program". We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It doesn't take special training to make this program work. We carry this program with us wherever we go. We carry our message to the addict wherever he is and whenever he's ready. This program fits every addict because the addict learns to apply our Steps to his life in his own way. Our ability to reach addicts anytime, anywhere has certainly been a great advantage for us.

Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy, our ability to understand and identify with the newcomer. We know what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. We know what it's like to face life without drugs, each of us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; we've all had to pay them. We can't look down on the addict who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con each other; we've played all the games. We understand the addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, after all, this is the life we lived. We care for and love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict really is ourself.

Our motivation is simple; this program was given freely to us by addicts who cared. We only do the same. We have

1 learned that "we can only keep what we have by giving it
2 away". We know that recovery is a matter of life and
3 death for the newcomer and for ourselves.

4 These are the things we are and how our program works.
5 They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have
6 mobility; we really understand and care; and we are moti-
7 vated by survival. All these things are a contradiction to
8 traditional recovery approaches and to professionalism.
9 The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very
10 nature prohibits this. Professionalism as such is not the
11 problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his
12 sphere. Many of our members in the endeavors outside the
13 Fellowship have become professionals in their own right.
14 It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N.A.;
15 for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one
16 addict helping another is truly without parallel.

17 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the
18 addict who still suffers. We do the best we can and some-
19 times we need a little help. Volunteer work is the back-
20 bone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best
21 of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our
22 services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply
23 as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training necessary
24 or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our
25 Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we
26 may employ special workers in our service centers. Without
27 their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those
28 who reach out to us for help.

TRADITION NINE

N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create
service boards or committees directly responsible to those
they serve.

This Tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. A 1
lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpreta- 2
tions of our Ninth Tradition. Our members are addicts who 3
have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to 4
offer, and who have chosen to join us. Our meetings are a 5
gathering of members for the purpose of staying clean. 6
Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. 7

Another point of confusion is the term organized, which 8
has several meanings. Our Steps and Traditions are uniform 9
and set in a specific order. They are numbered; they are 10
not random and unstructured. Certainly they are organized, 11
but this is not the organization of our Ninth Tradition. 12
For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having 13
an administrative structure, and this implies management 14
and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine 15
is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or 16
management nor controlled by individuals within an admini- 17
strative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would 18
surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on 19
our insanities. 20

Even without this Tradition, organization such as this 21
would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. A 22
loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience 23
would find no place within an administrative structure. 24
How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service 25
and management are contradictory. Government implies control, 26
but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in 27
an administrative structure? Specialization and profession- 28
alism are the basis of any management scheme. Any admini- 29
strative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the 30
possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is a contra- 31
diction in terms and any attempt to force organization on 32
us would destroy us. 33

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the 34

1 things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says
2 that we may create service boards or committees directly
3 responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our
4 service structure, but keep in mind that although these en-
5 tities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in
6 fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure
7 consists of our groups and their business sense: our area
8 service committees, regional service committees, World
9 Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and
10 World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsi-
11 ble through the service structure, to the members of N.A.
12 and to be loving God as He may express Himself in our group
13 conscience.

TRADITION TEN

N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name
ought never be drawn into public controversy.

14 In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anony-
15 mouse must be known and respected.. Nowhere is this more
16 obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953.
17 For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure.
18 In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become
19 a worldwide condition and began to look for answers. Along
20 with this came a change in the way people conceived the
21 addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more
22 openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were
23 never tolerated before. Recovering addicts pave the way
24 for more groups and more recoveries. Today, N.A. is a
25 worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.

26 If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us
27 out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our
28 existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most
29 important things we can do to help in our primary purpose
30 is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do

this, and if our reputation is good, we will surely grow. 1
We were led to addicts so we could give to them what 2
others gave us. 3

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Traditions protect 4
us. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our 5
reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on 6
outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't endorse any 7
causes. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a 8
Fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. 9
To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopar- 10
dize our reputation. Those who agree with our opinions 11
might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always 12
disagree. This would effect the way they see us. 13

With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose 14
not to take sides in society's problems? For our own sur- 15
vival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep our- 16
selves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, 17
and so that others will not mistake our purpose. 18

TRADITION ELEVEN

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.

This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those 19
outside the Fellowship. It tells us how we should relate to 20
the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct 21
our effort at the public level. This has meaning for deal- 22
ing with both potential members and the general public. We 23
have learned the value of teaching by example rather than 24
direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this prin- 25
ciple when we work with other addicts. Our message is most 26
obvious in our lives. In this sense we are the message. 27
When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where we 28

1 came from and what has happened to us. If they can identify
2 with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they
3 may join us. This is attraction. We never promise anything
4 other than a chance to stop using if they want to. This is
5 all we really have to offer and to make any other promise
6 would be to distract from our primary purpose.

7 We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by
8 doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend
9 our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We can tell an
10 addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery.
11 Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a
12 free meal, or housing, or money, or a job, or a lover, or
13 any kind of free ride. But how many would have a desire to
14 stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found
15 out we wouldn't keep our promise? How many would never
16 come back? How many would die without ever having a chance
17 to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as
18 something we are not. In order to accomplish something we
19 want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come
20 to us and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more
21 acceptable. Our successes speak for themselves.

22 Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need also main-
23 tain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. Most
24 of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or
25 show our faces publicly as members of N.A. What would
26 happen if a member publicly declared that he was a member of
27 Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the wonderful
28 things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later he was found
29 dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard his
30 declaration and also knew about his death think about the
31 value of N.A.?

32 Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point
33 of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A. should
34 ever place themselves in a position where they have to make

a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is N.A. and 1
no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor 2
special members. Each of us has our story, and our own 3
recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellow- 4
ship we can achieve great things. 5

TRADITION TWELVE

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions,
ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even 6
more inter-related than our Steps. They compliment each 7
other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. 8
We've heard "principles before personalities" so often it 9
has become a cliché like "Take it Easy" or "First Things 10
First". But what does it mean? What is the principle of 11
anonymity? 12

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is 13
truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set 14
aside the differences we live by and become a part of a 15
greater whole. The awakening of anonymity in each of us 16
occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives 17
and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves. 18

Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual founda- 19
tion of our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about 20
common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common wel- 21
fare before personal welfare in the group setting is a 22
direct application of anonymity. The "I wants, I wills and 23
I shoulds" are replaced by "we"-oriented thinking for the 24
common good; the result is unity. Unity is the direct 25
result of the application of the principle of anonymity 26
within the group and the fellowship. 27

The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate 28

1 authority. No single person (no personality) has authority.
2 This is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over
3 our will and is vested in a loving God to whom we have
4 turned over our will and lives. The anonymity of the ser-
5 vant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are
6 not important; it is only the service which counts.

7 The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do
8 not define our members. We only insist that they have a
9 desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. This
10 desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must
11 either come with it or develop it before this program will
12 work for us.

13 Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth
14 Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group
15 would set itself up as something different from the rest--
16 something special. Our groups would begin competing with
17 each other for members and for recognition. The resulting
18 loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

19 Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one
20 primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that
21 binds our groups together. Our groups are not truly differ-
22 ent; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This
23 anonymity, and the anonymity of the groups, make it possible
24 for an addict to depend on us for help.

25 Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance,
26 endorse, or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside
27 enterprise. To violate this rule would be to lose our anony-
28 mity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over
29 and problems of money, property and prestige would surely
30 divert us from our primary purpose.

31 Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right
32 and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics
33 Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help
34 anonymously. We uniformly reject outside contributions

regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to
contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to
encourage the loss of their anonymity.

In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out
our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their
chance to experience personal recovery and grow. Not forcing
power and status on our members is yet another form of anony-
mity.

The service board and committees of our Ninth Tradition
are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a
group conscience. They are not responsible to any particu-
lar personality or set of personalities.

In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth
of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having
no opinion on outside issues. When controversy exists,
people take sides, personalities come forward, and as this
happens anonymity fades. Here again we find consistency of
action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we
relate to the outside world is in fact using personal anony-
mity. None of us are singled out, no one of us represents
N.A.; to do so would be to place our personalities ahead of
others and this would be a violation of our anonymity. In
attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the
right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our
Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The prin-
ciple of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality
and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and
differences have no power. Anonymity in action makes it im-
possible for personalities to come before principles.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOVERY AND RELAPSE

Many consider continuous abstinence and recovery as noteworthy and therefore synonymous, while relapsers are sort of pushed aside or worse yet, used as statistics that in no way give a true picture of the entire addiction pattern. We in the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous have noted with some satisfaction that many of the relapsers, when again active in their prime or substitute addiction, have dropped many of the parallel behaviors that characterized them in the past. This change alone is significant to us. Honesty of a kind has penetrated their character. Yet there are others completely abstinent, whose dishonesties and self-deceits still prevent them from enjoying complete recovery and acceptance within society. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, is still the best ground for growth. In close association and identification with others in N.A. groups, our chances for recovery and complete freedom in a changing and creative form are enhanced a hundred fold.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the ground work for complete freedom. At other times only by grim and obstinate willfulness to hang on to abstinence come hell or high water until a crisis passes, can that freedom be achieved. An addict, who by any means can lose even for a time the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be the decisive factor in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here at times in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves and the

giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy. Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working to give us the answers that alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Quality and not quantity is the most important aspect of abstinence. Emotional sobriety in reality is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse may prove the charge for the demolition process. A relapse can do the job of awakening us to the necessity for vigorous personal action.

For us, to use is to die. We have seen addicts come to our Fellowship, try our program, stay clean for a period of time, only to drift gradually away. They lose contact with other recovering addicts and eventually return to active addiction. We have learned that to try is not enough; we must live the program. Although we know nothing about prevention of addiction, we have seen that through the determination to stay clean, working the Twelve Steps, reading this book and attending meetings on a regular basis, we can and will prevent relapse thus promoting recovery.

Many of us would have nowhere else to go if we could not trust our N.A. groups and members. We were no longer afraid to ask for help. How then did we lose our fear? At first we were both captivated and intimidated by the Fellowship. No longer comfortable with our using friends, we were not yet

1 at home in meetings. Basically, we lost our fear through the
2 experience of sharing. We share our fears with other addicts.
3 The more we do this, the more our fear slips away. We accus-
4 tom ourselves to sharing our problems no matter how angry, scared
5 or hopeless we feel. It surprises us how often another addict
6 has had a similar experience. Helping each other is a two-way
7 street.

8 An important part of our recovery is the development of
9 self-esteem. We had turned our lives and wills over to so
10 many Powers greater than ourselves that it was hard to see how
11 one more time would help anything. Many of us did not come to
12 our Fellowship with a sincere desire to stay clean. That came
13 after the fog had lifted and after we realized that staying
14 clean was possible. The first thing in recovery for which we
15 felt gratitude was this clear state-of-mind. We encourage members
16 to tell the truth to the best of their ability and recollection.
17 We have been told that our primary aim should be to tell the
18 truth about our recoveries. Then, no matter what, we cannot be
19 disputed. Our recovery began when we accepted the truth another
20 recovering addict shared with us. Even if we did not like it,
21 we could trust it.

22 Trusting our feelings and trusting our fellow addicts in
23 recovery are learning to live processes. It is worth the effort
24 when many people-haters who come here can tell us that they now
25 see the point in being nice to someone, of showing compassion for
26 someone other than themselves. When we found out that we all
27 hurt at times we became aware that it is O.K. to hurt and to
28 make mistakes while clean. We become trusting of people with
29 whom we are only mildly acquainted if we sense their sincere
30 desire not to use--a desire found in N.A. Fellowship.

31 Addicts must patiently re-learn things forgotten and learn
32 how to live. This is what Narcotics Anonymous is about. It is
33 about people who can care about a desperate, dying addict and
34 who can, in time, teach him how to care and love also. It is
35 beautiful!

In recovery it is perfectly all right for us to get in touch with our emotions. We will not flip out or make our fellow N.A.'s mad at us. We eventually make a one hundred eighty degree turn in growth and in dealing with our emotions. Addiction is a feeling disease.

Recovery is more than just staying clean. Living by spiritual principles outlined in the Steps, many clean addicts become useful and productive citizens. At meetings we are repeatedly convinced that recovering addicts are among the most sensitive, responsive and loving people in society. Ongoing recovery demands more. We must change radically. If we are to continue abstinence we must be responsible and productive, not necessarily in terms of normal definitions, but in terms of spiritual principles. We must grow. Most of us recover physically, reasonably soon. We feel better, look better and act better. Time required for mental recovery varies. Some of us have done extensive damage to ourselves. Others procrastinate on the Fourth through Ninth Steps which help us change our thinking and personalities. Many have found that our sick mental processes change very slowly through repeated practice of new unfamiliar principles. Some of us seem to return to nearly normal mental activity soon after adopting a Twelve Step program of daily living. Spiritual growth is more difficult for most of us. Just the fact that we of all people strive for it is so radical a change that many call it miraculous. Spirituality as a way of life for an addict seems a total contradiction. Many feel that they have found what they were searching for in drugs through spirituality. By working the Steps we are relieved of our obsession to use and many gratefully serve the Fellowship for this reason. Growth means change and we feel we must live on a spiritual basis in order to change. Spiritual maintenance usually means ongoing recovery. Spirituality is to isolation as recovery is to addiction.

From self-centered, angry, frightened isolated people, we become loving, sharing, self-assured spiritual parts of a

1 greater whole. We changed from hopelessly helpless to hope-
2 fully helping. From liars, thieves and wards of the state
3 to responsible productive members of society; these are the
4 themes of character changes that take place in Narcotics Anony-
5 mous.

6 We remain honest to free ourselves from guilt. As we begin
7 to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort out
8 priorities and do the most basic things first. Daily practice
9 of the Twelve Step program enables us to change from what we
10 were to what our Higher Power would have us become. Gradually,
11 we learn to trust and depend on our Higher Power, however we
12 understand it, and get to meetings so that other clean addicts
13 can give us spiritual guidance. At first, we are overwhelmed
14 by the miracles around us. We cry easily and find it safe to
15 cry and express love and share all our emotions in the atmos-
16 phere of recovery found at N.A. meetings. The steps become
17 our framework of daily change. Continuous abstinence requires
18 spiritual growth which leads to emotional recovery in our lives.

19 Each day we stay clean by practicing the Steps in our
20 lives, our chances of relapse decrease. Each of us is only one
21 drug away from a painful active addiction, but living our pro-
22 gram through regular honest sharing in the Fellowship of Nar-
23 cotics Anonymous increases our chances for uninterrupted clean
24 time. Eventually, we become grateful for problems as well as
25 rewards. Learning to live through changes by practicing the
26 principles of the program helps insure our ongoing recovery.
27 Often we find that when the pain of growing is the strongest,
28 we must give ourselves time and remember that it won't last.
29 Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean
30 time. We never fully recover. Guilt, remorse, fear, lust and
31 pride may all become unbearable if we fail to invest ourselves
32 totally in the program, no matter how much clean time we have.
33 Many of us get clean in a protected atmosphere such as a re-
34 habilitation center or recovery house. When re-entering the
35 outside world we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to
36 meetings daily, or more often if possible, will reduce the

shock of change. Meetings provide a safe place to share with 1
others during this time. Many members whose recoveries have 2
blessed them tell us that they continue to attend meetings on 3
a daily basis even after several years of clean time. 4

Living clean for a period of time provides valuable experi- 5
ence working the program through many life changes. What we 6
do repeatedly we find easier to do in times of stress. We 7
respond and react differently to situations after a period of 8
time in the program. It is suggested to us not to make any 9
unnecessary major decisions in the early part of our recovery. 10

When we work the program, we are living the Steps daily. 11
This gives us experience in applying spiritual principles. 12
The experience gained with time insures our ongoing recovery. 13
We must use what we learn or we will lose it and probably re- 14
lapse, no matter how long we have been clean. 15

We seek solutions rather than dilemmas. Productive means 16
being clean, creative and loving today. 17

We wanted to be accepted and loved. As a newcomer, some 18
of us traveled the same desperate road of loneliness and lack 19
of recognition, and of hope. We understand newcomers talk 20
about drugs and the things that brought them to the Fellowship, 21
because we have been there. Most addicts are able to accept 22
this type of sharing even in the beginning. In time we have 23
a new sense of strength that will give us the guidance we 24
need in our own recoveries. The group we choose to be our 25
home group will be like a spiritual savings account. The 26
more we can invest in it through our care and sharing, the 27
greater the dividends it will pay. 28

All of us who find the Fellowship and at least begin to 29
work the Steps develop some kind of relationship with others. 30
As we grow, we learn to overcome our tendency to run and hide 31
our feelings. Learning to be totally honest about our feelings 32
helps other people take us seriously. We find that when we 33
come across honestly it seems to reach others better. Honesty 34
takes practice and none of us profess to be perfect in this 35
area. Whenever we feel trapped or pressured, it takes great 36

1 spiritual and emotional strength to be honest. Sharing our
2 lives with others seems to keep us from feeling lonely. The
3 Steps lead to the kind of honesty that can help us let others
4 know and accept us.

5 We seek creativity through the spirit. The spirit dwells
6 within all of us. We need to understand that the spirit with-
7 in each individual is the same. The action being that we tap
8 the available resources of the spirit within ourselves. Some
9 have tapped more than others. We need to create more soul
10 searching within one another. This process is the creative
11 action of the spirit. We listen to ourselves and others in
12 order to recover and to stay on that path.

13 Lack of spiritual quality within our lives leads us down
14 the path to relapse. This part of our recovery is the essence
15 of the program. Spiritual maintenance is indispensable if re-
16 covery is what we are after. Diverting from the spirit in our-
17 selves we utilize the negative consciousness that comes from
18 within. Our life is the constant efforts of progressing in
19 our spiritual consciousness. Stagnation or just plain old
20 character defects which we re-cultivate rather than let go of
21 sends us back to where these defects were conceived. The
22 illness began sending us down for the last count. Unless
23 spirituality is reunited with action in our lives, relapse is
24 inevitable. Recovery may not again be possible, as this time
25 we may die, many have. We must continue our spiritual main-
26 tenance or die.

27 In our daily lives, we are subject to emotional, environ-
28 mental, intellectual, mental and spiritual relapses, causing
29 us to become defenseless against the physical relapse of ad-
30 diction.

31 As a disease, addiction is subject to relapse. Reverting
32 to using is a physical relapse. Physical relapse is only a
33 symptom. We are never forced into relapse. We are given a
34 choice. Relapse is never an accident. Our knowledge of ad-
35 diction is not enough to stop us from using.

When we were told in meetings we were flirting with re- 1
lapse, we had to make a decision. We had reservations about 2
anything which did not describe us to a tee and built these 3
up until we thought we could use again. 4

Relapse is a sign we have had reservations in our program. 5
We slighted our program and left loopholes in our daily lives. 6
Aware of the pitfalls ahead, we trod blindly on in the belief 7
we could make it on our own. If we continue to fall back into 8
the illusion that drugs would make life easier, we must not be 9
ready yet. We believed that drugs would change us and forgot 10
the changes would be fatal. Unless the illusion is shattered 11
that we, in any way, can stop using on our own, we will use 12
again. 13

We took the opportunity to avoid several of our responsi- 14
bilities, missing meetings, skipping work, neglecting Twelve 15
Step work, and most important, we stopped asking for help. 16
Growth in the program stopped. We could sense a change coming 17
over us. Our ability to remain slightly open-minded was gone. 18
We became angry and resentful toward anyone and everyone. We 19
began to reject those who were close to us. We became genu- 20
inely sick of ourselves in a short time. 21

When a resentment or any other emotional relapse occurs, 22
failure to practice the Steps can result in physical relapse. 23
Many of our newcomers have difficulty coming into the Fellow- 24
ship because they do not understand we have a disease called 25
"addiction". We are deemed to see our past behavior as part 26
of ourselves and not part of our disease. 27

As long as we preserve our clean time we enjoy the great- 28
est possible advantage over our disease. For this we are 29
grateful. The first thing to do is get clean. This makes 30
the other stages of recovery possible. Learn that addiction 31
is a disease. Try to forgive past behavior and realize it 32
was caused by our disease. Go to meetings and study the pro- 33
gram for your own personal growth. 34

Obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts we have 35
met or heard of. Our ego tells us we can do it on our own, 36

1 then loneliness and paranoia return. We find out we cannot do
2 it on our own and things get worse. We really take the First
3 Step, this time internally. There will be times, however, when
4 we really feel like getting off. We want to run, we feel lousy,
5 we need to be reminded of where we came from and that it will
6 be worse this time. That is when we need the Fellowship most.
7 We must then call our sponsor or make a meeting. Through such
8 support we will find hope. Others have felt the way we do and
9 every drug addict is a prisoner in his or her own mind, con-
10 demned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.

11 We hate to be wrong. It is hard to believe that now in our
12 recovery somehow self-will leads us to make decisions based on
13 manipulation, ego, lust or false pride but it happens . . .
14 often. Remember we don't recover overnight. When we realize
15 that we have made a bad decision or bad judgment, we make an
16 attempt to rationalize it. We become extreme in our self-
17 righteous attempts to cover our tracks. We see all the places
18 others go wrong and think that they caused the problem. As we
19 prolong our admission of being wrong, we feel increasingly
20 guilty. Living with guilt makes us more self-willed. We get
21 sicker progressively. Eventually, we are shown that we must
22 get honest or we will use again. By this time, it is hard to
23 know why we feel bad. We make a list of feelings and people
24 and events--an inventory. Maybe we can see what's gone wrong
25 in our recovery. We share this list with our sponsor or a
26 spiritual advisor or an addict whose recovery we respect. We
27 are counseled through shared experiences. We pray for willing-
28 ness and humility and finally get honest about our mistaken
29 judgment or bad decision. We tell those who were hurt that we
30 were to blame, ask them to forgive us and make whatever amends
31 necessary. Now we are in the solution again. We are working
32 the program. It comes easier to work the program now. We think
33 that the Tenth Step helps prevent relapse.

34 There is something in our self-destructive personalities
35 that cries for failure. It permeates our total being--"You
36 do not deserve to succeed." We have all experienced this and

without the knowledge that we finally have earned the right to
be responsible, respectable members of society. The manner
in which we returned to our addiction is not important. What
is essential to each of us is that we have the choice not to
continue. In fact the knowledge that we learn in N.A. plagues
us as we try to continue in our self-annihilation. God has been
gracious to many of us who have relapsed by allowing us to
return to the program and the people who truly love us as we
are.

Those of us who have relapsed found the true progression
of the disease that plagues us. To know and come to under-
stand that there is a Power greater than ourselves desiring
to have a relationship with us, in spite of our faults, com-
forts us all. We all have one common factor, the disease
of addiction. When we look at this concept closely, we can
see that using was just a symptom of our disease.

In N.A. spiritual principles, along with the Twelve Step
blueprint of our program, and sharing with recovering addicts,
first check our disease and with practice, develop our vir-
tues. The disease will go with us to our graves, we are never
cured.

Some of us reach a point of complacency in recovery. If
we stay at this level for long, the recovery process ceases
and we begin to backslide. Clean time in the program acts as
insurance. If complacency is not acted upon the disease be-
gins to manifest apparent symptoms in us. Denial returns
along with obsession and compulsion. Soon we reach a point
where we stand on the border line. Denial and the First Step
conflict in our minds. If we let the obsession of using over-
come us we are doomed to relapse. Only a complete and total
acceptance of the First Step can save us.

One of our biggest stumbling blocks seems to be in un-
realized expectations of ourselves and others. Relationships
are a terribly painful area. We tend to fantasize and project
images of what should happen. We pick ourselves apart and
decide we are to blame if our fantasies are not fulfilled.

1 It seems the farthest thing from our minds is that we are power-
2 less over other people. The old thinking and feelings of lone-
3 liness, despair, and helplessness and self-pity creep in.

4 Thoughts of sponsors, meetings, literature and all other
5 positive input then leave the consciousness. We can stay clean
6 by going to a meeting when we feel we do not want one or need
7 one. Meetings are a healing source. Writing about what we
8 want, what we are asking for and what we get and sharing this with
9 our sponsor or another trusted person helps to work through those
10 feelings, and letting others share with us about their experi-
11 ence gives us hope that it does get better. It seems that being
12 powerless is a huge stumbling block. Whenever a situation arises
13 for us to admit our powerlessness, we first look for ways to
14 exert power against it. Exhausting these ways, we begin shar-
15 ing with others and find hope. Attending meetings daily, living
16 a day at a time, and reading the literature seems to send our
17 mental attitude toward the positive. Willingness to try what
18 has worked for others is vital.

19 Another stumbling block we should safeguard against is com-
20 paring ourselves to others who seem to have gone farther down
21 the road of addiction. For example, one member found himself
22 locked behind the doors of a state mental institution. His
23 earlier comparison to the other addicts was a failure on his
24 part to see the progressive nature of his illness. Forms
25 of this example and countless others support the fact that no
26 matter how long we stay clean, whether it be one month or one
27 year, once we begin to use again our illness picks up exactly
28 as if we had never stopped. We are thrown right back into the
29 old pattern of addiction.

30 Progression of recovery is a continuous journey uphill with
31 loving effort. Without love or effort we start the downhill
32 run. The progression of the disease is an ongoing process,
33 even during abstinence, no matter how long.

34 When we forget this or the effort and tenacity it took us
35 to get a period of time in our lives when we experienced free-
36 dom from within; ungratefulness sinks in and self-destructive

behavior begins again. Unless recognition and action is 1
taken immediately that fall will encompass our existence and 2
then we are along for the ride. Our life needs an immediate 3
upswing. Spirituality and sharing is the essence of our re- 4
covery. Keeping our illusion of reality rather than using 5
the tools of the program and the people in the Fellowship will 6
return us to isolation. This loneliness will kill us inside 7
and the drugs which always come next, may do the job comple- 8
tely. The symptoms and the feelings at the end of our using 9
come back three fold. This impact is sure to drown us if we 10
don't surrender ourselves to the program. Relapse can be the 11
destructive force that kills us or leads us to the realization 12
of who and what we are. The eventual misery of using is not 13
worth the escape it might give us. To live is to use the 14
necessities to attain life. To use is to die, often in more 15
ways than one. We have found this program at the right time 16
or we would not have found it at all. N.A. and its principles 17
are here to help us achieve quality in our lives. If we were 18
worthless we wouldn't be alive. 19

Failure to accept the N.A. program and the full implica- 20
tions of our powerlessness has proven for many of us to be a 21
fatal stumbling block in our recovery. Left with a shadow of 22
doubt, the mind of a newcomer and even the old timer can prove 23
to be the spark needed to set off the return of insanity and 24
that first pill, fix, drink or toke. To safeguard against 25
this fatal stumbling block we should develop a good under- 26
standing of the basic principles set down in the Steps of 27
our recovery and apply them in our daily lives. 28

A young man picked up a white chip. Eager to learn of 29
this new life, he very quickly became willing to do anything 30
he could. He went to meetings, emptied ashtrays, made coffee, 31
talked to people, all the things that help us to recover. 32

Afraid, unable to let go of old ideas, still working to 33
"run the show" he found no answer to what he saw as his prob- 34
lem. Blinded by what he saw as important, unwilling to let 35
go of the old familiar ways, he used again. He took with him 36

1 some of what he had learned and seen. The seed of recovery
2 had been planted in him.

3 Although using for the next three years, he continued to
4 stay in touch with a member, though not on a regular basis.
5 This contact was enough to see that the member was leading a
6 happy and contented life. As he looked at the member's life,
7 then his own, he found his own life lacking what the member's
8 had: peace, serenity, joy and love; all of the things that
9 he thought would make a truly happy, enjoyable life.

10 After seven more years of misery, the young man came back.
11 Six months in the program he leads a happy, enjoyable life.
12 He has some of all the things that, to him, make a good life.

13 Life's flow takes place in this manner; we come here
14 powerless and the power we seek comes to us through other
15 people in the Fellowship if we can only reach out for it.
16 Now in the Fellowship with clean time, we will want to keep
17 ourselves surrounded by Fellow members who know us well and
18 who we can count on in a pinch. N.A. is a fellowship of sur-
19 vival and one of the advantages of the Fellowship is that
20 it places us in intimate regular contact with the very
21 people who can most understand and help us in our quest for
22 recovery. All the good ideas and intentions will not help
23 us at all if we fail to put them into action. Reaching out
24 is the beginning of the struggle that will make us free. It
25 will break down the walls that imprison us. Our disease is
26 one of isolation and honest sharing will free us to recover.
27 Maybe there was a time when our defense mechanisms actually
28 helped us survive, but who needs a raincoat when the sun
29 has come out?

30 Slow down and live life. A cynic is someone who has been
31 very disappointed. He does not hear until the heart decides
32 to listen, then he can accept help. It is not shameful to
33 relapse. The real shame is in not coming back. Being thus
34 humbled, we must express our need to those who are able to
35 help.

We are grateful to have stayed clean long enough for the mes- 1
sage of total abstinence to take hold. We are grateful that 2
we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable 3
going to one meeting a day for ninety days. Without staying 4
clean and coming to all those meetings, we would surely have 5
had a rougher time working the Steps. Just one fix, pill, 6
drink or toke would have interrupted the process of recovery 7
and cut us off from the Fellowship. 8

When someone returns to the Fellowship after a relapse, 9
we stress the importance of living just for today. The past 10
is past. We can not change what has happened. What is im- 11
portant is to stay clean today. As long as we live today to 12
the best of our ability and pursue adequacy not perfection, 13
we can take pride in ourselves. We are doing the best we can 14
for today and not living in the past. We can begin to live 15
at peace with ourselves. We can stop being so hard on our- 16
selves. This we have found to be the case; that we have been 17
our own worst enemy, and fault for our failures was not in 18
the stars but in ourselves. 19

We all find that the feeling we get from helping others 20
motivates us to do better in our own lives. If we are hurt- 21
ing, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for 22
help. We find that pain shared is pain lessened. Members of 23
the Fellowship take great pleasure in helping a relapser re- 24
cover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to 25
offer when asked. Recovery found in Narcotics Anonymous must 26
come from within and no one gets clean for anyone but them- 27
selves. 28

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE DO RECOVER

Although "Politics makes strange bedfellows", as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction. Obsession and compulsion. Obsession--that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion--that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill, or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power stronger than ourselves.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be these alternatives: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends--jails, institutions, or death; or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today, are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual--not religious--program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some twenty-six years ago, there was no N.A. I found A.A. and in that Fellowship met addicts who had also found the program to be the answer to their

problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road to disillusion, degradation and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it couldn't be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings, no more hiding as other groups had tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem of everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start. Because of this, of course, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part, is the fact that those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our Steps, and Traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when the tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict", will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover

As long as there have been people, addiction has	1
existed. Addiction is the obsession and to use compulsion.	2
Modern technology has made available not only the drugs	3

1 themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring
2 out the potential for addiction. In the past, there
3 was no hope for an addict. Clean today, we come to see
4 life in a new light. We confess to an addictive nature
5 and we are no longer set apart by marked obsession, com-
6 pulsion, and physical discomfort.

7 In sharing our past with others it seems that we
8 all reached a point when we said to ourselves, "I'm lost,
9 I just don't know what to do". We have all experienced
10 that terrifying overwhelming urge, that need for some-
11 thing outside ourselves. In addiction we share a bond
12 of fear, anxiety, and anger that we are unable to control.

13 What we have in common is what we have all felt: the
14 loneliness, the self-centeredness, the misery, the despair,
15 the pain within and the empty numbness that sets us apart
16 from others. We all felt that we were unique, different,
17 better than, or worse than, but always separate. We felt
18 alone. Our pain surrounded us. We could not fill the
19 empty place inside.

20 Earlier patterns are what got us into trouble. How-
21 ever anything that "works" to help us make it through a
22 new day clean is considered a new pattern. Complete ab-
23 stinence is the foundation for our new way of life.
24 Vigilance, integrity, honesty, open-mindedness and will-
25 ingness to try, are all associated with strange new pat-
26 terns to the newcomer and to clean addicts as well.

27 It all begins with that first surrender and admis-
28 sion. From that point forward, each addict is reminded
29 that a day clean is a day won, and any failure is only a
30 temporary set-back rather than a link in an unbreakable
31 chain. Every addict is a prisoner in their own mind,
32 condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.
33 This compells a person to act against their true inner

nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do. 1

We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life, but 2
on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could 3
not deal with success, so failure became a way of life. 4
The fear of loss of control had set in and we were 5
afraid to try anything different. 6

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with 7
recovery than the mysteries of addiction. We seek to 8
change our personalities and our lives for the better. 9
We realize that we are a part of the universe. In 10
recovery, we change our reactions, thoughts, and atti- 11
tudes. We begin to understand and accept who we are. 12
This gives us a sense of security. We become less com- 13
pulsive in our thoughts and actions. 14

The dishonesty in our actions has led to a large 15
amount of guilt inside all of us. This guilt could drive 16
us to use, and the using could keep us from going back 17
and making amends. All these things together would cause 18
misery. Being clean, we are able to take our inventor- 19
ies honestly. We can admit our faults and are able to 20
ask for help. 21

We realize that an addict is going to resist recovery. 22
Things we have shared with them interfere with their using. 23
We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that 24
they can smoke pot and suffer no ill side effects, there 25
are two ways we can look at it. The first possibility is 26
that they are not an addict. The other is that the dis- 27
ease hasn't become apparent to them. 28

We always try to be careful because we don't want to 29
say or do anything that might prevent them from seeking 30
help when drugs turn on them. 31

We have found from our group experience that honesty 32
is essential for the new member to surrender completely 33

1 to the program. We have also found that complete surrender
2 is the only way to recover. No addict has ever failed to
3 recover who has surrendered completely to our program.
4 This has proven itself time and time again by the phenom-
5 enal growth of Narcotics Anonymous throughout the world.

6 We have noticed as our program has grown that new-
7 comers seem to come in with a false impression that needs
8 to be corrected. In the instances that we are talking
9 about, they seem to believe that they can barter non-usage
10 for group acceptance. When the group fails to behave in
11 accordance with the newcomer's expectations, they seem
12 to feel it's O.K. to use. The sad thing about this is
13 that it may take them a while to get the real message of
14 our program. If they happen to be addicts, they can die
15 never realizing that recovery is possible.

16 Some of us had thought of ourselves as outgoing,
17 happy-go-lucky people, but we were wrong, and after years
18 of depending on drugs and other people to make our decis-
19 ions, we lost almost all ability to socialize and be
20 comfortable with ourselves.

21 At the end of our using we were consumed with terror
22 and despair. We knew for sure that we were dying and
23 many of our friends were already dead. No one can explain
24 the incredible fact that addicts, hopeless in their addict-
25 ion, can reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

26 Over a period of years, old habit patterns become
27 familiar, and many times the comfortable mode of exist-
28 ence. Our egos were blown out of proportion. We became
29 uncomfortable due to the obsessive nature of our disease.
30 The old comfort associated with using was lost. Life was
31 addiction-a lonely, miserable prison.

32 The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's
33 self for no apparent reason. Compulsion or obsession

drives addicts to the point that there were few things we 1
would not do to obtain our drug. Insanity for us seems 2
to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette. 3
We are forced to play because we have tried and can't 4
stop. 5

We know that we are powerless over an illness which 6
is chronic, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with 7
the obsession and compulsion that comes with the disease. 8
The only alternative is to stop using. When we are 9
willing to follow this course and take advantage of the 10
help available to us, a whole new life opens up. 11

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not a religious, 12
program. The spiritual basis of the program is strong 13
enough to support a person with the disease. As we re- 14
enter society, the Twelve Steps are the roadmap to a 15
successful recovery. Every addict who is clean and with- 16
out a compulsion to use is a miracle. To keep that 17
miracle alive is an ongoing process of awareness. It is 18
important for us to remember that not using is an abnormal 19
state for us. We have to learn to live clean. We need to 20
be honest with ourselves and think of both the negative 21
and positive sides of things. Decision making is a little 22
rough at first. Sticking to and seeing that you have made 23
the decision is the reward. Before we got clean, all our 24
actions were guided by impulse. We seldom thought con- 25
structively, and even if we did, we would say, "the hell 26
with it" and carry through with the negative anyway. It 27
is better for us with practice and the help of our spon- 28
sors and N.A. friends. 29

We realize that we are responsible for the way we 30
feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame, and we 31
are aware that we create the world in which we live. We 32
are products of our own thoughts. 33

1 We have found it essential to accept reality. Since
2 that time we have not found it necessary to use.

3 Reality, as it is, is just fine with us. Without
4 drugs we can function like normal human beings, which
5 means accepting ourselves and the world around us,
6 exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of
7 reality and learn to be grateful for them. We learn new
8 ways to resolve conflicts instead of running from them.
9 We begin to simplify them and we actually look upon them
10 with gratitude as opportunities for progress. They are a
11 part of the real world. We learn to handle problems, not
12 to solve them. Everyone has situations; we have tended
13 to make them problems, like making a mountain out of a
14 mole hill. We really don't have any brilliant answers
15 or solutions, but we can honestly say that this program
16 works! We can stay clean and even enjoy life, remember-
17 ing, "just for today" and not picking up that first fix,
18 pill, drink, or joint.

19 The rewards of staying clean are endless. We used to
20 think life would be boring without drugs. We were really
21 screwed up in our addictions and our concept of what life
22 was really all about. Now that everything is changing
23 and getting better, we give thanks to God and the N.A.
24 program. One member shares that reality is the biggest
25 trip of all.

26 We become aware that many of our feelings were im-
27 mature and based upon pride and ego. As we become more
28 comfortable with ourselves, we appreciate more fully the
29 meaning of living just for today. We get over the guilt
30 of the past and the worries of the future. We enjoy the
31 now: we learn to endure both pain and pleasure. We
32 endure frustration for we know that it will pass. We
33 rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure,

and begin to enjoy doing things for the fun of it, rather
than shying away because we are not perfect.

Interpersonal relationships improve and we become
less sensitive and suspicious. Understanding the meaning
of love, recognizing that we are growing from an immature
"need for love" to a mature "giving of love", allows us
to care about others.

We are not responsible for our disease. We are
responsible for our recovery. We can seek help from
others who are enjoying lives free from having to use.
In time, we find that more is possible in recovery than
we could conceive. Our teachability hinges on our
ability to admit our need for help. This surrender is
the beginning of the basic learning experience that
gives us information on our disease and recovery. Life
is a learning experience. As we begin to apply what we
have learned, our lives begin to change for the better.
No one completely understands this process, but thank God
we do not have to understand it for it to work. We learn
not to question the ways of God. Instead we look into
our actions. Writing down our belief has always helped
many of us examine our feelings. If we have trouble ex-
pressing our belief or writing it down, it is helpful
to make sure we have worked Step One. The ego deflation
of Step One generally opens minds. Faith is the key.
It takes a firm belief in a loving God before we can pos-
sibly begin to turn our wills and lives over to His care.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we have found that a spiritual
experience is necessary to arrest our addiction. This
occurs as we rely on God as we understand Him. The Twelve
Steps chart the course to individual recovery; from the
hazy days of initial surrender to the various levels of
spiritual awakening.

1 We get relief through the Twelve Steps, and sharing
2 with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the
3 promise and hope that they offer. Following the Steps,
4 living just for today, we can maintain an attitude that
5 is essential for us to grow. We move forward in the
6 program, and we are comforted by the Steps. They are
7 suggested only, but they are the principles that made
8 our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essen-
9 tial to the recovery process, simply because they help us
10 to participate in our own recovery. By the grace of God,
11 our actual participation in recovery provides the health
12 we need to respond to life and to arrest the disease of
13 addiction. We are grateful that God provided the steps
14 and that they have been proven as a means to arrest our
15 disease.

16 If we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery
17 after some time clean, we usually have stopped doing one
18 or more of the things that helped us in the earlier
19 stages of our recovery. This can show up as an unexplain-
20 able depression or disorientation. It is really related
21 to a poor spiritual condition and can be remedied by an
22 ongoing application of the Twelve Steps of recovery.

23 From "day one", the Twelve Steps started becoming
24 a part of our lives. At first, we were filled with nega-
25 tivity, and we only allowed the First Step to take hold.
26 Today, we have less fear of going insane or using, than
27 we once did. We realize that those old feelings and
28 fears were a product of our disease, and that real freedom
29 is possible for us now. In time, we lost most of the fear
30 that had us completely within its grasp and we learned to
31 let go of guilt.

32 Our old ways were so self-destructive and egocentric,
33 we hurt ourselves and those we loved. Learning a new way

of living is a blessing from our Higher Power, giving us 1
the ability to explore and discover through feelings. 2
We thank our Higher Power for the love that we receive. 3
We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we keep 4
on finding miracles as we go. 5

The program recommends that we lower the demands on 6
ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. It is 7
also recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp our- 8
selves with a bunch of new responsibilities just because 9
we succeeded in handling a few basics. That way, we 10
experience success at a basic and acceptable level. 11

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on 12
being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom 13
from the desire to use. We find that everyone we meet 14
has something to offer. We are free to receive as well 15
as to give. Opening these doors and entering them be- 16
comes a new adventure in living. Letting go of old 17
ideas and entertaining the new ones brings us to this new 18
way of life. We will know happiness, joy, and freedom. 19
Life is not just a glum lot. 20

An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With grati- 21
tude, clean time is happy and joyous. We remain grateful 22
for all the beautiful things this program has revealed to 23
us. 24

Our experience revealed that the things we are not 25
grateful for could be taken from us. As long as we didn't 26
have something, it would seem wonderful and we would 27
often think if we just had so and so we would be happy. 28
Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to 29
find the rich feelings of satisfaction and comfort beyond 30
our grasp. We can see today that in reality we were 31
taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously 32
thankful for that which God and life had already provided 33
for us. 34

1 There exists no model of the recovered addict.
2 When the drugs go and the addict works the program,
3 wonderful things happen. Lost dreams awaken and new
4 possibilities spring.

5 How many times have we heard something over and
6 over again, until it finally takes root and blossoms.
7 With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier
8 meetings are watered until we can see them grow to harvest.
9 This harvest is a form of spiritual growth. Through
10 listening to the experiences of others and putting the
11 program into action, life becomes beautiful, pleasant, and
12 very exciting! Laughter is a common part of our day.
13 Smiling doesn't hurt anymore, and we can finally look
14 others in the eye and be grateful who we are.

15 Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction
16 that keeps us bouyant today. When we take the action indi-
17 cated in the steps, the result is a healing of our distorted
18 personalities. It is the action that is important, not the
19 result. We leave all results to God. God presents the op-
20 portunity that heals our disease spiritually. After
21 clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to
22 continue applying the principles in order to get to the
23 roots of our disorder.

CHAPTER NINE
JUST FOR TODAY

Tell yourself-
JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery,
living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.
JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A.
who believes in me and wants to help me in my
recovery.
JUST FOR TODAY I have a program. I will try to
follow it to the best of my ability.
JUST FOR TODAY through N.A. I will try to get a
better perspective on my life.
JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid, my thoughts
will be on my new associations, people who are
not using and who have found a new way of life.
So long as I follow that way, I have nothing
to fear.

We knew our lives had become unmanageable, but some 1
of us had a problem admitting the powerlessness over our 2
addiction. When we came to our first meeting it was as 3
though a big weight was lifted from our shoulders, guilt 4
feelings rolled off and a feeling of peace came over us, 5
as we realized that with our surrender to our Higher 6
Power, would come the help we so desperately needed. We 7
also felt the great feeling of warmth and love that came 8
from the group. For the first time in many months, we 9
were able to relax when we heard that we couldn't control 10
our addictions. 11

The principles of surrender, admission of responsibil- 12
ities, improving faith, and prayer and meditation, guide 13

1 us into a way of life in which all our resources center in
2 God, become available to us.

3 A great many addicts have a hard time with acceptance
4 in recovery. For so long, we have wanted and demanded
5 that things go our way. When we came into the program of
6 Narcotics Anonymous we were asked to learn to be patient
7 and accepting. This is a critical point in our recovery.
8 Not learning to accept is to continue to manage and con-
9 trol. We know from our past experiences that our way of
10 doing things did not work. When we refuse to practice
11 acceptance we are, in effect, denying our faith in a
12 Higher Power. This can lead to many problems and fail-
13 ures.

14 Any addict clean, without the compulsion to use, is
15 a miracle. We keep this miracle alive in ongoing recovery
16 with positive attitudes and awareness involving personal
17 growth. If after a period of time we find ourselves in
18 trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing
19 one or more of the things which helped us in the earlier
20 stages of recovery.

21 This lack of daily maintenance can show up in many
22 ways. As our lives become more comfortable, many of us
23 lapse into spiritual complacency, and we find ourselves
24 in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we came.
25 We forget we are given only a daily reprieve. We must ask
26 for help each morning and remember to thank God at night.
27 If we do not maintain our spiritual condition daily, some
28 of us find the resulting pain and confusion lead to a
29 return to drugs and our old way of life. Some have made
30 it back from relapses...many have not.

31 What are you going to do when you have to face your
32 first crisis? When the time comes we hope you will be well
33 equipped with the tolls and the principles of the program
34 of Narcotics Anonymous. The enemy we have to fight is our

own self-destructiveness. When we begin to work the
program, we will like ourselves better. Much of the
loneliness and fear will have been replaced by the love
of the Fellowship and the security of being a part of a
new way of life. It is important for us to remember to
take it easy.

We have found through experience that you can not be
too dumb for this program, but you can be too smart for it--
too smart to allow it to work for you in your life. Sur-
render is brought about by suffering. Having been beaten
by drugs we are powerless, not powerful. As powerless
people, we should realize that we cannot stay clean on our
own resources. Have we not tried before? We need to tap
into the group's resources and surrender our way to their
way.

As a result of working the Twelve Steps, regularly
attending meetings, and practicing these principles in all
our affairs, a spiritual awakening happens in our lives.
God consciousness fills the empty place inside that nothing
ever could before. We know a true peace. Circumstances
which used to baffle us no longer do. We come to dwell in
the fullness and abundance of life as a direct result of
having worked the Steps and maintaining our spiritual
condition. We find it necessary to continue to do so on a
daily basis.

These are guidelines and suggestions. We have found
they work for us. This is how we maintain our spiritual
condition. We never have to be lonely again. Our Higher
Power is accessible to us at all times. In the Fellowship
of Narcotics Anonymous we have more friends than we ever
believed possible. Finally, we are fulfilled and have come
to know a real peace and a true sense of self-worth.

We have stressed that going to meetings, working the
Twelve Steps, practicing these principles in all our affairs

1 and remembering to ask God for help in the morning and to
2 thank Him at night, only worked for one day. On those
3 days that we don't continue our daily maintenance we don't
4 have a good day. Sometimes, after a few days of neglect-
5 ing spiritual maintenance, things begin to really get out
6 of hand in our lives. This is, hpefully, when our pain
7 motivates us to renew our daily spiritual maintenance.

8 We need to be aware that although the spiritual life
9 is the answer to all our problems, we live in today's
10 world. If our spirituality cannot help us today, then we
11 need to re-evaluate what we term spiritual. We need not
12 immobilize ourselves with constant concern over our spirit-
13 ual pride in this manner and it keeps us humble. We be-
14 lieve that if it's not practical, it's not spiritual.

15 We believe, that as recovering addicts, we have a lot
16 to be grateful for. When things don't work for us, it is
17 a direct result of our own self will.

18 Our new found way of life may have its problems.
19 When we ask for help, the road ahead won't be so rocky.
20 Sometimes, after turning over our will and life to our
21 Higher Power, we choose to take it back and begin managing
22 our lives again. The principle of surrender, is admission
23 of responsibility when we are at fault, and practicing
24 faith.

25 Even though, by the grace of God, we have been given
26 an answer to our problems, we often take things back into
27 our hands. Again and again, we must ask God to do for us
28 what we cannot do for ourselves. How many times had we
29 looked at a job well done, and said, "See what a good job
30 I've done?"...forgetting where the ability really came
31 from.

32 We begin to see how only our Higher Power can restore
33 us to sanity when the obsession to use surfaces and self
34 will runs riot. We gradually turn our will and life over

to the care of God as we understand Him. We no longer feel
alone; we have found a partner in our Higher Power, who is
with us all the time. We cease trying to control, and
surrender. Gradually, as we become more and more God-
centered than self centered, our despair turns to hope.
Self-pity and resentments are replaced by tolerance and
faith.

If our surrender to our disease is complete, the rest
of our recovery is dependent upon our belief in a loving
God of our own understanding. Remember, as recovering
addicts, our fellow members love us and will not fail to
respond to our sincere desire for help. We believe God
works the same way.

We find that we receive guidance when we ask for
knowledge of God's will for us. This is the emotional
stability we so badly need. We are given the freedom,
serenity, and happiness we had so desperately sought.
Before going to sleep, we take a few moments out of our
routine to thank God for keeping us clean that day and
for helping us with our living problems.

With our Higher Power guiding us, we may never again
have to deal with using, but we will always have to deal
with staying clean.

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive,
and if we don't take the time to appreciate both, chances
are we will miss something that will help us grow. As we
begin to live in the present, burdens of the past and the
anxieties of the future slip away. We are granted the
serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and thus
lose our quickness to anger and sensitivity to criticism.

Normal living is possible. The Twelve Steps of
Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process
established in our normal living. Our recovery is depend-
ent on our belief in a loving God who cares for us, and will

1 do for us whatever we found impossible to do ourselves.

2 Resentments are one of the biggest road blocks to
3 recovery. They deaden our spiritual growth. Resentments
4 are a direct result of our self will acting out its most
5 extreme nature--violence. We must let go, with love, and
6 ask God to relieve us of the burden of self will. Anger
7 and fear will fall by the wayside.

8 Change involves the unknown, the great source of fear.
9 The same Power that has helped us deal with our obsession
10 will be the guide and source of courage when we ask for it.
11 The wisdom to know the difference involves growth in the
12 program. Regular attendance at meetings is our best baro-
13 meter in this respect.

14 The Fellowship, after a meeting, is a good opportunity
15 to share things we didn't get to discuss at the meeting.
16 It is also a good time to talk one-on-one with our sponsors.
17 When we talk about our questions and answers, many parts of
18 the message surface for the first time and become clearer
19 to us. These initial ventures into the realm of sharing
20 freely are the beginnings of honesty, open mindedness, and
21 willingness as a way of life.

22 These principles for living will guide us in recovery
23 when we learn how to use them. We succeed in life each time
24 we practice them. We no longer need to make excuses for
25 who we are. New ideas are available to us.

26 Honesty, the search for the truth, is our most diffi-
27 cult and yet most challenging objective. We may not be able
28 to maintain rigorous honesty, but we must always strive for
29 it. Honesty must start at home. If we are not first honest
30 with ourselves, we can't be honest with others. The best
31 way to practice honesty is by taking a daily inventory.

32 Our life is a diary wherein we mean to write one story,
33 and quite often write another. It is when we compare the
34 two that we have our most humble hour.

It is important while doing our daily inventory that 1
we remember to look at our assets as well as our defects. 2
So often, we get caught up in striving for growth and 3
eliminating our defects, that we forget about our assets. 4
We have found when we focus on our assets our defects 5
will also change. Our inventory allows us to realize our 6
daily growth. 7

Rigorously practicing the few simple guidelines for 8
living in this chapter, we succeed daily. Although daily 9
inventory may have a fair share of red ink, these guide- 10
lines, when practiced, give us sufficient black ink to 11
balance the day's ledger. 12

JUST FOR TODAY, WE WILL LIVE!!!! 13

CHAPTER TEN
MORE WILL BE REVEALED

1 As our recoveries progressed, we became increasingly
2 more aware of ourselves and our world. Our needs and wants,
3 our assets and liabilities were revealed to us. We came to
4 realize that we had no power to change the outside world;
5 we could only change ourselves. As recovering addicts, we
6 found that without our drugs, we hurt. The program of
7 Narcotics Anonymous provided an opportunity for us to relieve
8 our pain by applying spiritual principles.

9 The N.A. program provides a healthy environment for
10 growth. As a Fellowship, we love and cherish one another,
11 supporting our new way of life together. We do this because
12 of our common desire to stay clean.

13 We are encouraged to work the Twelve Steps, practice
14 the Twelve Traditions, go to meetings, get a sponsor, find
15 a home group and ask for help. We place principles before
16 personalities. We work our own program and we do it for our-
17 selves. The Steps are there for us to work and the people
18 are there to help us. We use the tools of the program to
19 shape our inner being. The slogans: Just For Today; An
20 Addict Alone Is In Bad Company; If It Works, Don't Fix It;
21 The Lie Is Dead; Clean and Serene; are simple reminders we
22 use to help keep us on the right track.

23 While using, we didn't know who we were, or where we
24 were going. We were constantly being deceitful, lying to

others and ourselves, and closing people off. We came in knowing only what we didn't want. By coming to our first meeting, we admitted our ways of dealing with life didn't work. Chemicals always had the last word. In other words, we were unable to deal with life on its own terms. Through working the program, we are rebuilding our disordered and fractured personalities.

Any addict is welcome regardless of their drug of choice. We cannot afford the luxury of arrogance in any form. Within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, there is no caste system relating to drug of choice. We believe that chemical dependency in any form is addiction and we encourage the addict to seek whatever recovery works best for them.

We found that forming sweeping opinions and generalizations with limited insight was dangerous. We found our own place in the world and took it. The ability to accept our place and be grateful for it is very special. Many of us have had great opportunities in our lives but were faced with a baffling inability to accept them or make the most of them. We have found a safe and certain usefulness in our new way of life. The old rules no longer apply and we can live in peace and harmony.

Often it means simply listening to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think would benefit others or ourselves and acting on them spontaneously. We are then able to make decisions based on principles that have real value to ourselves.

In N.A. we begin new lives, and we discovered a need for balance. Where we were excessive, we learned moderation; where we were weak, we grew strong. Balance comes to us gradually in ways we can accept. Sometimes these ways appear to be coincidental and we recognize them as the grace of God only in time. Coincidences are miracles in which God

1 chooses to remain anonymous.

2 When we pray for something, we have spiritually pre-
3 pared ourselves for the realization of our prayers. Know-
4 ledge of God's will for us guides us to make wise choices
5 when we pray. If our Higher Power forced his goodness on
6 us, we could never learn to distinguish good from bad, and
7 enjoy the happiness of being a spiritual person.

8 As we grow, we become more aware of the key to willing-
9 ness. Willingness lets us relax and do what we can, just
10 for today, to improve our lives in any area. When we are
11 unwilling, we have to fight and constantly deny the need for
12 improvement. This attitude leads to even greater problems.
13 Today we have learned with God's help, to face each problem
14 as it arises. God never gives us too much to handle in any
15 twenty-four period.

16 We are grateful for open-mindedness. Open-mindedness
17 opens the door for new ideas, from all areas in our lives.
18 Through active listening we can hear things that will stay
19 with us for the future. This ability is God-given and grows
20 with us. Life takes on new meaning when we leave ourselves
21 open to experience this gift. To be able to receive we
22 must give and more importantly we have to receive in order
23 to have something to give. Open-mindedness becomes an
24 admirable quality for which we strive.

25 In recovery, we strive for an attitude of gratitude.
26 We feel grateful for ongoing God-consciousness. Whenever
27 we confront a difficulty that we do not think we can handle,
28 we have learned to pray that God will do for us what we
29 cannot do for ourselves.

30 Remember, we are all in this together. None of us are
31 too good or too bad to improve. We are not here to get good;
32 we are here to recover. Help is there only if we reach for
33 it. We had only to get clean, open our minds and hearts to
34 be free to live. Humility is a fact of ongoing recovery.

Watching others grow in recovery increases our capacity for 1
tolerance towards members who seem to need growth in many 2
areas. We learn that the principle of personality change 3
will transform them from caterpillars to butterflies or 4
allow us to see that they were butterflies all along. 5
We have seen many areas of personal and seemingly perma- 6
nent difficulties yield to the ongoing practice of doing 7
what we can. When we do what we can, God takes care of the 8
rest. 9

Surrender to the program of Narcotics Anonymous is an 10
ongoing thing. In a sense the newcomer surrenders to the 11
wisdom of those who have gone before and those with time 12
clean surrender to the spirit and vitality of the new. 13

The opportunity to witness recovery of a suffering addict 14
is one of the greatest experiences this life has to offer 15
us. We are always willing to help. We are willing to go 16
anywhere at anytime to help the suffering addict. Having 17
been down the road, we understand the problems of a recover- 18
ing addict. As we look back, we are grateful for the events 19
in our lives that have brought us here. 20

We want constantly to remind the newcomer and our- 21
selves that there are plenty of people ready and able to 22
help. What recovering addicts want most is to feel good 23
about themselves. If we become self-destructive, we die. 24
Today we have real feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, 25
sadness and friendship--not the old drug induced feelings. 26
We heard a man say, "Everytime he lost faith in another 27
human being, he died a little bit". The program is giving 28
us so much belief that we want to live again. We have to 29
surrender at each stage of recovery in this program. The 30
only way to win a losing battle is to surrender. 31

For most of us, N.A. was our last hope. We were so 32
afraid of being rejected here that we were reluctant to 33
open up. We were all shocked to hear others speak openly 34

1 of things we had done in our own past that were shameful,
2 embarrassing and humiliating. In the beginning, we were all
3 frightened to speak freely about ourselves. There is nothing
4 between us but that first pill, fix, drink or toke. At one
5 time we were not willing to seek help and were so close-
6 minded. Living in a world of insanity is difficult to
7 understand for those who haven't experienced it. The old
8 ideas and our addiction kept us from obtaining a new way
9 of life and kept us deep in our addiction.

10 In time, we may find ourselves with old ideas on the
11 program. Our roots of recovery are important, but in on-
12 going recovery we need to constantly review our feelings
13 and thinking if we are to stay fresh and in touch with the
14 growth of N.A. as a whole. This freshness may well be the
15 key to ongoing recovery. We are each others eyes and ears;
16 when we do something wrong, our fellow recovering addicts
17 help us help ourselves by showing us what we cannot see.

18 When a newcomer admits his powerlessness, he opens
19 himself up to the Fellowship. We are responsible for making
20 him feel loved and supported. We all remember the painful
21 feelings of guilt, remorse, shame and self-loathing. We
22 can share our experience that these feelings were gradually
23 removed by working the program.

24 We realize that we cannot do it alone. We begin to
25 look at our brothers and sisters and become willing to do
26 whatever is in our power to give them what we have. We have
27 hope for we know that a better day is coming and we have
28 love. Our Fellowship grows and keeps on growing like our
29 belief in our Higher Power, we cherish this experience.

30 Life has many brick walls for us even though we are
31 clean. If we can see these dead-end paths, we won't feel
32 the need to pursue them. Some of our hopes and dreams made
33 us self-destructive. We fell short of our goals. We
34 figured we were bad people if bad things happened to us.

Other roadblocks in our path included our reluctance to pray, 1
our laxiness, and unworked Steps. There were a lot of 2
people we did not see eye to eye with, especially when 3
our character defects and personality differences got in 4
the way. Some of us used this rationalization to stay away 5
from the Fellowship and use. We were dying and could not 6
stand being around people we thought were full of hypocrisy. 7
The people in the Fellowship were staying clean and had a 8
chance to change and grow. What chance did we have? How 9
could we grow if we couldn't even stay clean? Some of these 10
roadblocks led some of our fellow addicts to relapse. Un- 11
fortunately, some of them never returned. They were destined 12
to die using. 13

In N.A. we have feelings we never dreamed of having. We 14
are able to entertain ourselves today. We do things beyond 15
our wildest imagining. Some of us take on new hobbies, join 16
sports teams, become adventurous and do things we always 17
wanted to do but couldn't because of drugs. Free from drugs, 18
we can have good clean fun. 19

When we came into the Fellowship, one of our biggest 20
reservations or fears was the thought of how boring life 21
would be without drugs. Our fears were short-lived. We 22
soon found that living clean was not only fun, but that it 23
was excitingly simple. 24

Talking and sharing experiences with our fellow addicts 25
was a pleasurable experience. The simple games and pleas- 26
ures that life offers, which had been lost in our using days 27
were rediscovered. Playing ball, going to parks, hiking, 28
things we just didn't have time for when we were using. 29
Being clean is anything but dull and boring. 30

By living clean we are giving up using. We are giving 31
up the right to be close-minded, selfish, dishonest, hateful 32
and generally unhappy. And what are we giving up all these 33
precious things for? Simple, unconditional happiness. 34

1 Having fun and being happy doesn't have to be searched
2 for; it surrounds us. It is all there. So just do it. Be
3 clean, have fun and be happy.

4 In N.A. we do not mope around crying because we're
5 addicts. As a matter of fact, it is seldom that we mope
6 because there is always a friend around to lift our spirits.
7 God has restored us to sanity but that does not mean we are
8 boring or prudish. We are a group of life lovers and we
9 used to try too hard to have fun. We exhausted ourselves
10 trying to figure out what to do. Now it's very natural
11 and spontaneous. We used to be afraid of going insane---
12 now we enjoy ourselves. This is a big change from the wild
13 parties we used to attend while we were using and the "fun"
14 we used to have. It is important for us to have fun in our
15 recovery without the dying. Many of us would not have con-
16 tinued in Narcotics Anonymous had we not been able to enjoy
17 it.

18 Many newcomers are amazed by their first dance or party
19 to find members laughing and dancing like high school kids.
20 It helps break the ice of isolation. Many newcomers have
21 the problem of their faces hurting from the unaccustomed
22 smiling. A sense of renewal pervades conventions and get-
23 togethers which draw together members and old friends from
24 different areas.

25 Complacency does not go with recovery. The deadly and
26 insidious nature of our disease can disguise itself as
27 boredom or superiority and generate the old "apart from"
28 feelings. Separation from the atmosphere of recovery and
29 the spirit of service to others slows our spiritual growth
30 and can threaten relapse. This book is not the final
31 answer to addiction. The Spirit of our Fellowship is
32 constantly leading us into new awareness. Recovery is a
33 journey, not a goal. This is a life time school; our
34 graduates get loaded. We have attempted to record a way of

life which includes many addicts from many areas. Our 1
program could not encompass so many types of addicts from 2
differing backgrounds if not for the spiritual nature of 3
our groups. The spiritual truths at the heart of our 4
program do not change but the edges are constantly growing. 5
On the practical level, adjustment occurs because what is 6
appropriate to one phase of our growth may not fit another. 7
Vigilance is required to maintain the atmosphere of recovery 8
as a small group grows in size from three members at the 9
weekly meeting to three hundred. Concern and attention on 10
the part of trusted servants is required at every meeting, 11
group and service committee. Spiritual vigilance is re- 12
quired to apply our Twelve Traditions and to bring up at 13
times the ties which bind us together. Complacency has no 14
place in all this; openness, freedom, and spirit are the 15
marks of recovery. It is this spirit which will guide our 16
ongoing process as members and as a Fellowship. Ours is a 17
message of the Spirit, not of words. Words can describe 18
the process but not explain it completely. Experience alone 19
can make it real to us. Surrender to the disease begins our 20
recovery, surrender to the basic mystery of recovery sustains 21
it. No one we know understands the program totally and the 22
program has defied reduction to formula by the most deter- 23
mined efforts of some of the most skilled rationalizers in the 24
world. No sooner we make a breakthrough in terms of personal 25
growth than we realize how much more we need to grow so that 26
we may remain clean. 27

Our conceptions of fun have changed drastically since 28
we surrendered to N.A. as a whole. We can enjoy simple 29
things in life, like fellowship with other addicts, whereas 30
we once isolated ourselves. This was especially true after 31
we received help through N.A. and fellow addicts. 32

We enjoy sharing experiences, strength, and hope for 33
we know that we can't keep what we have unless we give it 34

1 away. Through N.A. and the Twelve Steps, we are able to
2 grasp a new understanding of fun. We realize we don't
3 have to create fun--we just live it. It happens to us
4 as a result of complete abstinence from all drugs. As
5 we look back, we are grateful to enjoy life, because
6 it's so unlike the events in our lives that brought us
7 here. When we used, we thought we had fun and straight
8 people were deprived of it. God helps us to live to the
9 fullest, without forgetting who we are, and what our pur-
10 pose is. We have learned how to love ourselves and others
11 and not to be so afraid. We find that God usually grants
12 us the ability to see the obvious. Since we've been
13 clean, we have found joy doesn't come from material things
14 but is within ourselves if sought. We find when we lose
15 self-will we lead richer, happier and much more fun lives.
16 When there are no longer conditions put on our lives,
17 everything that we need is given to us in order to live
18 today. We do not forget to live each day to its fullest,
19 as a gift from our Higher Power, and just share, care, love,
20 and live the N.A. way.

21 A day at a time we have no way of knowing what will
22 happen to us. This is why we live in today. However, it
23 has been very funny how things have worked out for us!
24 We find that if we would have written a list of things
25 that we wanted upon entering the program we would have been
26 cheating ourselves.

27 It has been our experience that by clean living and
28 working the Steps, our dreams have come true. We do not
29 mean we became great leaders, champion race drivers or rock
30 stars, though some of us may have. What we mean it that
31 our deep inner dreams come true for us in recovery.

32 Things that we had given up hope on a long time ago
33 come true. Like being happy most of the time or seeing our-
34 selves succeed in some areas where we had failed miserably

before. 1

In our experience, the Twelve Steps give us a way of 2
life which does more than keep us off drugs. Not only is 3
this way of life superior to the old using life, it is 4
superior to any life that we can conceive. So, when we 5
say that clean in the program is our dreams come true, we 6
can speak from our experience. Before 1953, addicts did 7
not recover except in special cases. They did not dream 8
that recovery was even possible. We died, went insane 9
and were locked up. Unfortunately, too many of us are 10
being locked up still, and being killed by a disease. 11
Our small population today numbers twenty thousand. 12

We have a much loved member who says to newcomers 13
with a twinkle in his eye, "Just stick around and watch 14
the miracles happen". And they will. 15

Deepening ties are even now being forged so that no 16
addict need ever die seeking help. To us this is truly 17
exciting. The possibility of being used as an instrument 18
to save lives is exhilarating to us. 19

When times are hard for us in the Fellowship, we can 20
ask our Higher Power, as we understand Him, to guide us as 21
to what to do. He reveals Himself to us a little at a time. 22

In our recoveries we have witnessed God's healing 23
powers take a dying addict and turn them into a new person 24
with a new, totally different life. 25

Things we never dreamed of become true. We find our- 26
selves daring to care and love and with love, all things 27
are possible. We find ourselves advancing as human beings 28
along spiritual lines and doing a great service. 29

We get the very finest friends. These are some things 30
many of us could not conceive of. Before, we thought in 31
terms of self-centered materialism that could not possibly 32
bring us happiness. Now we live with a new outlook, that 33
of caring and sharing the N.A. way. 34

1 We are surrounded by like-minded addicts, who once were
2 at the depths of misery and despair, and now serious about
3 their own recovery and helping the suffering addict.

4 We are living and enjoying life without drugs. At
5 times we look in the mirror and find it all so hard to
6 believe. The great fact is that it's O.K. It does get
7 better and we never have to be alone again.

8 We have, in recovery, experienced difficult times when
9 we could not decide our next move. The truth has been re-
10 vealed to us. In meditation we may concentrate on a dream
11 of service for our fellow man and find that the rest is
12 just willingness and foot work. More will be revealed.
13 It takes work to uncover it but it is, we believe, the one
14 thing worth working for--Twelve Steps of recovery.

15 Today we are free from the obsession to use compul-
16 sively even when we are beaten. We are free to live as we
17 see fit without drugs. The ability to accept God's will
18 and feeling serene inside is freedom for us. Faith has
19 replaced our fear and has given us a freedom from our-
20 selves. Today we have the freedom of choice.

21 The program of N.A. is truly a program of freedom.
22 N.A. has given us back the freedom that we lost when we
23 turned to drugs in our search for freedom. We had believed
24 that drugs were the answer. When we were under the control
25 of our addictions we had given up all of our freedom to
26 choose--the only choice left to us were jails, institutions
27 or death. At last, with the help of the Fellowship and
28 our Higher Power, we have regained our freedom.

29 When we first came to the program, many of us felt
30 defeated, beaten and ashamed. As a newcomer it is some-
31 times hard to see that through our defeat and surrender
32 we had regained some control of our lives once more.
33 Through our freedom we begin taking responsibility for our
34 lives again. In our freedom we have found that our dreams

come true, if we choose to make them happen.	1
Through the freedom in our new lives we are finally	2
able to see the special qualities that we possess as indi-	3
viduals--qualities that we used to envy in others--never	4
realizing the potential within ourselves.	5

We have attempted to make this collection of personal stories as representative as possible of the Fellowship as a whole. We hope that each of you can identify, in some way, with this selection.

We have taken the stories from the "White Book" and added several more from the material available to us. Each story was selected by the group consciousness of the story review workshops at WLC-3.

Prior to final editing of the First Edition of our book, we hope to see the stories expanded to include a comprehensive cross-section of "The Addict." We encourage you to submit your story, if you do not find it already here. We are aware that this sampling may not be truly representative.

We feel, however, that we have done our best with a difficult task. Every story available was good, meaningful and worthwhile. Regretably, neither time, space nor money permitted the inclusion of every story in this review copy.

Faithfully,

WLC-III

At Memphis, TN

February 8, 1981

A LITTLE GIRL GROWS UP

1 I was born the youngest, to a family of eight, on Christ-
2 mas Eve. I heard all of my life how my coming into this
3 world was a special occasion, as a result of my birth. I too
4 thought it was a celebration, and continued to for the next
5 26 years. My parents were close to 40 when I came, so natur-
6 ally I felt like a grandchild. Every day to me was supposed
7 to be special. I demanded and got all the attention I needed
8 and wanted. My conception of myself at this time was that I
9 was to be taken care of the rest of my life, and that all I
10 had to do was be pretty and smile and the rest would be a
11 piece of cake. I put the responsibility of my existence on
12 everyone but me and if I wasn't happy, they weren't doing
13 their job. Of course when things went my way, I took all the
14 credit. To me, no one knew how to make me happy. I was con-
15 stantly filled with frustration and anxiety because nothing I
16 did seemed to get me to that place called "Happiness."

17 I was brought up in a religious atmosphere, but I never
18 seemed to be able to grasp what it all meant. I couldn't under-
19 stand how God could love me one minute but the next strike me
20 down to hell. This understanding of mine caused me to rebel
21 against all that I was taught to be "sinful". I was deter-
22 mined to prove that if I danced, smoked, cut my hair, or wore
23 pants, I would not go to hell. I began to do all these "sins"
24 in Junior High and ended up pregnant at 15. I did not want to
25 get married and be a housewife. My first reaction was to have
26 my baby and raise it myself, but that didn't go off very well,
27 so I got married and had my child at 16. You see, again, I
28 didn't want to take the responsibility of my actions, so I
29 went into the marriage bitter but determined to make it work.

My husband and I were two kids playing house. We began 1
going out to clubs drinking and living it up. My thinking 2
at this time was that I had found it, this was the life! 3
Right before our third wedding anniversary, my husband was 4
shot and killed at one of those live-it-up nightclubs. Well, 5
needless to say, I really had a good excuse now. I now had 6
another reason to cop-out on this big bad world. I honestly 7
felt that mean God up in the clouds was really paying me 8
back for all the sins I had committed. I hated Him! I'd lay 9
awake many a night in agony wondering if God and my husband 10
could see and hear the pain of loneliness I felt. I never 11
got an answer. 12

After my husband's death, his best friend and I began 13
spending time together crying and laughing at memories of the 14
past. Not too long after this I was introduced to L.S.D. My 15
first trip was spent in the floor with me crying and wishing 16
my old man hadn't died on me. But the bad trip didn't seem 17
to bother me because somewhere in my mind I knew I had found 18
something new--a new world, maybe "happiness". I was con- 19
stantly in search for relief from the pain and about this time 20
another man came along, except he was different because he had 21
cash. This man saw a scared little girl in agony and wanted 22
to buy the hurt away. Well, I tell you it didn't take me very 23
long at all to grab on to that and hold on till I used him 24
completely up. With the access to so much cash it was just a 25
matter of time before I was burnt out on all the pills I was 26
taking, the high just wasn't the same any more. Again, I 27
began a search for escape from myself and I found it, the 28
needle! 29

My first shot was ecstasy. The feeling that ran through 30
my body and veins when I got off was one of contentment and 31
exhilaration. I had never dreamed anything could feel so 32
good. During this time of discovering the new highs, I was 33
trying to keep two men happy. Also, my sugar daddy was con- 34
stantly forking out cash and I was forking out lies. My old 35

1 man and I really thought we were something; having all that
2 cash to buy all the dope we needed or wanted. But there was
3 something wrong that I couldn't quite grasp and that was
4 that I was slowly running out of whatever it took for me to
5 lead a double life. For about a year I shot dope for fun.
6 My feelings were, "If it feels good do it!" It wasn't very
7 long before the needle had taken full control of me--no more
8 was I in command. This dependency led me to be very care-
9 less and the next thing I knew, I was busted twice in a
10 period of a few months. I'll never forget the feeling I had
11 as I was being photographed and fingerprinted. All I wanted
12 to do was go back and run-up. My mind and body were so
13 screwed up, I wasn't even aware that I had a daughter at
14 home waiting for me.

15 Someone told me that if I went to a hospital and quit
16 using that I could probably beat the case. So that's exactly
17 what I went for and that was it! I knew I had been doing too
18 much dope but I thought I just needed a rest. I ended up
19 having my friends bring me dope through the windows and in
20 the meantime proceeded to drive my family crazy. My husband
21 was sentenced and I got 2 years probation.

22 Well, that really did it! Again God had taken away my
23 reason for living. Before my husband left I made promises
24 that I would be faithful, save money that my sugar daddy gave
25 me, and only shoot dope occasionally. I was only able to keep
26 one, and that was be faithful. I literally stayed in my bed-
27 room and bathroom for two years waiting for the day my hus-
28 band would come home and make me happy again. But there was
29 a problem. The needle slowly became my friend, lover, and
30 my reason for living. I lost every glimpse of self-respect
31 I had left. I spent hours in the bathroom sticking and cry-
32 ing because a piece of plastic owned me now and there was
33 nothing I could do. As a result of getting myself off I began
34 to "miss" a lot, and those "misses" turned to infection and
35 sores from my head to my toes. I spent a lot of time tell-
36 ing my daughter and parents that those sores on me were just

boils--how very sick I had become. I had lost everything. I 1
was a zombie with no feelings for anyone or anything except 2
my rush. I remember thinking that when my husband came home 3
I could quit and everything would be alright. It wasn't. I 4
tried staying clean for a while working in a furniture store 5
my father had started for us, but nothing worked. Before long 6
I was at it again and by this time I was burnt out completely. 7
There were no veins left so that I had to go in about an inch 8
and a half to find one and that nearly took my legs for good. 9
All this time I was trying to be a mother, wife, and girl- 10
friend. I'd dress myself up for maybe a day, put on my mask 11
and perform my duties, but it never did work. I had no moti- 12
vation to help myself for anyone, not even me. 13

During the worst time of my addiction my thoughts were 14
never suicide, I just wanted to sleep till it all went away. 15
My old ideas told me it was a "sin" to take my own life. I 16
couldn't really see, but I was slowly doing just that. As 17
deep as I now was into my habit it wasn't long before I was 18
selling everything. I had run out of lies to tell my money 19
man, so next went my house, cars, and jewelry, but I didn't 20
care, I had to have my dope. There were people reaching out 21
to me with all they had but all I could do, when someone 22
tried to get close to this scared little girl was shoot more 23
dope. I didn't have any ideas. I had no strength to get out 24
of it all. It wasn't long till I got busted again. This 25
time it was different. It was the end for me. I had never 26
been one to assist cops in anything but now the running was 27
over. I knew it. I told them exactly what I had done and 28
I didn't really care what the consequences were, I just 29
wanted out. I was picked up at a drugstore and taken to jail. 30
I was so messed up that nothing mattered, nothing! I was un- 31
able to walk. Both my legs were bent from infection to where 32
I couldn't straighten them out. I was carried by the nurses 33
before the judge to have my bond set. As foggy headed as I 34
was, I'll never forget the voices of disgust and pity as I 35
was carried into the courtroom. Something inside my sick 36

1 mind and heart told me it was all over, finally! I suddenly
2 realized how close I was to death or even, prison.

3 Without my knowledge my father had found a lawyer to get me
4 out. The nurses informed me that I was on my way to a hospi-
5 tal, police escort and all. Before I left the jail my lawyer
6 arrived. He came in, introduced himself, and then proceeded
7 to tell me the most frightening words I'd ever heard, "It's
8 time for you to grow up!" He told me the only reason he was
9 taking my case was because he hated to see a grown man cry and
10 my father had sat in his office and cried like a baby, plead-
11 ing with him to please help his little girl this last time.
12 He informed me there would be no more calling my parents,
13 brothers and sisters, and sugar daddy for help. I was to
14 stand on my own two feet for once and take the responsibility
15 for my actions. I had never been so scared in my life. The
16 things he told me scared me more than anything, even my arrest,
17 and losing my daughter again. I didn't know where to begin.
18 I had no idea of how to grow up and no idea of what he really
19 meant, except that it had to be done somehow.

20 When I arrived at the hospital, I was informed that there
21 would be no phone calls in and no phone calls out. I couldn't
22 even talk to my parents. I didn't like to too much but I knew
23 I had better listen for the first time in my life. My lawyer
24 was the only visitor I got for the first few days. He really
25 helped me laugh at myself and the condition I was in. I was
26 lying in bed one day feeling sorry for myself and counting the
27 scars, I had twenty-two. He looked at me real serious, and said,
28 "I know what we'll do, we'll paint you green and play dot to
29 dot!" I had never imagined, in my serious and condemning mind,
30 that I could ever laugh at myself in a forgiving way. Before
31 if I laughed at myself, I was judging myself for being such a
32 failure at life. Now there seemed to be some relief and hope,
33 nothing was that bad any more.

34 My next trip was to a treatment center, and this time I was
35 determined to make this thing work. I spent a lot of that time
36 preparing myself to go to prison because there just didn't seem

to be a way out of it. My lawyer told me there would have 1
to be a miracle somewhere, because I'd really gone my limit. 2
I knew this, people just didn't get out of three narcotic 3
busts (including fraud) without ratting and without going to 4
jail. The song "Why Me Lord" came into my head, while I was 5
there. I had begun to know what gratitude was. My prayers 6
were limited to just, "Help me". I didn't know what I was 7
really praying to, but I had to for the first time. I 8
couldn't carry the burden alone anymore. These people around 9
me were telling me I had to believe in something bigger and 10
greater than me or I would die. I could look in their eyes 11
and see that they must be telling the truth because something 12
was there and I wanted it. For the first time I was told I 13
would have my own God that could love and understand me. I 14
could have a God that no one else had if I chose to do so. 15
Wow, what a relief this was to me. I no longer had certain 16
rules and regulations to belong somewhere. My God and I could 17
make up our own. Now I was beginning to know what faith was 18
and I had taken the first three big steps of my life. My 19
heart told me now that whatever happened in my life would be 20
God's will and that my worries of wondering what to do could 21
be taken away, if I just prayed and believed. It all seemed 22
so simple to do, but my will just wasn't ready to give up. 23
I kep telling myself, "You've made a decision, stick with it 24
for once and see what happens." The words of the third step, 25
"Made a decision" scared me because I didn't know what "deci- 26
sion" was. I had never decided on anything, I just reacted. 27

To the best of my ability I stayed with the third step 28
throughout my time at the treatment center. Little did I know 29
my next trip would be to a halfway house in Birmingham. My 30
counselor recommended that I go, so I could get some time 31
behind me and see what it was really like to be clean for 32
more than thirty days. When she told me the name of the 33
place was St. Ann's, I freaked. I thought there would be a 34
bunch of sisters in robes greeting me. I couldn't conceive 35
living with eighteen women under one roof for too long, but 36

1 I knew I had to go. To my surprise I was greeted by several
2 lovely women that were not nuns, but alcoholics. I knew I had
3 come to a place of love, acceptance and understanding beyond
4 my comprehension. Those women told me everything was going to
5 be alright and I believed this with all my heart.

6 My stay there began with mixed emotions. I often wanted
7 to leave, get my little girl and take off somewhere to get
8 away from all the pain of reality. I also read a great deal
9 from the A.A. Big Book and it told me it was time to take the
10 Fourth Step. I spent numerous hours writing about what had
11 happened in my life, the pain I had felt, and the pain I had
12 caused. I wrote about everything! There was a great deal of
13 pain and embarrassment involved, but also an overwhelming feel-
14 ing of relief, that I was finally able to get out all the pain
15 that had been with me all my life. To look at me on a piece
16 of paper, and realize how responsible I really was, just veri-
17 fied the fact to me that there would be no more running. The
18 old me was finally beginning to die. I began to see that I
19 really didn't deserve all the punishment I had bestowed upon
20 myself and that maybe I was worthy of that thing called "happi-
21 ness".

22 I spent several months on the Fourth Step and when it came
23 time to do the Fifth there was no planning done on my part, it
24 was just time to do it. The only way I could have held on to
25 all that garbage would have been for me to start rationalizing
26 my actions again, and the thought of losing the honesty given
27 to me and what it had done for me! To my astonishment, the
28 woman I had done my Fifth with didn't laugh, snicker, or frown
29 any the whole time. She only cared with compassion when I
30 cried, and laughed. Hallelujah! Someone finally knew the
31 crazy thoughts I had and the crazy things I'd done.

32 I now felt completely forgiven and was truly ready to have
33 God remove the old me and my sick ways. But I soon found out
34 that the key word of Step Six was "ready" and that it would
35 have to be done when God was ready, not me. Step Seven came
36 with the Sixth because as a result of Step Five I now had some

idea of what my defects and shortcomings were and I needed 1
someone or something desperately to take it all away. I now 2
had to understand willingness. 3

Steps Eight and Nine hit me when I came into the program. 4
I was ready to have everyone accept my apologies instantly, 5
when I wanted them to. I was so relieved that God had for- 6
given me that I thought everyone else had too! But again 7
it was only to find that I had to wait for God's time, not 8
mine! 9

As of today, I work Step Ten daily, searching for where 10
and if I had wronged another human being by allowing my de- 11
fects to overcome God's love. As a result of the Twelve 12
Steps, I'm not able to hold onto old ways of deceiving my- 13
self as long as before. God allows me shorter periods of 14
time for rationalization, for He and I know, I'll die if I 15
keep it. 16

Step Eleven is my way of getting out of myself. My time 17
for prayer can be any time, anywhere, for I now have a friend 18
that listens whenever I pray. Meditation was hard at first 19
for I couldn't hear anything God was saying. As I work the 20
program I find Step Eleven is when I work Step Ten, by lis- 21
tening to God tell me when I've wronged another. 22

Step Twelve is my reason for living today. To not be able 23
to share what Narcotics Anonymous has done for me would be 24
to not exist. I now have an identity. I know who and what I 25
am, and maybe somewhere someone can relate to the pain my 26
addiction caused me. If this is so, I've achieved a portion 27
of what I feel is my purpose for being alive and happy today. 28

The program of Narcotics Anonymous gave me an identity. 29
I can now hold my head high and tell people who I am and that 30
"I'm an addict". Before I came to the program and I was 31
asked, who are you, I wouldn't and couldn't answer because 32
I had no idea what it really meant. I love the newfound me. 33
I love getting to know me and other people like me. I now 34
can feel emotions that were buried deep within me for many 35
years. 36

1 The program has given me everything non-material. To me
2 "happiness" (I thought) was what and how much I could buy.
3 How little I knew what was missing. I'm beginning to accept
4 pain as growth. I know pain is essential for through pain
5 God can break down that many false personalities little by
6 little, on His time.

7 There is so much hope for me today. The program was a
8 challenge I needed desperately and was given to me as a gift.
9 Each day I want more of what it has to offer. I want so much
10 to learn. What a long way to go to reach the understanding
11 I'm searching for, but that's okay, I'm at least searching.

12 To put into words what God and the program of Narcotics
13 Anonymous have done for me is difficult, for there aren't any
14 words to express God's love. I hope that my story can reach
15 someone, somewhere, but if it doesn't, that's okay, it reached
16 me.

17 Thank you, God, and Narcotics Anonymous for giving me
18 myself.

NO EXCUSE FOR LONELINESS

Like everyone else, I started my life as a baby, and 1
later became a child. And, like everyone else, I grew up 2
one day and discovered that I had an adult body. But, 3
unlike most people, I was still a child when I made this 4
discovery. I am an addict. Drugs, in whatever form, were 5
my primary addiction. Self-destructive behavior, obsessive 6
and compulsive thinking, were symptoms that lived with me, 7
before I ever used chemicals, and stayed with me after I 8
let go of the drugs. 9

When I was a little girl I started to look for a sub- 10
stitute for Papa. I had a father, but he wasn't the father 11
I wanted. He was a drunk with a compulsive personality. 12
He was highly intellectual, but very bigoted and negative, 13
and above all, violent and unpredictable. His job required 14
that he spend a good deal of time away from home, so there 15
were months out of almost every year that I didn't see him 16
at all. He was my Higher Power. He was big, strong, and 17
frightful. When he did take the time out to play with my 18
older brother and me, he was so much fun! But, even when we 19
were playing together, he could not be trusted. The 20
slightest thing could send him into a rage. Yes, I was a 21
battered child. It was not uncommon for me to go to school 22
with bruises on my face, along with instructions as what lie 23
my parents wanted me to tell the teacher as to how I got 24
that bruise. 25

Joe was my older brother. He and I were very com- 26
petitive. Although he was two years older than me, we were 27
always about the same size growing up. He was popular in 28

1 school, both with the teachers and with the other kids. All
2 his life, people told him what a genius he was. I worshipped
3 him too.

4 For several years, we were the only kids. Then, when I
5 was eleven, my brother, Lee, was born. I didn't like that
6 at all. My status as the "baby" was gone, and he represented
7 my first responsibility around the house. Before he was
8 born, we always had maids, so I never had to help my mother.
9 But with his birth, there was so much more to be done.
10 And Mama didn't have the time to spend with me that I had
11 been used to. He was a lovely baby, but deep down inside
12 I resented him for being born.

13 Mama worked all my life. We were raised by black
14 maids. They kept the radio on the rock and roll stations
15 all the time and kept the atmosphere pretty loose around
16 the house all day. I liked the way they seemed to live
17 and think, much better than the way I was being taught to
18 grow up by my parents. Many of them were very loving with
19 Joe and me, and they taught us a lot about life.

20 What I seemed to want most in life was attention. I
21 usually got it. I was bright, pretty, and wild, with a
22 tough little spirit to break. I decided early on that I
23 would grow up to be either a singer, a writer, or an artist.
24 By the time I was fourteen, I had chosen singing as a career.

25 In the late sixties in Nashville there was very little
26 of the "sub-culture" trickling into the community, like
27 there was in so many of the larger cities earlier. But,
28 eventually, through the mass media, a little hippie movement
29 was starting to blossom in our city. I had seen people like
30 that in movies, and I really thought they were neat. The
31 men all looked like rock stars. That was what I wanted.
32 When my brother discovered pot, I was close on his heels.
33 He found out where all the flower children hung out, and
34 joined them. To his embarrassment and disgust, so did his

fourteen year old sister. Joe was witty and handsome, so 1
older kids in the street scene liked him right from the start. 2
I didn't feel like I had anything to offer these wonderful 3
people, so I donated my body to the cause. I donated it to 4
anyone that looked the way I wanted him to look, especially 5
if there were drugs available. 6

I had my first taste of illicit drugs when, at four- 7
teen, I was sent to Atlanta for an illegal abortion, and 8
the doctor gave me morphine. I liked most of the effects; 9
I had been experimenting with alcohol since early childhood 10
and was quickly becoming a partyer. And, any time anyone 11
suggested a new kick, like cough syrup or glue, I tried it. 12

Once I found the right sources, I began taking all kinds 13
of goodies. I really liked smoke, in all its forms, es- 14
pecially hashish. I had my first hit of acid when I was 15
fifteen, and I dropped it every chance I got from then on. 16
We did speed in pill form mostly, in my little clique, and 17
even though I did experiment with downers, they never did 18
agree with me. Even back then, I can remember a real sense 19
of desperation in trying to find drugs when none were 20
around. The drugs I took gave me the first real freedom I 21
had ever known. I depended on them to expand my mind, to 22
relax me, to mix with my hip buddies. 23

When I was sixteen, our family moved to Bogota, Colom- 24
bia. I was four months pregnant (again) and I'd been eating 25
LSD every other day or so for the first three months of the 26
baby's gestation. On December 25, 1969, at 1:00 A.M., I 27
gave birth to a premature baby that died in less than five 28
hours. Its little insides were deformed, and it was blue. 29
For a couple of months after that, I was kept under lock 30
and key. But my parents couldn't hold me for long. And, 31
Colombian pot is strong. It called my name: "dirt cheap". 32
We lived in Bogota for almost a year. After I returned, I 33
was re-enrolled in high school. It had been a long time 34

1 since I had been in school, and I didn't adjust to the
2 discipline well at first, but things got better for a
3 little while, at least school did. I was still getting
4 high on whatever I could find, and still promiscuous as
5 hell, but the atmosphere at the school was liberal, and
6 when the other kids voted on Senior Superlatives, I was
7 elected "Most Individualistic". I won a medal in my
8 Spanish class, and I did well in all my subjects. Unfortu-
9 nately, I had been working on a correspondence course for
10 the school year before that, and I never did finish it, so
11 I skipped Graduation Day, in order to avoid the embarrass-
12 ment of being the only Senior to walk away with no piloma.
13 I lied about that fact for years. During that year, I came
14 down with hepatitis. It laid me up for a month. I had a
15 steady boyfriend at that time, and he got it too. We had
16 great plans for ourselves, after my eighteenth birthday.

17 My birthday arrived, and I tried to get out of the
18 house as soon as possible. I hitch-hiked to Indiana to
19 visit my lover, and his Mom sent me back home after a few
20 weeks. I tried that same trick again after three months, and
21 his mother kicked me out again then too. So, I went to live
22 in the house with my brother's rock and roll band. In just
23 a little while, my brother kicked me out too, basically be-
24 cause I had been playing games with three of the band mem-
25 bers at once. I learned about crashing after that. I did
26 a lot of it for years.

27 I did find places to live and people to live with. I
28 even found a job that wasn't too demanding, minding shop
29 in a health food store. At that time, I was staying away
30 from most drugs, because I had to avoid things that might
31 harm my liver. I was a vegetarian, and I kept up with all
32 the herbs. I ate all the time, and I probably ate more
33 merchandise than I sold a lot of days. I looked real serene,
34 but I was getting as fat as a pig, and I hated myself. It

seemed to me then that something must be terribly wrong with 1
me. Here I was, clean from drugs, and all I could do with 2
myself was eat like a hog, and hole up in my room. 3

To my great relief, I met up with a piano player who 4
wanted to make music with me. His name was Sylvester. We 5
became the best of pals. We went everywhere together, even 6
the john. Both of us had all kinds of high ideals about 7
spirituality, which we tried out on one another, and found 8
them to be impossible, at lease for us at that time. 9

Right before my nineteenth birthday, I got a ride all the 10
way to Colorado. I didn't have any money. I didn't bother 11
to tell my mother and father that I was leaving town. I 12
didn't even give an hour's notice at my job. I just left. 13
Once I got to Boulder, I got wild. The street scene there 14
reminded me of the one in Bogota. I liked it, and I became 15
a part of it in no time at all. The first people that took 16
me in were the "guru" type. They were pretty interesting, 17
but I got restless. The next group I fell in with was much 18
more down to earth. The STP Family was the royal family on 19
the Hill in Boulder. One of the members took a liking to 20
me, and asked me to come and live with him. I loved him as 21
much as I was ever capable of loving anyone, and I believe 22
that he probably loved me too. But, we sure had funny ways 23
of showing it. We screwed around on each other all the time, 24
and when he wasn't throwing me out, or taking me back, I was 25
running out the door, with my thumb outstretched. I came 26
and went from Boulder to Nashville and back again, and we 27
were lovers for about six months before his death. He was 28
dealing MDA on the Hill, and when the cops searched him, 29
he ate the whole stash. I freaked out completely at his 30
death. I still wear the ring that his mother gave me, taken 31
off his dead finger. 32

That was the excuse I wanted to just let go of all sense 33
of dignity, and just stay loaded and filthy. Before his 34

1 death, I had been living however I could, taking whatever
2 handouts I could manipulate, crashing wherever I could.
3 I hadn't really been staying stoned all the time, though.
4 I had tried to be useful and kind to people, and even cre-
5 ative, at times. Once he was gone, I was free to let all
6 of it slide. I went on a drunk, and I just traveled around
7 the country, hitch-hiking for six months or so. I stayed
8 drunk and stoned on whatever drugs I could find. I had a
9 boyfriend, or old man, all the time, although I never kept
10 the same one for very long. I had to depend on a man to
11 protect me from rapes and murders and thigs that I might
12 encounter on the road. In truth, I wasn't very well pro-
13 tected. Some of the people I chose were pretty violent
14 themselves. And, there were several times when I had hitch-
15 hiked during that year that I was raped. I never reported
16 any of this to the authorities. I was certain that any
17 judge in a court of law would rule against me, and in favor
18 of the rapist, because a woman hitch-hiking is easy prey,
19 and most people know it. Rape was something that my life-
20 style invited, as a commonly accepted detail that I just
21 took for granted; something to avoid when I could, but to
22 expect from time to time. The same went for arrests. I
23 was arrested five times in the year that I was nineteen,
24 mostly on petty offenses, but there was one felony too,
25 that I had a hell of a time getting out of. The last situa-
26 tion like that was when I had been given a lift from New
27 Orleans to North Carolina, and we made a stop in Georgia.
28 The man who had given me a ride had known me for several
29 days, and he'd seen how loose I was sexually. He waited
30 until I was really drunk, and I'd just seduced a buddy of
31 his, and then he tried to force me into having sex with
32 him too. I didn't like the idea, and he figured that I
33 didn't have the right to turn anyone down, after the way I
34 had acted, so he beat me within an inch of my life, raping

and beating me repeatedly, for what seemed like hours. I 1
was lucky to have survived that with my life, and I nearly 2
lost one eye. Of course, my Higher Power, whom I didn't 3
understand, sent people to rescue me. After that, I 4
managed to get into some more trouble and spent a couple 5
of weeks in solitary in the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta 6
with two felonies hanging over my head. I got out of both 7
of them, with the charges dropped, but my drinking pattern 8
had gotten so out of hand that I was in even more trouble 9
than I had been. I couldn't go a day without drinking 10
enough booze or wine to knock me out, and it was becoming 11
obvious that I had no idea what kind of behavior to expect 12
from myself after I had had that first drop of alcohol. I 13
still did as many of the other drugs as I could, but since 14
the addiction to booze had gotten so physical, I couldn't 15
handle uppers or even pot without some alcohol to offset 16
them. 17

I went back home to Nashville after a year of travel- 18
ing around, bombed out and flat broke, figuring that all my 19
old buddies would be glad to see me and would put me up. 20
They didn't respond to me the way I had anticipated they 21
would. Frankly, they didn't seem to want to have anything 22
to do with me, and I had to change crowds to hang out in. 23
I finally ended up moving back in with my mother and little 24
brother. I was unemployable. I had to at least try to 25
clean up my act a little bit. A little bit didn't work. 26
During the day, I was so hung-over that even after I finally 27
found a place to work, I couldn't function on the job. I 28
hated the way I felt about myself, and I hated being fright- 29
ened and sick all the time. When I had been in New Orleans 30
the winter before, I'd gone into delirium tremens, and the 31
doctor in the emergency room had given me some librium to 32
withdraw me. So, when I decided to get off the sauce, I 33
went straight to the hospital clinic, and begged an intern 34

1 to prescribe a bottle for me. He did, thank God, and I
2 stopped drinking sometime in July of 1973. It took me a
3 much longer time to let go of the downers and the pot, but
4 I really wanted to get free of all drug dependency. On sheer
5 intuition, I realized that if I didn't let go of all drugs,
6 I would just jump from one addiction to another. That was
7 the only thing that saved me, because I didn't join any
8 programs, or call on anyone for help, for almost a year.

9 May 20, 1974, in order to get a certain cowboy out of
10 my hair, I attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting
11 at the local A.A. clubhouse. Honestly, I didn't think I
12 needed any help at all in staying away from booze, but I
13 had met a songwriter that seemed to think there was some-
14 thing wrong with an alcoholic that didn't drink, but didn't
15 go to A.A., and since he was a loyal A.A. member, he proceeded
16 to nag me about it, until I broke down and went to a meeting
17 with him. I really liked it. The man who spoke was the
18 funniest man I had ever heard in my life. He told one story
19 after another, and I was in tears. I didn't like the refer-
20 ences to God, or the fact that all the people were so much
21 older and "straighter" than I was. So I didn't go back.

22 On September 7, 1974, I joined A.A. as a member. I
23 had just gone through a three month depression, and I had
24 no answers for myself. I had tried every tactic I knew of
25 to avoid going for help, but I just couldn't take any more
26 of life, as I was seeing it and living it then. During my
27 first year of chemical abstinence, I had moved into my first
28 apartment, made a start for myself in the music business,
29 found and lost the "love of my life" (he was married),
30 worked at the same job for nine months on end, and developed
31 a serious new addictive pattern. I became anorexic, suffer-
32 ing from a disease just as devastating as all of my other
33 addictions put together. When I wasn't starving myself, I
34 was compulsively gorging myself and vomiting. I had moved

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to Atlanta again, this time for three months, working as a singer in a club. Out of all the experiences I had had, I came to one definite conclusion; I was not equipped to cope with anything alone. I had to have help. The day I joined A.A. it was the only thing I could think of to do, besides use, and using (anything) was all I really wanted to do. I was so frightened and depressed on the day I called the clubhouse, that the people assumed that I was still shaking off a drunk. Even though there wasn't anyone there that I felt old enough to talk to, I really didn't think I had a choice. These people were nice enough to let me cry, to talk to me and to listen to me. And, unlike my other friends, they weren't using. I stayed in A.A. for a year, going to meetings almost every night, reading the "Big Book", and all the other literature. It was home, and all the people were my new parents. Then I went on the road, singing in lounges with different rock and roll bands. I still attended as many meetings as I could, but my hours usually conflicted with meeting times. People were usually pretty nice to me. It was almost impossible for me to stay clean on the road, and I am sure I would've gone back to using many times, if I hadn't been asking God for help in the mornings and thanking Him at night. I made it a point to call A.A. as soon as I hit town, no matter where we went. I stayed on the road for a year, and then I spent another year or more back in Nashville, beating the pavements on Music Row, trying to get singing work, both in studios and in the clubs. I didn't have much success at it, but I did learn one thing. There is absolutely no situation that I can't stay clean in, if I use the tricks I have learned in meetings, and ask God for help.

It took more than four years for me to bottom out on the strange eating behavior, but I finally did on October 13, 1978. I kept the same "dry date" for a long time, but I de-

1 cided to go back and change it a few months ago. I feel
2 more honest this way. So, my dry-date changed from Septem-
3 ber 7, 1974 to October 13, 1978, which was the last time I
4 did anything compulsive and destructive to myself. I lost
5 my old-timer status, but I sure feel better about me.

6 In 1978 and 1979, young people started coming into A.A.
7 in my area. I had even gotten stoned with a couple of them.
8 These people, like me, were drug addicts. Like me, they had
9 later developed alcohol addictions. I no longer make a dis-
10 tinction between the two. Alcohol is just as much of a drug
11 as any other.

12 A songwriter blew into town from West Palm Beach. He
13 had been going to N.A. in Florida, and he didn't like the
14 fact that we didn't have it here. So, with the help of God,
15 and one very dedicated heroin addict, I got the first success-
16 ful N.A. meeting started in our city. The other N.A. meet-
17 ing that was started at that time was started by some people
18 that we haven't seen since, but I still go to it, and so do
19 many others of us. Now, we've got six meetings listed on
20 our meeting list, and I hope that they all stay intact, but
21 attendance fluctuates all the time.

22 My life is blossoming. I place my N.A. Program above
23 all of my other interests. The meetings, the friendships,
24 the principles we discuss, and everything involved with the
25 N.A. society are the things I love most. The relationship I
26 have with my Higher Power and with myself are things I have
27 dreamed of all my life. The tools that help me to cope with
28 all of life's situations are with me all the time, no matter
29 where I go.

30 And, the most important fact in my life is this: I am
31 powerless over my addiction, not over any substance, but
32 over an isolating, sickening, frightening illness that is
33 in me. In the Twelve Steps, I have a way to live clean,
34 a way to grow up and be comfortable. In the Fellowship of

Narcotics Anonymous, I have no excuse for loneliness. And,	1
in tapping the Cosmic Source, I can create, produce, ac-	2
complish, and have anything I will ever need. I thank all	3
of my brothers and sisters in N.A. for making all things	4
possible	5

REALIZATION OF A DREAM

1 I was born in January, 1957 in Atlanta, Georgia. My
2 early memories of childhood are pleasant ones. I was very
3 honest as a child. I told the truth no matter what. When
4 I started kindergarten and first grade, I began to live in
5 my own world. I was obsessed with plastic soldiers, little
6 men I called them. I loved to set up an elaborate battle,
7 with different strategies and make it unfold. I loved
8 planning outcomes. As I got older, I learned how to manipu-
9 late my parents to get what I wanted.

10 Until the second grade, we moved around a lot. We
11 settled in northern Louisiana at that time, and I was to stay
12 there until my senior year in high school. Until the fifth
13 grade I made straight A's and participated in all the sports
14 I could. In the fifth grade I changed schools, so I could
15 take an accelerated course where I took the fifth, sixth,
16 and seventh grades in two years. This was a little harder
17 than the regular school and I made some B's, which didn't
18 meet the approval of my parents. I was very good in foot-
19 ball, basketball and track but I wasn't very good in base-
20 ball. Looking back, I can see that not being able to be great
21 at everything I did had an adverse affect on my abilities.
22 It made me feel inferior, and instead of being a fair or good
23 baseball player, I was a bad one.

24 Sometime that year I took my first drink. I was alone
25 that night and I drank one of my father's beers. I can rem-
26 ember that I thought it tasted awful, and wanted to pour it
27 out. I only drank one and didn't get any effect from it. I
28 don't know why I drank it, and I didn't tell anyone about it.
29 At the end of my fifth grade year we had a weekend field trip

and I took two airplane bottles of liquor. When I told my
classmates that I had some liquor, they applauded. One of my
close friends drank some of it with me and I threw some of it
away. My peers didn't accept it.

I had a cute girlfriend but I was afraid of sex. I
was real inhibited about sex but I bragged and lied to my
friends about it. I bolstered myself by swearing a lot,
and I eventually lost my girl because of it.

My next drink was at the end of my sixth grade year.
We went on another weekend field trip and I did the same
thing as the year before. I was beginning to feel inade-
quate and felt that I needed something to make me whole.
On the trip I kept the liquor to myself. I was outgoing
on the surface, but I was very shy. I was very afraid of
not being accepted.

The next year I went into the eighth grade which was
the beginning of my exposure to social drinking. I was one
year behind the other kids already, and by skipping the
seventh grade, I was two years younger than my classmates.
That really made me feel inferior. I was not as big as the
other kids and I couldn't make the starting team playing
football and got cut off the basketball team. I didn't make
the track team either, but they let me be the manager. I
remember once as the track team manager, the coach paid me a
compliment for something I'd done and I started crying. I
really felt sorry for myself.

The girls thought I was good looking and I started
going steady with one who was part of the "in crowd". I
was still afraid of girls and felt really inadequate but I
forced myself to learn. I started going to parties where
there was drinking, but it did not interest me that much.
I was too pre-occupied with my newfound sexual awareness.
I kept going to parties and would drink two or three beers,
but I only did it because everyone else did.

1 I started making some C's that year. I was pre-occupied
2 with getting the acceptance of my peers.

3 The summer of that year was when I first got drunk. From
4 then on, I didn't want to drink unless I could get drunk.
5 We would camp out and drink. After only three months, I was
6 already developing a problem. In the ninth grade, I started
7 going to parties drunk or getting drunk at them. I developed
8 a reputation as a "hell raiser", and it made me feel good
9 about myself. I was finally somebody. I felt really inadequate
10 when I was around people, and I was scared to meet new people.
11 There was some school dances that year, and I went to them
12 all drunk out of my mind. The girls in school started to not
13 like me so much because they never knew what I was going to
14 do. I would save my lunch money and put it together with my
15 allowance and get roaring drunk every weekend. C's became
16 more common and my interest in sports dropped.

17 The tenth grade was more of the same until I was intro-
18 duced to pot. At first, I felt really guilty and paranoid
19 about pot and even resolved not to smoke it any more after
20 several times. But it was so easy and convenient. I was
21 able to block out all my feelings with pot and smoked more
22 and more. I got to the point where I was drinking and smoking
23 before school or whenever I had the chance. It was fun; it
24 kept me from feeling, and it made me think that I was cool.
25 My mother started noticing my drunkenness and would wait up
26 for me when I went out. My father thought that I was just
27 going through a phase and would grow out of it. I was only
28 fourteen then. I already had a fake I.D. and bought my own
29 liquor. When I turned fifteen, I made a fake I.D. out of my
30 drivers license and started going to bars. I was always in
31 trouble and it became a common occurrence for the police to
32 bring me home. My parents would punish me but it didn't do
33 any good.

34 My Junior year was a disaster. I started failing subjects

and lost interest in football completely. I still played, but 1
I didn't care if we won or lost. I stayed stoned and drank 2
whenever I could, not caring if anyone knew about it. I even 3
drank before football games and tests. My mother tried every- 4
thing she knew to do but nothing helped. My father would try 5
to talk to me, but I wouldn't listen. They even told me that 6
I was a teenaged alcoholic. Man, I thought that was funny. 7
I ended up failing everything the second semester of that 8
year. I really just didn't care anymore. As long as I was 9
cool and accepted by my peer group, nothing mattered to me. 10
Being a pothead gave me an identity and I was able to belong 11
somewhere. I felt guilt and remorse when I messed up, but 12
when I got punished it made me resentful and gave me a reason 13
to get high. 14

My Dad took a job in South America my senior year in 15
high school, and I was all for the move. I took correspon- 16
dence courses through L.S.U. because I was afraid to go to 17
the American School in São Paulo. I was afraid of the kids, 18
afraid I wouldn't be accepted. We lived at a paper mill 60 19
kilometers from a paved road. For a while I felt superior 20
to the Brazilians, but they loved to drink and I quickly 21
became friends with them. I went to work with my father in 22
the morning and studied till noon, then drank and shot pool 23
with my friends the rest of the day. Liquor and beer were 24
cheap, and I could afford to drink as much as I wanted. The 25
whole year of '73 went by and I was in a stupor every day. I 26
passed my correspondence courses by cheating and came back to 27
the U.S. to go to college. 28

As soon as I got settled in my dormitory, I started look- 29
ing for connections. I was scared to death and needed some 30
pot. I got a connection and started dealing pot. I got 31
turned on to T.H.C. and started selling it too. I had always 32
looked up to cool people and now I was one. I went crazy with 33
my new-found identity. People thought I was cool. I tried 34

1 mushrooms and I loved them; I thought it was a spiritual
2 experience. Six weeks after I got to school, I got arrested
3 for possession. I didn't know what to do, so I called on my
4 family. They got me out of trouble, and decided they wanted
5 me nearby, so I went back to Brazil.

6 Things were sticky for a while, but within two weeks I
7 was drinking every day. My Dad got tired of me doing nothing
8 and decided that I needed to go to school. I was fluent in
9 Portuguese so I went to a Brazilian Prep School. I made an
10 honest effort for about a month, then I lost interest. I
11 was living in a cheap hotel where my Dad had an expense ac-
12 count, and I was in hog heaven. I saw my parents about once
13 a month which for me was too much. I made some connections
14 and started smoking pot again. I quit going to school and
15 just drank and smoked pot all day. That was in the fall of
16 '74, and in Brazil, they still sold biphphetamine and methaqua-
17 lone over the counter and when I found that out, I went crazy
18 with joy. I started shooting pervintine, which is a liquid
19 amphetamine, and by the end of the year I was in sad shape.
20 My friends went crazy and ended up in jail, and only after I
21 freaked out on hallucinogens for three days did I realize that
22 I had a problem with drugs. I stayed drunk for the next seven
23 months and one night started throwing up blood. I tried to
24 quit drinking and started having the D.T.'s. I had to start
25 drinking again. The only feelings I was capable of having
26 were intense fear and paranoia. I didn't know what to do, so
27 I kept drinking. I reached a point where I knew I had to do
28 something, so I tapered off and quit drinking in the morning.

29 I came back to the U.S. and enrolled at L.S.U. I was
30 tired of my lifestyle and decided that I needed a college
31 education. I really tried hard for a change and made B's. I
32 felt good about myself and started drinking heavily. I lost
33 interest in school and got into drugs heavily. I was dealing
34 and shooting cocaine and morphine. The money I made dealing

didn't support my habit, so I started running a bank fraud 1
scheme. 2

When I saw my parents at Christmas, I conned them out of 3
\$3,500.00. I had made up my mind that I was going to clear 4
up my debts and go straight. But when I got back to the U.S., 5
it was a different story. I blew the money on dope, got 6
arrested in New Orleans for accessory on a rape charge, and 7
had to go back to bank fraud to support my habit. The Baton 8
Rouge police got onto my scheme, and I ended up working out 9
a deal with them and turning myself in. I was so out of it 10
that I was holding when I walked in the police station. 11

I can honestly say that I had no feelings at this time. 12
I had ceased to be a member of the human race. I had to get 13
\$1,000 from my parents to get me out of jail, and again, I 14
made a resolution to clean up my act. After I got the drugs 15
out of my system, I felt all the guilt, remorse and fear that 16
I had been trying to cover up. I realized how much I loved 17
and cared for my family and decided to quit doing drugs. I 18
just drank and smoked pot - a case of beer and a quart of 19
liquor every day. I finally got a D.W.I. and my dad asked 20
if I would like to come to Brazil and try to get a new start. 21

I went back down in December of '75, determined to do 22
good by my father. It went well for about two months, until 23
I met an old connection. I was back on the roller coaster 24
again. I started selling pot and was making a lot of money, 25
and then I started shooting cocaine again. I started dealing 26
to support my habit again. I was very paranoid and afraid of 27
getting arrested because of the methods of torture that the 28
Brazilian police use on drug dealers, but it didn't stop me. 29
I ran across a New Yorker and he and I organized a drug ring. 30
We were known as "o gringo mafia". For me this was the reali- 31
zation of a dream. We would sell enough drugs to keep us in 32
money and dope and head out to the jungle to camp out. I 33
degenerated into an animal. I had to alternate periods of 34

1 shooting up and snorting because my nose had become hemor-
2 raged and my arms were abscessed all the time. On top of the
3 dope, I drank all the time. I no longer had any feelings at
4 all, only needs. The only escape that I had was our camping
5 trips. We would get away from the city, and I could feel
6 safe. We would live like animals, eat with our hands, drink
7 and do dope by the campfire until we passed out. Finally,
8 the inevitable happened, and the police came down on us. I
9 was given two weeks to get out of the country or go to jail.
10 My dad gave me a plane ticket and told me that he didn't
11 care if he ever saw me again. In the States, my mother
12 didn't want to have anything to do with me.

13 It was the first of '77 and I knew I didn't belong to the
14 human race. I wanted to use every conscious moment. I
15 couldn't identify with anyone who didn't want to use twenty-
16 four hours a day. I managed to hold down a job and made a
17 resolution not to shoot any more dope. I did plenty, I just
18 didn't shoot any. In a drunken stupor I ran into a man, his
19 wife and three little girls going fifty miles per hour. By
20 the grace of God I didn't kill any of them, but I still went
21 to jail. I liked it there; I didn't have to worry about any-
22 thing. I played cards and ate barbs all day long. If they
23 had let me have a woman twice a week, I would have stayed
24 forever. I couldn't face the outside world. I was afraid
25 of getting out. My life was a horror to think about and I
26 resolved again to quit getting "so" loaded.

27 The first thing I did when I got out was get high. I
28 had come to the conclusion that I could not handle liquor and
29 decided not to drink anymore. Two days later I was drunk. I
30 tried smoking pot to quit and it didn't work. I could not go
31 through the day without drinking, so I decided to just drink
32 beer. I would do O.K. for a week or so, but then I'd get
33 drunk again. I never remembered what I did when I got drunk
34 anymore, but without fail it was at best, obscene.

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This merry-go-round lasted for about a year and a half 1
and finally the inevitable happened: I had a needle in my 2
arm. I went on a super bender and overdosed on M.D.A., 3
mandrex and gin. I stayed loaded for about a week and the 4
pain nearly killed me. The dope and liquor turned on me and 5
would not relieve my agony. No matter how much I used, I 6
couldn't get any relief. Out of desperation, I hospitalized 7
myself. 8

I resolved never to use anything again, except maybe a 9
little pot. I had been in the alcohol and drug unit for two 10
days when I smoked my last joint. When I made up my mind 11
to get clean, I really felt free. I resolved to make up, 12
somehow, with all my family that I had hurt. But when I 13
smoked that joint all the pain of eight years came down on 14
my shoulders. In the controlled environment of the hospital 15
I was able to stay clean for five days until they took a van 16
load of us to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I had no idea 17
what it was, but since it was required, I went. I don't 18
remember what was talked about, but at the end of the meet- 19
ing they asked if anyone had the desire to stop using. I 20
said, "I do", and they made me get up and gave me a white 21
chip and a hug. I was kind of freaked out, all those people 22
hugging each other. They told me not to use and go to meet- 23
ings. They asked me to come back and welcomed me when I did, 24
and let me say that I had not been welcome anywhere for a 25
number of years. 26

I grasped the "one day at a time" method of not using 27
and soon began to follow directions and pray to a God of my 28
understanding to keep me clean for that day. I kept expect- 29
ing them to finally tell me what the catch was, but they 30
didn't, because there wasn't one. They gave me a Program to 31
live by, and I saw hope. They didn't tell me what to do, but 32
shared with me what they did. I have since come to know, love 33
and respect many in the Fellowship. I owe my life to Narcotics 34

1 Anonymous and have learned that in order to keep my recovery,
2 I have to give it away. Today I have been clean for a year
3 and a half and it is through N.A. that I am clean today.
4 I will do anything I can to help someone stay clean today
5 except use for them.

ALWAYS LOOKING

I'm a grateful drug addict. I have never been a controlled or social user. From day one, I pushed it to the limit. There were never enough drugs to satisfy me. Whenever I found a drug that I thought would work, I soon found that I had to use more and more of it. Eventually it would stop working altogether.

Growing up was very emotional and painful for me. My parents put an enormous amount of pressure on me to excel in everything I did. I was emotionally high strung, always on the edge of freaking out. When I brought home a bad grade from school, I usually received a beating or mental scolding that would last for hours. I remember having bruises, being dragged from room to room by my hair, and having things thrown at me.

My parents had knock down, drag out fights that would last all night and continue the next morning. I began to ask myself why I should obey these people who obviously didn't have their own life together.

I began to rebel at about the age of twelve. I grew my hair out, wore ragged clothes, and anything else I could do to get back at my parents. Thus began my first efforts to handle resentment through revenge.

I began playing drums in the school band, and in the eighth grade I met two fellow drummers who smoked pot. They introduced me to rock and roll, planting the seed that was to begin growing two years later.

I began to believe in the ideas that I heard in the music. Drugs, free sex, and revolution all sounded good to me. I bought a drum set and began playing in local bands.

1 I dreamed of being a star.

2 I didn't use until about two years later, simply
3 because I was still afraid of my parents. They had stopped
4 beating me as often and began punishing me by not letting
5 me leave the house. I took my anger out on my drums, prac-
6 ticing for hours at a time.

7 Then I started high school, and that's where it all
8 began. I got stoned on pot the first day and loved it. My
9 only question was "Where can I get more?".

10 Within two weeks I was using LSD and mescaline. Mescal-
11 line was first. It seemed to be the cure for all my ills.
12 I laughed until I cried. I began questioning the meaning of
13 life and wondered why I had to put up with the things I did.
14 It gave me a taste of freedom that I had never felt. The
15 people who were tripping with me were beautiful, and the
16 straight people were dull. They just didn't know. I
17 decided that drugs were definitely for me.

18 LSD was next. It was more powerful and exhilarating
19 than mescaline. I had more "realizations" about life and
20 its meaning.

21 A problem began to present itself. All the freedom and
22 ecstasy left me as the dope wore off. I had to come down
23 off the throne. I figured the only way to remedy this was
24 to do more dope.

25 The feeling slowly stopped being beautiful. While trip-
26 ping I became confused and paranoid. I began seeing demons
27 in the faces of my using friends.

28 This scared me into a period of smoking pot and drinking
29 beer only. I figured if I used these and nothing else, I
30 would be okay. As it turned out, they didn't quench my
31 thirst for meaning and adventure that I sought through drugs.

32 During this period I got thrown out of my parents house.
33 This happened one night when I freaked out, thinking demons
34 were about to take control of me. My father gave me an

ultimatum; stop using dope or get out. So I got out. 1

I was fifteen years old, and got an apartment with a 2
friend who was old enough to sign the lease. I quit school 3
and began working landscaping, and using as much dope as I 4
could get my hands on. Living away from home gave me a new 5
sense of freedom I had never experienced before. I was 6
happy and content, my troubles were over, and life had 7
just begun. Little did I know. 8

All through high school my using buddies had told me 9
what a great high MDA was. It was the ultimate, and the 10
best way to do it was to shoot it up. I wanted to try it 11
but was a little afraid of sticking a needle in my arm. I 12
soon got my chance. I figured I might as well fire it up; 13
everyone else was. 14

I began feeling this tingle at the tip of my brain, 15
then my head exploded before the needle left my arm. I 16
loved it. Everything and everybody was beautiful; my prob- 17
lems disappeared. I decided this was definitely the drug 18
for me. 19

It was the drug for me for two solid years. I became 20
obsessed with the rush and the feeling of cold metal enter- 21
ing my arm. I preached the glories of MDA to my friends and 22
fellow workers. Most of them thought I was crazy. I was. 23
I lost my job, fifty pounds, and had nowhere to stay. I 24
roamed the streets dealing and stealing. My relationship 25
with my girlfriend, also a junkie, began to fall apart. 26

I decided that I had to quit. I had to boot up three 27
or four grams to get off, so why bother? Since I couldn't 28
get any pleasure out of all the other drugs, I figured I 29
might as well quit everything. In doing this, I began to 30
feel strange and alienated from my using buddies. I began 31
to search for the answer to my problems by reading books 32
on eastern mysticism. I tried to practice meditation and 33
yoga. My addiction had programmed my mind to accept instant 34

1 sense gratification only, so my efforts to experience spirit-
2 uality without drugs was in vain.

3 I decided that I had to get away. I joined a religious
4 cult and moved out of state, much to the dismay of my parents
5 and girlfriend. Shaving my head and doning a robe, I ex-
6 perienceed total culture shock. As the dope washed out of
7 my system I began to feel better. After a year I grew tired
8 of the rules and decided that it was time to move on.

9 I returned to my hometown and looked up my old using
10 buddies. They acted as if they were glad to see me. The
11 first night back I shot up so much MDA I nearly died. I
12 heard dogs howling and sirens screaming, and felt as though
13 I was falling through a long black tunnel. I was on my way
14 to hell in my mind. I begged God to let me live, surely I
15 couldn't live a life that would end up that way. I slowly
16 drifted back to reality, thanking God for every breath I
17 took.

18 The next day I jumped on a 707 for Florida. I figured
19 hard work and sunshine was what I needed. This lasted two
20 weeks and I was back home again shooting dope.

21 Back at home I ran with different crowds trying to
22 find one that I could relate to. I hung out with gays,
23 musicians, hippies and rednecks. I used everything from
24 crystal speed and quaaludes to morphine and alcohol.

25 After a near fatal binge on crystal speed, I decided
26 that all I could handle were barbituates. Thus began a two
27 year binge of quaaludes and alcohol. I began a new fantasy,
28 giving up one of being a rock star to one of being a big-time
29 dope dealer.

30 I began some small-time dealing and my using rapidly
31 increased. All my profits went down my throat. I began
32 shaking and sweating when I didn't have any 'ludes to even
33 me out.

34 One night I caught one of my girlfriends at a friend's

house. I was drunk and barbed out as usual, and tore the
place up from one end to another. Within an hour I was sit-
ting in the county jail.

Once again I decided that I had gone too far, I had to
clean up my act or else. I straightened up for a short time,
ran with a new crowd - jocks this time.

Within a couple of weeks I was loaded again. I totaled
out my car, banged up my head, and ended up in the hospital.
I knew I had to have help if I was to stop using drugs. I
stayed on the psychiatric unit for nine days and detoxed.
The best thing they did for me was to give me a list of all
the local meetings of Narcotics Anonymous.

I left the hospital, started attending N.A., and found
a love and acceptance that I'd never known. I refused, how-
ever, to work the twelve steps or to give up my old running
mates. One of my old connections made me an offer I didn't
refuse, and I began turning Quaaludes and speed by the
thousands. I stayed clean for a short while, but eventually
began a nine month relapse. I could no longer use success-
fully, the seed of N.A. had been planted.

I checked into a state mental hospital for detox. In
the institution I was shocked by the old-time alcoholics
and drug addicts. I strongly believed this was my last
chance for recovery.

I left the hospital knowing I had to dive into N.A.
head first in order to live. I gave up dealing and my old
using buddies and began attending N.A. full steam ahead.
I asked my Higher Power to keep me clean a day at a time and
to please restore me to sanity. Life is more beautiful with
each passing day and some of my dreams are coming true. I
feel a love for life that I can't describe. I now look
forward to a beautiful life in recovery. I look forward to
helping save lives, and have found many of the meanings and
answers that I have been seeking for so long and in so many
ways.

"I'VE COME A LONG WAY"

1 This program works. Believe me, I've come a long way.
2 I am a miracle. When I came through the doors, I was so
3 burned out on dilaudid (those little yellow devils), I didn't
4 know which end was up. I had a \$200.00 a day habit and that
5 wasn't even getting me high. It just took that "sick" feel-
6 ing away. But "I wasn't really that bad", so I thought.
7 My arms and legs were a mess from the needles I'd used and
8 they ached terribly. I hated myself and I considered myself
9 a helpless, hopeless junkie. Today I know better, there is
10 hope and there is help for people like me. I couldn't do
11 anything without drugs and I'd do anything to get them. I
12 begged, borrowed, and stole to get what I needed.

13 I started out smoking a joint now and then. I liked the
14 high, and I'd laugh and laugh. I worked in a bar so I natur-
15 ally drank with the customers, but I could never stand the
16 taste no matter what I mixed together. I started taking
17 speed and oh how I loved that feeling. I could talk, and
18 dance, and drink like a sailor. I'd go for days like that
19 of course I couldn't take time to eat so I'd keep losing
20 weight and getting meaner and meaner. And when I'd crash,
21 look out. I wanted to kill. I went on like that for a couple
22 of years. Then I took some acid. I hated it. I was so para-
23 noid, but I'd keep on taking it because everybody else was.
24 I can remember taking my blanket, and my alarm clock and
25 going into my closet and just wishing the trip was over.
26 Then a friend of mine "turned me on" to some qualudes. I
27 remember I got sick and puked all over the place. Of course
28 I had done three of them on top of a fifth of C.C. and I
29 don't remember a couple of days after that. It was then that

I decided that I would just stick to my speed, pot and whiskey. 1
Again, I couldn't take time to eat and I got sick, a real 2
bad kidney infection. I went to the emergency room and 3
they gave me morphine. I loved it. Than I started looking 4
forward to my kidney infections, which came frequently. 5
By the time I was twenty-five years old, I'd been married 6
and divorced three times and I had two children. I took 7
many geographical cures, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, 8
Maryland, and always losing jobs because of my addiction. 9
No one understood me. I dragged my kids with me everywhere 10
I went. I did a lot of things I'm not proud of and some 11
that are nobody's business, but I know I can't change the 12
past, I can only change my life now, one day at a time. I 13
decided to stop drinking so I did. I just tripled my drugs. 14
I just kept getting lower and lower. I'd speed all day and 15
do qualudes after the sun went down. I loved the night life, 16
I loved the bars, and the music and the excitement. That 17
was my life. I didn't know any better. This went on for 18
years. I finally did what I said I'd never do, I used a 19
needle, and I fell in love. I loved that instant rush, and 20
I couldn't get enough of it. I went down real fast. I 21
couldn't think of anything but sticking that needle in my 22
arm, and then where was I gonna get the next one. Then one 23
day after trying to find a vein to hit, I decided I had a 24
problem. I decided to quit, but I couldn't. The longest 25
I could go was two or three days and I'd be just nuts until 26
I got another fix. I finally went to my family doctor. I 27
didn't know what else to do. I told him I needed help. He 28
put me into the hospital for detox. I never want to forget 29
that withdrawal. I was climbing the walls, I couldn't eat, 30
I couldn't sleep. They had intravenous tubes in both my 31
arms for forty-eight hours. My liver was swollen, I had a 32
real bad kidney infection, and they found a growth on my 33
ovary the size of a softball. You see, I didn't know any 34

1 of these things were wrong with me because whenever I hurt,
2 I thought I needed a fix so I'd just get one. I can remember
3 the nurses changing my bed three or four times a day because
4 I sweat so bad and I just knew I had the crabs because I
5 could feel them crawling all over me, only it was with-
6 drawal and I didn't know it. I remember I asked for my
7 Bible and someone brought it to me. I started reading page
8 one. I was afraid; I've never felt so alone. A couple of
9 people from the program came to visit me. When I got
10 out of the hospital after sixteen days, I went to a meeting.
11 I started meeting other addicts, happy addicts. I got
12 strength and hope. I didn't think I was an alcoholic though.
13 I thought if I could just stop using drugs, I could still
14 drink. Well, five months later, I went out and sat down
15 at a bar and started drinking. Within four hours, I was
16 copping morphine and had a needle in my arm. Alcohol is
17 a drug. Once I picked up that first drink, I couldn't stop.
18 The next day I woke up and didn't know where I was. Oh,
19 the guilt! I entered a twenty-eight day re-hab that day
20 and I surrendered. People told me--"One day at a time",
21 "easy does it", pick yourself up, brush yourself off and
22 keep on going. I go to meetings, a lot of discussions, I
23 read all the literature I can get my hands on, I have a
24 phone book for program people and I use it. I pray every
25 morning and every night. I ask God to help me stay sober
26 through the day and I thank him at night. I have a sponsor
27 I use all the time. I talk to new people. I work the
28 steps to the best of my ability. I love my new friends,
29 and I love my God. Thanks to all of you for helping me
30 to help myself.

DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

I was the happy little housewife, living in a happy
little house--sticking a needle in my arm. 1

I was twenty-six years old with two children and 2
working on my second marriage (with my Knight in shining 3
armor) when I started to use drugs as entertainment. After 4
all, most people drank on weekends to have fun, why not a 5
little dope to liven things up a bit? My weekend heroin 6
using went on for a few years until, inevitably, heroin 7
began using me. Soon it was all I wanted and it didn't 8
matter what day of the week it was. 9

My "Knight" began to feel our Camelot left something 10
to be desired and started going to institutions and drug 11
programs, although he wasn't having any success. 12

I started looking for some help, so I went to Alanon 13
because it was obvious that he had a problem with drugs and 14
alcohol. I was 5'9" tall and weighed 114 pounds when I came 15
to this Program and thought I was "looking fine"! The 16
miracle of this Program worked even in Alanon, for I had 17
to get honest. They told me to "Keep coming back" and I 18
did again and again. I finally went to my first Narcotics 19
Anonymous meeting and knew I was home and safe at last! I 20
was still saying things like "I don't know what I'm doing 21
here, it's my husband who has the problem". Naturally, they 22
understood, and again I got the "keep coming back" and I did. 23

I got some phone numbers, a meeting directory and was 24
doing fine as long as I wasn't home or stayed in my car 25
to avoid my Knight-turned-drug addict. 26

One night on arriving home after a meeting, he was 27
waiting for me with some dope, saying there was still some 28
left. At that moment the "left overs" sounded good and I 29

1 used. The minute the chemical was in my arm I went insane.
2 It was cocaine and I never did like coke, for there was never
3 enough. I threw some money at him and demanded he score
4 some more. The next thing I knew we were fighting over the
5 coke cotton. I knew there was nothing in the cotton and so
6 did he, but we fought over it viciously as if our lives
7 depended upon it.

8 That night in 1975 was the last time I used drugs, even
9 though there were many nights when my husband bought dope and
10 offered it to me. He continued to slip on and off this
11 Program, but I stayed clean. I had to leave my house, my
12 car--all my material possessions. I had to go through a
13 divorce, get a sponsor, go to women's stag meetings, share
14 an inventory, and do many things I really didn't want to do
15 or that didn't make any sense to me, but I did them all--and
16 I didn't use.

17 I'm still 5'9" tall, although I now weigh a 160 pounds
18 and other people tell me I'm "looking fine". Through this
19 Program, I have acquired faith that if I stay clean, it will
20 get better. I know if I use, it can ONLY get worse.

21 I was given a second chance at living and I took it. I
22 have a job and function well there. I am not doing at all
23 bad as a wife and mother. By the Grace of God, this time
24 the happy housewife living in a happy house isn't hiding
25 anything any worse.

NOWHERE TO TURN

I am an addict and a member of Narcotics Anonymous. 1
Today I am able to live clean and sober because of the 2
Fellowship of N.A. 3

I am now thirty years old and began using drugs about 4
twelve years ago. 5

As I was growing up, I remember the feeling I had of 6
wanting to belong or be part of other groups of people. I 7
was a loner and did not know how to do this. Fear and in- 8
ferior feelings were a part of me since childhood. I was 9
unable to participate in sports and other activities because 10
of the feeling that I could not do it. I had a fear of 11
people, especially in groups, so I lived in a fantasy world 12
where I was somebody. I had few close friends as a child 13
and tried to control and isolate the friends I did have. I 14
wanted to keep them to myself for fear that others would only 15
take them away. 16

I was an only child and my father died at age three. I 17
was raised by my mother and grandparents. I was very sensi- 18
tive and did not want others to see this, so I tried to hide 19
it. I didn't like myself and always tried to be somebody 20
other than the person I really was. At an early age I would 21
escape the reality of the here and now by fantasizing about 22
the future. I thought somehow if I could change me or find 23
the right situation that I could be happy someday. My need 24
to control and dominate people only drove them away and I 25
felt rejected. 26

As I got older I began to rebel at the society that I 27
was blaming for my inability to be happy. At the same time, 28
on a deeper level, I blamed myself. I started to get into 29

1 trouble at home and at school for attention. Inside I was
2 hurting and was very confused but solutions were not at my
3 disposal and I felt as though I must do whatever it took to
4 be accepted by any crowd. I chose other kids who were
5 getting into trouble and breaking all the rules. But even
6 in that crowd I felt different.

7 Somehow I made it through high school and went on to
8 college to please my family. I was not ready for the
9 responsibility of college and I wasn't motivated to learn.
10 I felt out of place there and did poorly. At the end of
11 my first semester, I left school and got a job. I thought
12 that hard work and low pay were what I needed to prove my
13 manhood. This got old quick. I would develop problems with
14 people wherever I went and would run from one situation to
15 another, blaming others for the problems that would arise.

16 I began to identify with the peace and love movement
17 that was catching on around the country. I thought the musi-
18 cians of this era really had the answer and part of that
19 answer was to escape to enlightenment, with drugs. I felt
20 that I could be accepted by the "long-hairs" because they
21 talked of unconditional love and other spiritual principles.
22 I started smoking pot and then came that first acid trip,
23 followed by speed and barbiturates. My first experience with
24 each drug was wonderful to me and I wanted to keep doing it.
25 I especially liked the speed and acid in those days and smoked
26 pot to keep that stoned outlook on life. I thought the drugs
27 went along with the philosophies we all talked about and that
28 it was all spiritual and mystical.

29 One by one I tried all of the drugs that I said I'd
30 never do. My relationships with women were few and none were
31 successful. This drove me deeper into escaping with drugs.
32 I felt fear and excitement with this new, destructive way of
33 life. Sometimes I had doubts about drugs, but when I was
34 high I felt reassured and confident. I left the world behind

in those moments until I came down confused and afraid. 1
Fear of death became an obsession with me when I wasn't 2
high. The effects of the speed and acid helped nurture the 3
fear. I went back to school and continued to use more and 4
more. At one point, I cut my hair and started to drink a 5
lot. I thought a change of lifestyle was the answer but I 6
still managed to find reasons to take pills. 7

I felt that life was empty and meaningless. I became 8
more and more isolated at school and my consumption of speed 9
increased until I was using daily and my health began to 10
deteriorate. I became paranoid and fearful of people which 11
made it harder to function. I would hang out with users 12
on the weekends back in my hometown. It seemed that their 13
solution to the dilemma of using was to use more until you 14
reached the point of not caring at all. I finally quit try- 15
ing to control my using and decided to quit fighting it. If 16
I was going to be a dope-fiend and self-destruct, I was 17
going to do a good job of it. It seemed that it was be- 18
coming more and more accepted that dopers were losers and we 19
might as well stay loaded completely. "Take as much dope as 20
you can" became my new philosophy for survival. 21

The speed runs left me burnt out, I had sores in my 22
mouth, my skin was turning yellow and much of the time I 23
couldn't go out at night because I couldn't focus my vision 24
and I would hallucinate. I came home from school in the 25
summer of 1971 totally wasted. It was then I was introduced 26
to the cure for the burn out, heroin. Shooting morphine and 27
heroin was becoming more and more a part of the local dope 28
culture; and I had a few friends who were well into it. I 29
tried it and thought it was good for me because I could 30
relax and eat and sleep. I learned to use a needle and by 31
mid-summer, I was shooting dope two or three times a day. 32
Jails, doing time, violence were the new topics of conver- 33
sation, no more peace and love. Now it was conning, ripping 34

1 people off and doing whatever was necessary to get narcotics.
2 I did not like any of this new talk but the dope made it
3 more and more acceptable. Finally I got involved with break-
4 ing into houses and forging checks. I stole from my family,
5 lied, sold my musical instruments for money to get drugs.
6 At the end of the summer I was arrested for check forgery
7 and put in jail where I went into withdrawal.

8 It was a nightmare to realize how far down I had
9 fallen and was going to have to answer to the law for my
10 actions. My mother bailed me out and the local drug council
11 sent me to a psychologist for therapy, which did no good
12 because I was still using. So my lawyer suggested that I
13 go to Lexington to the Federal drug hospital. I stayed long
14 enough to detox and came home with the idea that I would go
15 to school and everything would be okay.

16 I also thought one shot wouldn't hurt anything. Back
17 into active using again, I sought help again at the local
18 drug council, because I knew they were sending addicts to
19 a doctor who was writing "scripts" for methadone and bar-
20 biturates for them. So my addiction took a new direction.
21 I began to get my supply legally from doctors. Things were
22 going well, so I thought, for about a year until the doctor
23 said he could not give me any more methadone. I panicked
24 and bought some speed on the street, and while I was in
25 withdrawal from the methadone, I started speeding. After a
26 few days I got crazy and started shooting a shotgun in my
27 back yard at imaginary foes. I ended up in jail for two
28 miserable weeks of insanity and withdrawals. The court sent
29 me to the State mental hospital where they put me on two
30 Quaaludes a night for sleep. All of the dope fiends on the
31 unit were requesting them for insomnia and bringing in other
32 drugs from visits. After thirty days, I was released and I
33 went straight for the doctor's office with another drug to
34 add to my requests. I continued to pop pills and drink

codeine cough syrup and booze. I started dating a girl who
used and my dependence on her was a means to get more drugs.
Her dependence on me was emotional. I feel that she kept
me alive through those times when my using was so insane
that I would have died without someone to keep me from
harming myself more than I did.

I had become a garbage can for drugs: street drugs,
prescription drugs, paragoric, cough syrup with codeine,
whatever I could get. I had been put on probation for the
check forgeries and I kept getting arrested for drunk driv-
ing or brandishing weapons. Needless to say, I was always
in trouble with the probation officer and they would lock me
up for awhile and then send me off to another rehabilitation
program or hospital.

In 1974, I was sent to a long term therapeutic community
after spending about four months in the County jail. I was
very sick emotionally when I got there and stayed withdrawn
for the first couple of months. I went through many in-
tense changes in the time that I was there, most of which
were positive. I learned to function with other people and
start to become responsible again. They gave me a place to
belong and something to believe in. What they couldn't
give me was a way to live without drugs outside of the
confines of the therapeutic community.

I finally was graduated from their program in 1977,
and as a graduate and also an employee, I was allowed to
drink. I decided that I wanted to return to West Virginia
because the lifestyle of New York was not for me. Really
I wanted to get away from them so I could try to use
successfully. I got a job in my old home town and started
to see my old girlfriend who was still using, and it wasn't
long until I was taking a pill or two. At some point, I
just let go and started shooting, speeding and eating
codeine pills and Quaaludes. I hit the depths of despair

1 because the dope had me again after all that time away from
2 it and nothing changed.

3 After all that therapy, I still couldn't control my
4 dope; it controlled me. I felt hopeless and worthless
5 like a total failure; I couldn't go back to the rehab house
6 because I felt like such a bad person, like a traitor. I
7 lost my job and continued to use, getting most of my drugs
8 legally from doctors. One doctor had become a friend of
9 mine and felt sorry for my dilemma, and I used his com-
10 passion as a means to con him out of more and more drugs.
11 I was using amphetamines, sedatives and various synthetic
12 opiates at the same time. I was miserable; my highs were
13 like lows. I couldn't live with drugs, but it was worse
14 without them. I just tried to stay numb or seek oblivion.
15 No longer could I blame my using on others like before;
16 although I tried. I really knew the truth. I was off pro-
17 bation so that was no longer a threat, but still I was a
18 prisoner to my addiction.

19 Between my sprees of using, I started to try church;
20 I began to feel as though God was my only hope, but I
21 wasn't sure if God really existed. Maybe I felt as though
22 God might just be a philosophical idea to comfort man and
23 make sense out of life. I needed something real and could
24 not find it. I began to drive away loved ones, and the people
25 I used to maintain my drug supply were cutting me off. I
26 went to live at a monastery for a couple of months and I
27 found some faith there that God was real. I still had a
28 faint glimmer in my mind that I could mix my newfound faith
29 with drugs. It did not work and I hit another bottom and
30 found myself alone and sick. It seemed as though being
31 alone and sick were a way of life for me.

32 I was ready to ask for help in a sincere way. I don't
33 believe in coincidences anymore and it was a miracle that I
34 stumbled upon the phone number of an N.A. member in the

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Atlanta, Georgia area. I spilled my guts to him over the
phone and asked him what he thought. He said it sounded
as though I needed to learn how to live without drugs. That
was so simple, but it said it all. With God's help, I caught
a bus to Atlanta in withdrawal, praying and crying, but I
made the journey. I feel that the willingness and courage
to make such a move came from a power greater than myself.

God, as I understand Him, has worked many miracles
in my life in the past two years of my recovery. In those
first meetings I heard people share honestly. They sat and
talked with me and they understood. They really cared be-
cause they were like me. They had been there. There was
no condemnation or lecture. They gave me hope by their
example. It really was possible to get a new way of life
filled with happiness and usefulness to other people. I
didn't have to be alone ever again. I could use my past to
help others and pass this new way of life on to others who
were in despair and misery. It was okay to let people know
when I hurt. I didn't have to pretend to be cool and have
all the answers or hide my true feelings. They loved me
back to health; people were patient when I needed to talk;
they listened and shared what had worked for them. I was
a part of their lives. They taught me that the steps were
the foundation of recovery.

The Program has freed me from my prison and shown me
how to be myself and live life on its terms. I owe my life
to Narcotics Anonymous. God works through the people in this
Fellowship. It works if you want it. Surrender has been
the key for me. If I work this Program, my life gets better.
Today I have friendship, love, a family of brothers and
sisters from all over the world from all walks of life. We
are united in a way that was once impossible for the addict.
We have been delivered from a living hell to happiness, peace,
joy and a fulfillment that escaped my wildest dreams in the

1 past.
2 All this has been freely given to me out of love. The
3 program is simple. It requires only sharing, working the
4 Twelve Steps, attending meetings and practicing the princi-
5 ples of the Program. First and foremost I must remember
6 that I suffer from a disease called addiction and that using
7 is insanity and death, so I cannot take that first fix, pill
8 or drink. Drugs in any form are poison to me and will kill
9 me emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically. God
10 has revealed His love for me through the Fellowship of N.A.
11 I am grateful to be able to write my story and share it with
12 whomever may read it. I pray that it may be of some help
13 and bring hope to someone like me who once had no hope. May
14 God be with you in the spirit of this Fellowship and I pray
15 that this new way of life will bring all the joy and love
16 it has brought me.

MID-PACIFIC SERENITY

I am a happy, grateful drug addict, clean by the grace of God and the Twelve Steps. Life today is fulfilling and there is a joy in my heart.

It wasn't always this way. I drank and used other drugs for twelve years; on a daily basis for ten of them. I was an addict of the hopeless variety. It seems to me that I was born that way.

I was brought up in a loving middle class family. My mother and father were very affectionate towards each other; my sister and I were wanted and loved children, and we were shown that in every way. To this day, I have never seen my parents or my sister loaded in any way, at any time. Yet I was to follow a different path. As far back as I can remember, I had felt separated from this family and all of life, never feeling a part of, always feeling different. Of course, I am talking of an intense fear of life. I don't recall ever feeling the simplicity of being a child.

Growing up in southern California, I seemed to get into all the normal things. I went to the beach a lot and I was involved in all the sports, yet always the fear was with me. I always felt inadequate and could never live up to my potential. Today I see how fear does stop us from living life to its fullest.

I had the addict's personality, self-will run riot, throughout my childhood. I always wanted my own way, and if things didn't go my way, I sure let people know about it.

I seemed to be an average student throughout elementary and junior high school. More or less withdrawn, I did have friends. I guess I was fifteen when I found my first

1 drug, alcohol. Was it a welcome friend! From the first
2 drink it was oblivion, and that's what I was looking for.
3 Finally I had found freedom from fear; booze unlocked a whole
4 new world for me, a world where I fit in. I remember from
5 the beginning; I identified with the winos, the ones who slept
6 on the beach and lived under the pier.

7 As I look back over those twelve years, I see how I
8 loved each new drug I tried, and pursued it, whether it was
9 glue, speed, downs, alcohol, psychedelics or whatever. I
10 always seemed to bounce from one to the other, going up and
11 down and all around. With each new drug came its own little
12 world, a new corner to crawl into and hide. My first few
13 highs did bring me a sense of freedom, yet in a very short
14 time the drugs stop working like that and I found myself
15 even more afraid of life than ever. Now it was worse for I
16 was not only withdrawn from life, I was caught in a whole
17 other world and didn't even know it.

18 I quit high school in the twelfth grade. Surfing had
19 been part of my life for the past few years, so it was off to
20 the Hawaiian Islands. My parents were very confused concern-
21 ing the son who didn't do a very poor job of hiding his
22 desperation. To all who were sane and living life, I appear-
23 ed very lost and unhappy.

24 That first trip to Hawaii was in 1962. The whole time I
25 was there I was loaded. Needless to say, I was very scared of
26 life. I returned to Southern California after only a month to
27 continue my addiction.

28 I had my first real love affair at this time. My girl-
29 friend became pregnant and a few months later I was back in
30 Hawaii, with more of the same drugs and booze. Then it was
31 back to Southern California. I seemed to find a sense of
32 relief for an instant in the trips I made. Yet soon after
33 arriving at my destination, the glamour wore off and I was
34 left with myself and that intense fear and desperation. I

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knew of no other way except to get loaded. 1

In the summer of 1963, I went back to Hawaii, at my 2
parent's expense. I had been living on the mainland, sleep- 3
ing in parked cars and wandering the streets. I ended up 4
broke, and sleeping in cars once again, and begging money on 5
the streets in order to get loaded. 6

I was nineteen years old at this time and was a full 7
blown addict and didn't even know it. I only knew I had to 8
drink and use drugs and that there was no other way. 9

The end of the summer, someone gave me their surfboard 10
to sell for a ticket back. Arriving back in Los Angeles, I 11
was at a point where I felt I couldn't go on. 12

I felt totally burned out. Other people my age were go- 13
ing to school or working. I didn't even know how to look 14
for a job, let alone work. A friend had just joined the 15
Navy. To me it seemed a way out, all I had to do was sign 16
my name. I had never thought about the service, never heard 17
of dodging the draft. Viet-Nam hadn't started yet. So I 18
joined. When I got off the bus at boot camp I knew I had 19
made a mistake. 20

To this point I had only been to jail three times, twice 21
for drinking and once for suspicion of possession. Now in 22
boot camp, I found myself locked up for three months. I 23
managed to drink cough syrup and Andre tea bags, thinking I 24
could get loaded. I got one joint in boot camp once. 25

After basic training, I was put aboard a brand new ship. 26
It was very gung-ho. For the next year and a half I stayed 27
loaded, being the only way I could handle it. 28

I stayed pretty much out of trouble; stayed high and did 29
nothing. Once, coming back after being at sea a couple of 30
weeks, I had been taking a lot of speed. I began pulling 31
back in and feeling very spaced out. I headed home where I 32
had left some grass in a drawer. Mom and dad had found it 33
and thrown it away. This triggered me and I went away for a 34

1 month. I stayed loaded and slept at different friends' houses.
2 I met a girl at this time whom I later married. While AWOL
3 one month, I grew my beard back out and pierced my ear. I
4 finally went back to the ship. They were just getting ready
5 to pull out of San Diego harbor and they wanted to put a
6 uniform back on me, so I jumped overboard and started swimming.
7 The sirens all went off; "Man overboard; man overboard; this
8 is not a drill". They lowered the boats and got me. I
9 spent four months in the brig.

10 I finally got out of the Navy. The psychiatrist said my
11 mind was becoming disordered from the use of marijuana and
12 LSD. I remember being in the brig and looking out at the
13 stars, knowing that if I ever got out I was going to grow my
14 hair out and do what I wanted. I would be happy. When I got
15 out of the service, I was as lost and miserable as I was
16 before, if not worse.

17 I was to meet a new friend in life and find a new world,
18 the world of fixing. The first time I shot speed, I fell in
19 love with the rush. This started something that lasted for
20 six more years, off and on - using and fixing all kinds of
21 drugs. I fell in love with the whole thing of getting off;
22 it wasn't so much what was in the needle, it was the needle
23 itself.

24 Shortly after getting out of the service, the girl I had
25 met and I went back to Hawaii. We lived in the country and I
26 was again shooting a lot of speed and downers. I found myself
27 doing a lot of dealing to stay loaded. The woman I lived with
28 was not an addict; she went to work and I got high.

29 She became pregnant and we were married. She said some-
30 thing about me being her husband on our wedding night and I
31 said, "I am no one's husband", and went to shoot dope and slept
32 on Venice Beach with my dogs. As I look back at these kind of
33 things, I can't believe the selfishness that was so much a
34 part of this addict.

During this period, I did a lot of dealing. My house 1
was being watched and things were getting really weird. My 2
parents were fully aware of all that was going on. They were 3
at a complete loss as to what to do. We had no money. My 4
wife was working and I was using. I was totally incapable 5
of work. I had no skills. I had attempted a few job training 6
classes, yet always dropped out because I felt inferior and 7
inadequate. So my parents got us out of Venice and we moved 8
to Hawaii again. 9

Somewhere in the months previous, I had gotten hold of 10
some books on yoga and meditation. They talked about love 11
and a light within, freedom and that God was love. I knew I 12
was lost and I wanted that "thing" inside. Up to this point 13
the only thing I knew about God was that I was always going 14
to hell in Jesus' name. 15

Back in Hawaii; my wife, four months pregnant, and I 16
were living in the country again. She knew I was using hard 17
drugs. Everyone was using grass, hash and LSD and an ex- 18
Harvard professor was the everybody's guru. We were all taking 19
our drugs for spiritual reasons and sitting around meditat- 20
ing looking for the light inside. However, I wasn't finding 21
any magic place inside like the books and gurus were talking 22
about. I was becoming more afraid and withdrawn. The drugs, 23
gurus, and meditation were not working. It seems I was al- 24
ways reading things like "when the student is ready, the 25
teacher will appear". Little did I know that I was getting 26
ready through the use of drugs and that the teacher would be 27
the Twelve steps of the Program. 28

My wife had our first child, a beautiful baby girl. We 29
were on welfare and life consisted of going to the beach and 30
taking drugs. 31

There was a four bedroom house on the beach next door 32
that was for rent. One day a very strange lady appeared. 33
She was about fifty, had long, graying hair to her waist and 34

1 wore a bikini. She said her God led her to this house and
2 she was supposed to live in it, although at the time she
3 had no money. She moved in anyway. When the landlord came
4 to show the house, she asked him to have the electricity
5 turned on and that she was supposed to live there. Through
6 various miracles, she did live there for the next six
7 months.

8 This woman seemed to radiate a feeling of love and joy
9 that I had never felt from anyone before. Immediately upon
10 meeting her I felt as though I had known her forever. Some-
11 thing in me was drawn to her. Little did I know that she
12 would become my sponsor and play such a big part in my life
13 for the next ten years. This was the beginning of a journey
14 that even today amazes me. It is a way of life, a way of
15 learning complete trust in a Higher Power. I have found a
16 love that purifies, a way of life where the constant care
17 for others becomes automatic.

18 It seems the student had become ready and the teacher
19 appeared. Needless to say, the house became a "Program"
20 house. The woman was an addict with eight years clean time.
21 She started a meeting at the house. I remember my first meet-
22 ing so well. I remember that for the first time I identified
23 with another human being, not so much because they used drugs,
24 but because of what went on inside. Fear was discussed, that
25 intense nameless fear of living, feeling seperated from every-
26 one. I guess that I had always thought it was just me who felt
27 that way. I was finally able to feel like I belonged. Psy-
28 chiatrists had labeled me all kinds of medical terms like
29 paranoid and schizophrenic. No one had ever said I was a drug
30 addict and that I had a disease. I finally felt hope. As I
31 look back, it seems I was finally ready for the program. I
32 was beaten, lost in life, searching for a God with drugs and
33 here was a way of life that was a spiritual life. I was able
34 to see other people who were like me finding a happy, clean

way of life. Yet I was not really ready because for three 1
more years I bounced in and out of the program, never being 2
able to grasp the concept of complete abstinence. 3

During that three year period, I would stay clean for two 4
weeks here and there, but I would end up using again. I 5
watched others around me come into the program and remain 6
clean. Looking back I can see that I had not yet hit my 7
bottom. I always rationalized that it was O.K. to smoke 8
just one joint if I stayed away from the "hard drugs". I 9
always ended up strung out. 10

My sponsor was a woman who followed her heart to wher- 11
ever God said go, carrying the message of the program, work- 12
ing with young addicts. The young seemed drawn to her. In 13
1970 her inner voice said "head for Europe", so off she went 14
with a few other clean members. They left financially broke 15
as usual, but spiritually rich. I was alone again. 16

It was Christmas of 1970. I had three months clean and 17
sober; the most I had ever had. Yet the feeling returned and 18
I picked up a joint. A few days later I took some reds and 19
within a week I was shooting dope again. This started a ten 20
month period of using, day and night - drinking, shooting 21
dope and taking pills. I got to a point where I knew I 22
would never get clean again. I had completely surrendered 23
my life to drugs. My wife left me. We had two children. Our 24
little girl was three and we had a little boy almost two. For 25
some unknown reason she left our little boy with me. Today I 26
know that God was working in my life. For the next three or 27
four months my son was the only thing that kept me alive. I 28
identified with the mother who uses and tries to raise 29
children at the same time. I found myself in many blackouts, 30
not even knowing where my son was. Yet knowing he was there 31
must have kept me somewhat aware of living. 32

On the morning of October 20, 1971 I woke up. There was 33
dope in the house but for some reason I didn't get loaded 34

1 right then. I took my son and went across the street to the
2 beach. It was a gray morning. I remember sitting on the
3 beach, crying, just wanting to die. I just couldn't go on.
4 A feeling went through me that I had never experienced before.
5 It was as though someone put a blanket around me. I felt
6 warm and peaceful within. A voice within said, "It's over,
7 you don't have to use again". I felt a peace I had never
8 before felt. I picked up my son and went home. One of my
9 clean friends had moved to another island, I flew over and
10 found him. When I walked in the door I told him I was
11 ready to do anything to stay clean. As I sit here and write
12 this it's October 19. Tomorrow I will have eight years
13 clean and sober and that's a miracle. I am still willing to
14 do anything to stay clean.

15 Staying clean and sober today goes so much beyond stay-
16 ing away from the first pill, fix or toke. It is a way of
17 life, a life that I call an adventure today. I have an
18 outline for living; it's the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anony-
19 mous. I either practice and live these steps or I die. I've
20 known more joy than I ever thought possible. I have also
21 known pain as I had never known before. They call it the
22 pain of spiritual growth. I came here selfish and self-
23 centered to the extreme. That self had to die and as that
24 process took place, it hurt. Yet by the grace of God and
25 the Fellowship of N.A., we walk through these periods and
26 stay clean.

27 We have found a way up and out, to fly free. I have
28 learned to share what is going on inside. It is a give-away
29 program, no matter what it is, love, joy, or tears and
30 fears—we have to give it away.

31 Today I am clean and sober by the grace of a loving God
32 and the Fellowship and for this I am grateful. God is loving
33 me now.

JUNKIE MOTHER

When I got to this program I knew I was dying - mentally, 1
spiritually and physically. I had been using drugs and alco- 2
hol for the past twelve or thirteen years with brief periods 3
of what I thought were control and never a thought of com- 4
plete abstinence. Since being clean and sober, I've been 5
able to look back at my addictive behavior and realize that 6
my ability to cope had never been up to par. I remember even 7
at age nine, the need to avoid pain-taking fifteen to twenty 8
aspirin a day because that's what I knew made me feel better 9
if anything hurt. What I didn't know at the time, and 10
didn't learn until coming to N.A. was that my pain was not 11
physical, but emotional and spiritual. For the next thir- 12
teen years I attempted to fill that hole in my gut with 13
anything I could, beginning with LSD in the hippie days, 14
I tried to find a Higher Power that I could control. 15

Eventually I got involved with black magic and witch- 16
craft. There is a long period of confusion after that; my 17
memory of dates and sequence of events is poor. I was taking 18
a lot of downers, uppers, weed, alcohol and drugstore dope. 19
I was arrested once, spent a short period of time in a 20
juvenile detention center, and saw a probation officer three 21
times afterwards. There were many times later in my drug 22
career that I thought of looking up that P.O. and asking 23
her, "Didn't you know, couldn't you see, why didn't you 24
lock me away then?" But that ability to put up a good front, 25
along with many other things, is what drove me to the gates 26
of insanity. I know today that there is no one person, place 27
or thing that is responsible for my actions. 28

I never again came into contact with the law, but I 29

1 know the feelings of the person who has done time, because
2 I was locked in a prison of my own making. I continued to
3 take chemicals of all sorts, eventually shooting heroin with
4 the rest of the gang. I believe that part of my early using
5 was due to my need to be accepted. As it progressed I
6 became more and more self-centered. By the time I got my
7 first fix, I knew I was doing it because I had to, for me
8 to be able to survive in this lonely, frightening world.
9 For the next seven years, my life was a series of runs and
10 clean-ups. I think one of the reasons that I stayed out as
11 long as I did, was because I believed that I had a certain
12 amount of control. Somehow I held jobs most of the time.
13 I got married (to another hype) and had a son. I was
14 never fired, but I didn't take into consideration the fact
15 that I had to quit jobs before they fired me for stealing
16 their money.

17 I was so strung out that when I got pregnant and had my
18 baby, I left the hospital fifteen hours after giving birth
19 because I was sick and had to fix.

20 I kept trying to prove to myself that it wasn't as bad
21 as it seemed, that I could get it together one way or the
22 other. I moved to different towns, got different jobs and
23 saw psychiatrists and doctors. I read self-help/awareness
24 books, switched from drug to drug and tried methadone on and
25 off the streets, but the obsessive, compulsive insanity got
26 worse and worse.

27 My little family and I ended up, a year after my son
28 was born, back at my parents' house. There I spent the last
29 six months of my using. My husband left, got arrested and
30 went into a recovery house. At this point, I was completely
31 incapable of caring for my son or myself. My mother took
32 over my son. I was lucky to be able to get out of bed in the
33 morning to try to hustle for the day. I was dying and I
34 knew it. I was praying to God for death.

Somehow, for some reason, I visited my husband three times in that recovery house and I saw and heard things I had never thought possible. The message was; Addicts Do Recover, and I knew it was my only hope, a last chance, and I went for it. Within a week I got myself checked into a recovery house and started recuperating from the disease they told me I had. There was no medication (I already knew that didn't work). They told me this program of complete abstinence and that by not putting any chemicals in my body I could get better. They took me to N.A. meetings every night --sometimes twice a day--and I listened carefully because I thought for sure there must be some catch to the whole thing. I haven't found one yet. What I have found is freedom - freedom from that immobilizing fear that kept me enslaved for so long.

I spent nine months in that house, building a foundation for myself, making new friends and finding out all I could about my disease and about this Twelve Step program. I found a Higher Power I accept and allow to help me. I believe I had a rebirth - a spiritual awakening - the day I walked in. I have not had an obsession to use or drink since that day and I know that I am not the same person who sat in a blood-splattered bathroom, trying to find a vein to fix that dime bag in, knowing that wouldn't even get me well.

Today I work full-time, drive my own car and spend my own money. I go to a lot of meetings, stay active in the service of N.A. and try to give as much as I was given when I got here.

My son is living with me again and with the help of the Fellowship and the Twelve Steps, we are both growing up together.

"I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPIER"

1 When I was fourteen years old I was insecure and naive.
2 My parents never told me very much about drugs or alcohol. I
3 guess they figured I was too young to want to try anything.
4 I was very lonely at this age and I felt I needed a crowd to
5 join. I started going to parties where there was a lot of
6 booze and pot. Beer was always my favorite and I thought
7 nothing of mixing it with pot. It didn't matter to me if I
8 drank and got high. I felt at that time that pot gave me
9 security and confidence to make friends.

10 I stayed at home a lot, even more than I went to parties.
11 My parents went out a lot and being as young as I was, they
12 never gave it a second thought to leave me home alone. They
13 never thought I'd touch anything, but one night I did. I
14 decided to try every bottle in the liquor cabinet. Then I
15 decided to take an aspirin. During that year, my dad had
16 had an operation on his leg and he had some downers for the
17 pain. I didn't know what downers were at the time, and by
18 mistake, I took one. Later on that evening my mom called to
19 see if I was okay. When she heard how I sounded on the phone,
20 she came home. I just told her that I wanted an aspirin and
21 I had picked up the wrong bottle.

22 That summer I went to camp in Maine. I had a very hard
23 time getting along with the girls there. I hated them and I
24 never enjoyed myself there. My parents would not let me come
25 home, so I had to stay and make the best of what I had. This
26 led me to more dislike of myself and more and more despera-
27 tion to make friends.

28 In my fifteenth and sixteenth years I started going to
29 more beer and pot parties. I liked drinking out of quart

bottles. One day some friends and I went to the park to have
a picnic. I got wasted. I was cooking a hamburger on a
hibachi and it started to rain. I took the hibachi and put
it in the car. I was lucky that my friends realized what
I was doing. They ran towards me and took the small grill
out. Some coals burned the seats and they also burned my
feet.

A lot of times we would party at motels with our current
boyfriends. We would tell our mothers not to call each other
by telling them that the others were sick. Then we would
call our mothers in the morning. We never got caught.

We used to skip school a lot to get high or drunk. I
used to con my way out of everything. I had at least two
or three men teachers. I was more developed than most girls
my age. So, all I had to do was wear low cut shirts and the
teacher would let me get away with anything.

My friendships usually lasted six months, maybe less.
They all started calling me lush.

In my seventeenth year I went to Colorado with a friend
of mine from Sarasota. We got drunk and high every night.
Later on that year, I went out of town again, and every
night there I was drinking screw drivers. I was drunk or
stoned all the time. I guess that time I was fighting my
loneliness and depression.

It was then time for me to go to college. I found it
easy to get what I needed there. I decided to get high all
the time and try to cut down on my drinking. I kept a bottle
of booze in my room just in case I ran out of pot and couldn't
get any. My friend's boyfriend and I would sit out in the
hall and drink a couple of six packs of beer. To me, at that
time, beer wasn't the same as hard liquor. My social life
was going very well. I felt that with pot, it was easier for
me to make friends. One night I went with some friends to a
cocktain lounge. I drank thirteen or fourteen vodka martinis.

1 My friend gave me three pills which I immediately took. We
2 went to a pizza parlor after the lounge. It turns out that I
3 passed out in the pizza parlor with my face in the pizza. When
4 my friend sitting next to me picked my face up out of the pizza,
5 I fell on the floor. The police came, but luckily we didn't
6 get arrested and I didn't O.D.

7 The next night we went out to a bar and my friend's rich
8 boyfriend treated us to drinks. I drank fourteen double vodka
9 and tonics. I got very sick that night. This guy drove me
10 home in his new white mustang and I threw up all over the side
11 of it.

12 I didn't do very well grade-wise in college. I figured
13 at that time I would make it up in the summer.

14 I started doing cocaine in the morning during the summer.
15 I was mixing drugs all the time. I managed to get at least
16 one good grade during the summer. Now I had three weeks
17 until the semester started. My parents went out of town so
18 I had the whole house to myself. Every night we had parties.
19 We had six or seven grams of coke a night besides anything
20 else we could get our hands on. I managed to get a few nick-
21 names at this time. They were: Promiscuous Paula, Boom
22 Boom, and Space Cadet.

23 The summer finally ended and my parents were coming home.
24 I left the house and went over to a friend's to help her wash
25 her car. I decided to take some downers. I went into the
26 house to get a light for the joint I had. I was walking back
27 outside through the kitchen when I slipped and fell. I had a
28 blackout and hit eight bottles of soda with my wrist.

29 After leaving the hospital, I went home for a week before
30 going back to school. I had a lot of guilt and blame hanging
31 on my shoulders. I decided to call a psychologist that my
32 parents and I knew. I figured that if anyone could help me,
33 he could. I couldn't stand walking around with all the guilt
34 and shame I was feeling. I went out the following night and

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drank sixteen rum and cokes, but all that did for me was make me sick. 1
2

I kept seeing this psychologist even though my drug and drinking problems kept getting worse. I was at a point that I felt I could out-smoke or out-drink anyone. I felt important. I tried acid once and didn't like it at all because I had a bad trip. One time a friend and I tried some mushrooms. We didn't remember what we had done that day. We were cleaning the house and I noticed some neatly folded laundry. Apparently we had gone to a laundromat and done our laundry, we just didn't remember. 3
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One of the main things that led me to drugs was fear of rejection. I feel this happens to many of us whether we want to admit it or not. To me it was all the time. Drugs seemed to take a lot of that fear away. 12
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I started to get hooked on speed and diet pills. I lost twenty-three pounds in five weeks. My friend convinced me that the diet pills were no good and I threw them away. But I still kept losing weight. I didn't realize that it was the cocaine that was doing it. I started getting black and blue marks on my arms and legs from vitamin deficiencies. I ignored that and continued to get the drugs I needed. I was failing almost every subject in school. I was always depressed and I didn't want to live. I couldn't keep a decent conversation because I would lose my train of thought. The most important thing to me in my life at that time was drugs. One night I got so wasted, I attempted suicide. Luckily a friend of mine caught me and stopped me in time. 16
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I finally decided that it was time for me to do something about my problem. My psychologist and I both agreed that I should go into a therapeutic community. This was a week before school ended. Since I knew that I would not be doing anymore drugs, I decided to go for it. I did some LSD, three grams of coke, and smoked a lot of pot. 29
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1 I told my parents the night before that I would be going
2 into an institution. My psychologist was there to ease the
3 pressure. My mom drove me to the place the next day. I was
4 absolutely terrified and wanted to turn back. My experience
5 of getting straight at this place was beautiful. I owe my
6 life to a lot of people. It had been five years of continual
7 drinking and drugging and I was glad that it was over.

8 I stayed in the institute for eight weeks. I had many
9 flashbacks and a lot of tears. I had a seizure on the seventh
10 week I was there. The doctor said it was a drug delayed re-
11 action from all the garbage I managed to dump into my system.
12 I learned a lot from that.

13 After leaving the institute, I went to California to work
14 for my aunt. When I got there, I found that my cousins were
15 well on their way to becoming drug addicts. I had a slip
16 there and decided to return home. Someone once told me that
17 if I ever started using again, it would be just as if I never
18 stopped. I found this to be very true.

19 I've been going to Narcotics Anonymous meetings for four
20 months. I've been clean for a month. Without N.A. I don't
21 know where I'd be. It's been one day at a time for me and
22 I've never been happier. Things are beginning to work out much
23 better than before. I don't ever want to go through the hell
24 I did, ever again. My security is in N.A., not in drugs.

TODAY IS ALL THAT MATTERS

All my life I have felt like the square peg in a round hole. My earliest recollections are of anger, frustration and resentment because I felt misunderstood. As a small child, I was extremely emotional and highly sensitive. I cried easily. My feelings were constantly being hurt.

As I grew older, I learned to internalize most of my feelings. I thought that if people--family, friends, peers--didn't know they had "gotten to me," they wouldn't be able to hurt me as often, at least, not intentionally.

I grew up in a large family, in a small town. Coming from old Southern, pioneer stock, I had dozens and dozens of peripheral relations because we had lived in the area for generations. In addition, everybody knew everybody else, as in any small town. But I was very lonely. I never fit in wherever I was. I just knew, somehow, that I was "different".

As a young child, I was overweight, bookish and a sissy. I was teased a lot by my peers, as well as the immediate family. Early, I began running away. I simply could not handle "reality" as I perceived it, and retreated into an inner world of fantasy. If I didn't like a particular situation I merely pretended it did not exist. Because I read a great deal, I spent most of my time being whatever hero I was enamored of that week.

My behavior took on some rather bizarre aspects while still in grammar school. One entire summer, I spent much of the daylight hours literally in the closet. At night I came out after the family had gone to sleep to replenish the flashlight batteries, hoard up on sandwiches and gather a new book.

I was despondent much of the time. I was constantly in depression. I became a loner. Yet, much of what I really

1 felt I covered up with "rousing good fellowship," when I
2 could not avoid social or familial contacts. I began think-
3 ing about dying, and plotted my suicide as early as age
4 eight or nine. By age ten, I had just quit crying, completely.
5 And I never cried again, under any circumstances, for more
6 than 20 years. Sadly, when I stopped crying, I also stopped
7 laughing. Eventually, I even stopped smiling except by a
8 rather half-hearted pretense.

9 By age twelve, I had discovered alcohol. I had stolen
10 some of my step-father's whiskey, and managed to get a few
11 swallows to stay down. I felt like I had discovered the elixir
12 of the gods. I believe I was alcoholic from the start. That
13 first drink made me feel on the inside like everybody else had
14 always looked on the outside. From that day forth, I drank.
15 Never successfully, and not constantly for a number of years,
16 but I drank--every chance I got.

17 By age 15, I knew two things about myself. I knew I
18 was an alcoholic and I knew I was homosexual.

19 I didn't know what an alcoholic was, but I knew I was
20 one. All I knew about alcoholism was that my paternal grand-
21 mother had recovered from alcoholism in Alcoholics Anonymous.
22 She had been a skid row denizen for a number of years and
23 suddenly was clean, serene and sober. I figured I would just
24 have to get as bad as she, and then maybe I could recover too.
25 I think at that point I semi-consciously set out to drink
26 myself into real alcoholism, whatever that is.

27 I didn't know for sure what homosexuality was either, but
28 I knew I was not like other boys. All I knew was that being
29 "queer" was the most horrible sort of social depravity around,
30 and the only two known "queers" in town were not very good
31 role models. I literally lived in terror of being found out!

32 I drank more and more, and I drank more often. I did
33 not establish a single lasting relationship with anyone dur-
34 ing my teen years. Every time somebody got too close, I ran.
5 I was in constant terror of gym class, and was always very
36 conscious to sit, walk, talk and act in a "masculine" manner.

I don't think I looked at anyone below the neck until I was 1
over thirty. (Only "queers" are crotch watchers, remember.) 2

After high school, I managed to get in college, but it 3
was a men's school and I couldn't handle the accumulated pres- 4
sures. I was from a really poor background and most of the 5
students (and my God they were all boys) were well-to-do. It 6
was a religious school and rather strict, so I had problems 7
adjusting as I had not had any real discipline for years. Too, 8
my drinking had suddenly become chronic and that kept me in 9
constant trouble with the dean, especially after I started 10
"bootlegging" to other students. 11

Another student and I quit at the same time and literally 12
dropped out of sight. We wound up in New Orleans and for 13
months my family had no idea where I was, if I was alive, 14
nothing. 15

I picked New Orleans for two reasons: you could buy 16
whiskey legally at age 18 and the liquor stores and bars are 17
open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 18

I hit New Orleans with a bank account, new clothes, a 19
nice apartment; I got a job and just knew I was going to make 20
my mark in the world. 21

Within a matter of days, I had discovered, in order, pot, 22
LSD, speed, downers, hash, inhalers, poppers, cough syrup, 23
belladonna and several other varieties of "trash" drugs. 24
Belladonna was one of my favorite drugs of choice, and I 25
overdosed, intentionally, on more than one occasion. Of 26
course, I mixed the drugs liberally with all available 27
varieties of alcohol, but mostly wine, beer, bourbon and 28
scotch. 29

Within four months, I had hit skid row, and didn't recog- 30
nize it. I hung around the French Quarter and Irish Channel 31
mostly. I lost all motivation except to stay high. I spent 32
the bank account, I got kicked out of the apartment (leaving 33
the clothes behind), and I lost the job. I became unemployed 34
and unemployable. Most of the time I had no place to live, 35
and slept many nights on the levee under some azalea bushes. 36

1 I learned to panhandle and practiced my shoplifting skills.
2 If I got really hungry and was too shaky to boost at the
3 French Market, I could always eat at the "Sally".

4 I had no hygiene (azalea bushes don't come with hot and
5 cold running anything). I got to the point that I was thrown
6 out of a "hash house" because I SMELLED bad!

7 And I did not recognize that this was really skid row.
8 Too, I never knew I was a drug addict. I couldn't be a jun-
9 kie because I never knowingly took any Class A narcotics and
10 I never put a needle in my vein.

11 In a moment of clarity after an arrest for vagrancy, a
12 really bad acid trip and my worst belladonna overdose, I knew
13 I was in serious trouble. I was 19 years old and about to
14 die. I had been suicidal for years, but suddenly I didn't
15 want to die. Also, I had to get out of New Orleans. The
16 sexual problems had become more difficult to deal with. There
17 was a very large and visible gay community in New Orleans,
18 and for where I was coming from, I was disgusted. I only saw
19 the drag queens and other bizarre members of the community
20 and I knew I would kill myself before I became like "them".

21 I did the only thing that looked practical, from my warped
22 perspective; I got some responsibility. In order, I joined
23 the Navy, got married and had a family.

24 I had "dated" to avoid suspicion and I had even gotten
25 "engaged" once, but I never really had a meaningful rela-
26 tionship with a girl. My wife was no exception. I never let
27 her get close. Out of fear, I avoided any kind of "drug" for
28 the next few years, but I began drinking more and more. I
29 was by now a daily drinker. I had to. I couldn't function
30 without help. I had no sex life without a drink, I could
31 not work without a little help from time to time, and every
32 social situation was so fraught with stress I needed a drink
33 or two or three just to make an appearance.

34 The marriage did not last long. We fought constantly.
35 I was a genuine brute, both to her and the children. We were
36 heavily in debt because most of my income went for booze.

She worked literally to buy food. 1

When the marriage really began breaking up, I started 2
hanging around dopers and chipping with uppers, downers and 3
pot. I moved in with a girl whose problem appeared even 4
worse than the one I had begun to suspect I had. 5

That relationship didn't last long. Most of the time, 6
I just stayed home alone and drank and drank and drank. 7

I recognized in a second moment of clarity that I was 8
headed back to the same scene I had left behind in New Orleans 9
five years before. 10

Again I did the only thing that appeared practical. I 11
got married again and started another family. I got another 12
job, moved to another town, and later to another state. 13

My new job interfered with my drinking, because I worked 14
irregular hours at various locations throughout the deep 15
South states. Because I wasn't drinking as much, I managed 16
to make a fairly decent employee, although I am sure that I 17
was a miserable husband and lousy father. I secured a pro- 18
motion at work that sent us to the Southwest. 19

We moved in December, just after Christmas, and in mid- 20
January I developed several frightening physical symptoms. 21
A general practice physician sent me to a diagnostician. 22
The diagnosis was that at the age of 26, I was dying from 23
"old age". I was literally worn out. I was drinking nearly 24
a quart of whiskey a day. I was more than fifty pounds 25
underweight, as I had practically stopped eating altogether. 26
I had some severe organ damage and I was in the initial stages 27
of heart disease. 28

Amazingly my drinking was never discussed, other than I 29
casually mentioned that I drank a little "occasionally." 30

The marriage began to fall apart. We were in serious 31
financial difficulty. I was more and more depressed and more 32
and more suicidal. But, superficially, it looked okay. We 33
had a nice house and car, I had a good (high-paying) job, we 34
attended church... And I just knew I was losing it! I could 35
feel reality slipping further and further out of reach. I 36

1 have never been more scared, frightened and confused.

2 Counseling with a priest finally sent me to A.A. I was
3 in such a state of mental deterioration that I don't know for
4 sure in which month I attended my first meeting. I just know
5 it was during the summer. I will probably never know what
6 happened, for sure, after that. I started stopping drinking.
7 I had only tried to stop one time before in the past several
8 years. That was after the lengthy session with the diagnos-
9 tician. That 36-hour period showed me what compulsion, ad-
10 diction, and obsession really were. I could not quit. I
11 had to have a drink. I was in the complete thrall of alco-
12 hol, and I no longer cared if it were expensive scotch or
13 vanilla flavoring.

14 I did not come into A.A. with enthusiasm. I did not get
15 "sober" at my first meeting. I had a bad attitude. I was
16 angry, intolerant, smug, and just too damn smart! I con-
17 tinued to drink off and on and go to meetings. Slowly, I
18 began to hear the people when they said "come back, glad to
19 see you, we are here to help." I made thirty days on sheer
20 will power. I discovered the true nature of the disease then,
21 because I did not replace the "power" of addiction with the
22 "Power of the Program".

23 After thirty days of "dryness" I found it necessary to
24 "commit" suicide. There was a trip to a psychiatric ward,
25 visits with the shrink, antabuse, guilt, remorse, shame...
26 But I kept going to those damn meetings and hating every single
27 minute of it. I got five weeks of sobriety and had one more
28 "slip". Something happened during that last slip that I will
29 never understand. I received the gift of hope, out of no-
30 where. God knows I had not put forth even the least bit of
31 willingness. I didn't even have "the want to, to want to".
32 But I knew I could really get sober and stay sober.

33 I was lucky. I had a sponsor and people around me in A.A.
34 who believed in a program of TOTAL abstinence--absolutely no
35 mood-changing, mind-altering chemicals in any form. I did
36 go to some N.A. meetings, but I couldn't get anything there.

All they did was talk about "being back on the streets" and "remember when".

A.A. did not fulfill all the needs of my recovery program, maybe because of my own shortcomings, but I was never comfortable talking about the "drugging" and I was in the program and sober nearly four years before I got comfortable enough to really open up and talk about ME. I was still character acting much of the time.

A.A. tended to be an older crowd in that area. Most of the "old-timers" were old timers, and straight. There was talk about "dual addiction," but that didn't feel right. Somehow I knew that addiction was addiction was addiction. I did learn, by this time, to open up more freely, but there was little spontaneity.

Finally, I moved a third time to another state. I got involved with a "meeting" whose members who were from different 12-step groups (A.A., N.A., O.A., Al-Anon). The N.A.'s kept inviting me to N.A. meetings, but I wouldn't go. The N.A.'s I had met earlier didn't have very good recovery records, and the few meetings I had attended were disappointing and unfulfilling.

Seemingly by accident, I was on campus of a local university shortly after moving to the city where I now live. I was attending a seminar in another area of the campus and "stumbled" unintentionally in to a service conference of N.A. I sat in on one meeting and was hooked. It was a week-long conference and I called work and laid off, I stayed at the conference nearly round the clock. I went home only to shower and change and slept and ate at the conference.

I was overwhelmed with love and something spiritual that I couldn't identify. Although I could, if I had to, talk openly about myself to just about anyone, it was never a really comfortable situation. Usually I felt rather apologetic and had an intense need to explain myself. I guess I was still seeking approval at all costs.

1 I had come into A.A. with an absolute, unequivocal "hands
2 off" policy--you do not touch me, ever...physically or emo-
3 tionally. The N.A. conference changed that. I seemed para-
4 lyzed every time somebody got too close and I couldn't run.
5 I literally got hugged into happiness, on a 'round-the-clock
6 basis. The intense spiritual feelings were electric--love
7 literally pervaded the atmosphere in a tangible manner.

8 I had, because of the kind of sponsorship I had received,
9 always been active in A.A. service work. I chaired, answered
10 the Central Office tape at night, made twelve-step calls,
11 emptied ashtrays--whatever seemed needed. It was genuinely
12 satisfactory, and I received many blessings as a result of
13 trying to live the program to the best of my ability. How-
14 ever, there had always been some secret inner feeling of
15 "I have got to do this in order to stay sober." I am grate-
16 ful for A.A. and the A.A. program. I attained degrees of
17 serenity, peace, compassion, love and many other wondrous
18 joys beyond my wildest imaginings during the five years of
19 sobriety preceding that N.A. conference.

20 But, everything I received from N.A. is geometrically
21 more wonderful. I am still, at times, in awe of this experi-
22 ence. Today, I no longer am involved in the program because
23 I need to be; today I am involved because I want to be.

24 I still have many of the same problems today that I
25 brought with me to the fellowship. I am still, I think,
26 a square peg in a round hole. Now I understand though, that
27 I am where I am because of my own actions.

28 I am still gay, and still married. That means I don't
29 fit "properly" in either society. I still have financial
30 problems from time to time, because I still let my will take
31 charge. I have learned that God's way is better, but am not
32 yet ego-free.

33 One of the greatest benefits I have received from N.A.
34 is that today, I do not need to explain who or what I am.
35 All that matters is that I am a fellow addict, suffering from
36 an incurable disease. I feel truly a part of the whole.

My past is only important in that it got me here.	My today	1
is all that really matters.		2

THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

1 My father warned me, the day I was caught taking "over
2 the counter" ups, when I was 14, "This is the way it starts,"
3 he said. "First these, and someday you'll end on heroin!"
4 I laughed at him...

5 I was an addict from the day I took my first mind-
6 changing chemical, beginning innocently enough, with that
7 handful of "over the counter" ups. This launched a career
8 of addiction spanning every drug I could find, a downhill
9 road taking me through institutions, jail, attempted suicide
10 and insanity. I did not know there was a way to live with-
11 out drugs until I found the program at age 25. It is still
12 a miracle to me after six years of clean time and sanity.

13 The roots of my unmanageability reach far back into child-
14 hood, long before I took my first drug. I had a psychologi-
15 cal make-up ripe for addiction: I was overly sensitive,
16 easily frustrated, had trouble accepting life the way it was,
17 and always wanted to be someone else. I lived in a fantasy
18 world of books and movies; when reality was not colorful or
19 happy enough to suit me, I withdrew to this private world
20 where I could become anyone I chose. I do not remember being
21 very happy. There was conflict in my home over my father's
22 alcoholism and my mother's emotional problems, but my un-
23 happiness stemmed from my inability to accept people and cir-
24 cumstances the way they were and myself the way I was. I was
25 also plagued with constant fear and anxiety--fear that I
26 wouldn't get taken care of, that something would happen, that
27 I wasn't good enough. Fear in one form or another has haunted
28 me all my life and is only now beginning to fade.

29 When I was 11, I was taken out of school for being "too
30 nervous." This intensified my feelings of being inadequate

and different. I started believing there was "something wrong 1
with me." I also learned to hide, to avoid things that were 2
painful. 3

These feelings fed my addiction later; I decided I would 4
belong at any cost and that I would no longer suffer emotional 5
pain. I soon discovered that mind-changing chemicals had this 6
magic about them; they would kill the pain (any pain), help 7
me feel "comfortable" anywhere, and take the rough edges off 8
the world. I began drinking at age 14, and for the next three 9
years that was the only drug I used; however, I used it the 10
same way I later used speed, acid and heroin--to change the way 11
I felt and to blot out unhappiness. To me there is little 12
difference between the two, and I thank N.A. for helping me 13
see this with its program of total abstinence. I stay away 14
from the first fix the same way I stay away from the first 15
drink, for any mind-changing chemical interferes with my 16
clean time. 17

But I did not know this at age 17. I only knew that alco- 18
hol was the greatest friend I had ever had, and when I became 19
paralyzed with depression and hospitalized that year, I had 20
no idea how much it had to do with addiction. I rationalized 21
that it was just the strain of being away at college and over- 22
looked the fact that I had been drinking daily for that whole 23
year. Then I was introduced to other drugs by a well-meaning 24
psychiatrist, and it was just like Christmas to me! They 25
shot me up with chemicals to make me talk, speed to make me 26
happy, and tranquilizers to relax me. From the first injec- 27
tion all I knew was that this was the most wonderful stuff 28
in the world! It was five times better than alcohol because 29
I wasn't sick at my stomach and I flew much, much higher. 30
And I knew that when I was high on that stuff, I felt OKAY! 31
I was psychologically addicted from the beginning--I loved 32
the feeling and wanted it always. 33

I don't remember much of that time; I drifted in and out 34
of reality, which was the pattern of most of my addiction. 35
I totally flipped out and began hallucinating and was given 36

1 shock treatments. The doctors called it a "psychotic break"
2 but today I wonder how much of it was due to my drinking and
3 the "anti-psychotic" medication I was taking.

4 After the shock treatments, I spent almost a year in a
5 hospital recuperating. It was a year marked by crippling
6 depression, my first suicide attempt and isolation in seclu-
7 sion rooms. Thus began a pattern that lasted for the next
8 seven years. I bought the theory that I was crazy and played
9 that role to the hilt. I never spent a clean day in an insti-
10 tution because there were always plenty of pills and I usually
11 could sneak out to drink. For a long time I remained bitter
12 toward psychiatrists and therapists, claiming they had never
13 helped me, but how could they help someone who was always
14 stoned and rarely honest?

15 Although the hospitals were private and very good, as soon
16 as I emerged from my fog I began to rebel. After all, I never
17 asked to be there, to get screwed up or to "be born!" Play-
18 ing victim was one of my star roles and I gave it one hundred
19 percent, blaming my parents, doctors, and fate for my "mis-
20 fortune" and never once guessing where the real responsibility
21 lay. To this day that feeling persists and it's difficult
22 not to blame "God" when things don't work out the way I want
23 them to. The doctors at that hospital finally threw up their
24 hands and said they'd done "all they could do." I was to
25 hear that phrase often in the next seven years. They told
26 me not to use any drugs or the psychosis might recur. Natur-
27 ally, the first thing I did upon release was to get drunk and
28 score some pills.

29 It didn't take long to find some cooperative psychiatrists
30 to keep me supplied with amphetamines and tranquilizers. I
31 became obsessed with staying high; I lived in a synthetic
32 world where there was a pill to deal with every emotion. I
33 attempted college again, but soon school interfered with my
34 drinking and drugging. Also, I had discovered the wonderful
35 world of psychedelics! And there was plenty of marijuana,
36 plenty of parties, and plenty of friends at last. I had some

good times at first: drugs bridged the social gap I had al- 1
ways felt and gave me something in common with others. Al- 2
though I always drank to get drunk and did dope to get loaded, 3
in those days the consequences weren't too severe. I could 4
still get by in the world. 5

Then I heard about San Francisco and Haight-Ashbury. It 6
sounded like a paradise to me and I split for the West Coast. 7
It was far out at first, all love and sunshine and flowers. 8
I felt I had found my home at last! I moved right into the 9
middle of the Haight, threw away my dresses and let my hair 10
grow longer. It was pure fantasy, full of strange sights and 11
people, just like my dreams. There I never had to be anyone 12
I didn't want to be; I simply donned another costume and 13
changed names for the night. Nothing was permanent, every- 14
thing was possible. I thought I had found true freedom. I 15
didn't realize it had chains. It soon became apparent, 16
though. My first summer in California was spent searching 17
for a way to stay permanently high on psychedelics. I 18
alternated acid, mescaline, psilocybin and STP, and almost 19
succeeded in staying permanently crazy. I discovered many 20
other mind-changing substances along the way. Soon the only 21
objective was to get as high and far away from reality as 22
possible, however possible. I used everything I could get 23
my hands on, although my drug of choice was speed. The 24
streets were a virtual supermarket of drugs, and I found 25
lots of support for staying loaded. There were uppers and 26
downers, acid and peyote, speed and cocaine, smack, THC and 27
always marijuana. I surrounded myself with people who were 28
at least as stoned as I was, for that way there was no guilt. 29
Drugs were first and foremost in my life, before any person, 30
place, or thing. 31

One by one my values began slipping away. I began doing 32
all the things I said I never would do: trading my body for 33
drugs, stealing from friends, ripping off places, and get- 34
ting farther and farther from myself. I lost track of time; 35
I was unable to hold a job, so I got on welfare and started 36

dealing. Nothing mattered but staying loaded. Then I started
hitting the hospitals again, several times waking up in a
locked ward without knowing how I got there. The fantasy
rapidly turned into a nightmare. Soon I could not come down
from speed any longer, so I started fixing smack. However,
I couldn't even be a good junkie because I was getting too
crazy and erratic. My behavior was totally unpredictable.
And one drug by itself was never enough for me.

I wanted to get absolutely wasted. But no matter how high
I got, I always had to come down, and that was when the agony
hit. I never felt uncomfortable except when I was so loaded
I couldn't move. I never seemed to fit anywhere. I changed
drugs to change that feeling, "Maybe if I become a speed
freak," I thought, "I'll belong," and when that didn't work,
"Maybe if I'm a junkie...". I changed groups of people I
hung out with, from straight to gay people, from acid-heads
to characters, but nothing worked. I could never run away
from myself, and that was the person I hated most.

Days and nights faded into each other in a blur; I woke
up in strange places with strange people, not knowing how I
got there; I would go to the store for groceries and end up
freaking out and running home; I started making skin flicks
for easy money and found myself in L.A. in a porno studio one
day and wandering the streets in a daze that same night.
People slipped in and out of my life like shadows on a movie
screen. I could not maintain a relationship with a man and
moved in with anyone who would take me. I holed up for days
at a time, too afraid to go out on the street. There were
times when I literally could not function and would lie in
bed staring at the ceiling. And there were always drugs. I
could not get up in the morning without something in my
system.

I used to wander down the street and wait for someone to
take me home! I felt like a leaf in the wind. I started
cutting my arms with razor blades, not knowing it was anger
and self-destructiveness.

In desperation I went home to my parents in Texas, thinking that a change of scenery would help. I was finding it hard to take care of myself. Little did I know that geographic cures never work. My illness simply progressed. I can remember that time only in bits and pieces. There are chunks of my life that are totally blotted out; to this day I do not remember them, and the things I do remember I have many times wished I could forget. Except today I know that with the program those same painful things can become valuable tools. I have found that even the most humiliating and hurtful memories are valuable in sharing with another addict who may feel that he is the only one who ever experienced that.

I went downhill fast after I got to Texas, and today I consider that a blessing. It got me to the program that much faster. I spent six months in a psychiatric ward and barely remembered it. I could feel the walls closing in and pray desperately for some kind of sanity; then I would hear myself screaming, black out and wake up in restraints. I stopped believing in "God" altogether then. I overdosed several times. I became pregnant, had a miscarriage and found out when they put me in the hospital that I had a malignancy. After my initial shock, I realized that this was what I had been waiting for all my life, a socially acceptable way to die. This really appealed to me and I went home to my parents' house to die. I languished in vain for six weeks but kept getting healthier. And the healthier I got, the angrier I got. I can laugh about this today but then it was tragic. I felt like the butt of some huge cosmic joke, and hit the streets determined either to kill myself or become a vegetable so I wouldn't be aware of anything anymore.

I very nearly succeeded. I hit another mental ward and finally ended up on a methadone program, thinking that at last I had found the answer. This drug would certainly kill the pain, the anxiety and torment I felt most of the time. But I ended up more strung out on methadone than I had been

1 on junk, and I didn't even think it made me high until I
2 kicked it! My life was falling apart rapidly and I knew I
3 was out of control. I couldn't even hold a job as a top-
4 less dancer because I was too stoned. I had the sense that
5 time was running out. I was living over a warehouse in a
6 ghetto with the rats and the roaches and a psychopath who
7 stole my methadone while I was asleep, who once tried to
8 strangle me. After a year on methadone and all the speed,
9 coke, downers, and alcohol I could consume, I reached my
10 bottom. I got beaten up at the methadone center one day and
11 refused to fight back because I was afraid I would get kicked
12 out of the program. I felt as though something broke inside
13 at that moment. I knew I would do anything for dope and
14 wasn't even human anymore. I couldn't seem to die and was
15 afraid to live. I was desperate. I decided to "kick" one
16 more time.

17 I had to go "cold turkey" since the hospital didn't have
18 a methadone license, and while it was painful, it is some-
19 thing I hope I never forget. Many times in the beginning
20 I stayed clean only because I didn't want to end up like
21 that again. I was too sick to take care of myself for weeks.
22 My faithful parents let me stay with them one more time, and
23 often I would sit in the same chair for hours, unable to move.
24 Everything was too bright, too loud, too close. I really
25 believed I was going crazy, that I had burned out my brain
26 for good. When I found out that I had written some bad
27 checks several months before, I didn't know how I was going
28 to cover them. I couldn't work and couldn't even hustle.
29 I wrestled with the fear of going to the joint and the grim
30 relief it might bring. If I were locked up, at least some-
31 one else would manage my life. I knew at that point that I
32 was unable to manage my own life. Despair and hopelessness
33 engulfed me and I prayed to die. Instead, I ended up at an
34 A.A. oriented women's halfway house and learned how to live
35 again.

Some months before I had been dragged to some A.A. meetings but remember nothing about them. However, in my despair I decided to try it as a last resort. Today I know that it was my Higher Power working in my life. There was no N.A. to support me in staying off all mind-changing chemicals, but the A.A. program gave me hope in the beginning. As far as I'm concerned, the Twelve Steps can work regardless of where you learn them.

I had no trouble admitting my life was unmanageable, but it took me almost a year to admit I was powerless over all mind-changing chemicals. I thought if I stayed off hard drugs I'd be straight. I thought it didn't hurt to drink, smoke grass or take muscle relaxants to sleep! After all, I had too many "emotional problems" not to take something. I was "sicker than everyone else!"

I lived this lie for months, although I did stay clean most of the time I was in the women's house. I was in that house just long enough to give me a taste of something better, something beautiful. Small miracles began happening. When I called about the bad checks (which were 4 months old and should have been turned over for prosecution) I was told that they had been "lost" and yes, they would be glad to make arrangements! Also, I began to get a sense of a Power greater than myself. Every day I stayed clean convinced me that there was a God. After all, I had never even lasted one day before. Doing any kind of mind-changing chemicals was never quite the same after that. Although I was only using what I considered "minor" drugs, I couldn't deceive myself anymore; I knew it was slow suicide. I finally snapped one day--why kill myself slowly and painfully again? Why not just get it over with? And that is when I realized that I didn't want to die; I just didn't know how to live.

I went back to meetings and started praying constantly. "Even if I end up in the nuthouse, God," I'd pray, "just let me go cold stone straight." I met some other people who had been strung out and we decided to start an N.A. meeting. We

1 talked to people from other cities who were in the program and
2 finally started a little group. It was for our benefit more
3 than anyone else's. We had very few members in the beginning
4 but it didn't matter. We learned how to open up, share, and
5 love each other. It was the first meeting I was ever able to
6 talk in. I felt accepted and understood there. I learned the
7 value of service, too. Since there were so few of us then, we
8 all had to pitch in and help, and that's when I got my first
9 feeling of self-worth. I felt at last that I might have some-
10 thing to contribute after all.

11 That was six years ago. Since then, the group has grown
12 to six groups in the city. Most of the original members are
13 still clean. Through the grace of my Higher Power and the help
14 of this Program I have stayed clean, also. My life which was
15 once so dark is filled with light and beauty today. The miracle
16 was gradual but complete. Once I got involved with the Program,
17 going to meetings, sharing with others and working the Steps,
18 my life cleared up. I am happier today than I ever dreamed of
19 being. More than that, I belong and my life is of value. I
20 want to live today. And I, who was so afraid of closeness, now
21 have a wonderful (clean) husband with whom to share my life. I
22 can face things I once ran from and am slowly conquering the
23 fear that controlled me. I have more peace, self-acceptance and
24 sanity than I ever had.

25 And most important, I have a Higher Power who loves me and
26 from Whom all these gifts come. Without that, I am nothing.
27 But with God and the Program, my life has purpose and direction,
28 beauty and meaning at last. If I continue to give freely of
29 the blessings I have received, they can only multiply and grow
30 stronger.

31 The Program is more than a way to stay clean, it is a
32 transformation, like that of a caterpillar unfolding into a
33 butterfly. It is a way to become what you would like to be.
34 It is an awakening to the realization of a tremendous Power
35 within you that can overcome anything in your life. You will
36 not necessarily be free from problems but you will be able to

handle them. We who have survived have that rarest of chances	1
a new life to live and freedom in choosing how to live it.	2
What greater gift is there?	3

CLEANED UP AND SOBERED UP, WITHOUT BEING LOCKED UP

1 I grew up in what I call a nice area of Florida, with two
2 good parents, two brothers and one sister. The first time I
3 ever remember getting stoned was on alcohol at age thirteen.
4 This was also my first drink without supervision. I felt very
5 free; I loved getting loaded, but I remember feeling very sick
6 for two days and staying in bed. I hated being sick, but I
7 loved the attention I received for having a "virus." I started
8 running around with some guys who drank regularly. We stole
9 most of our booze from grocery stores. We would drink mostly
10 on weekends before going to dances. I had this brilliant idea
11 once, "If only the scientists of this country would invent
12 this liquid in a pill form it would be a miracle." Little did
13 I know...

14 Before I found pills, a friend turned our group onto the
15 fact that airplane glue would do a job on us! I sniffed quite
16 a bit, despite being aware that I was killing brain cells,
17 lungs and liver. One time I bought an entire case of glue.
18 I told the store owner I was building my own surf board. I had
19 never surfed in my life. Later, during the beginning of the
20 "love and peace" movement, in the mid-sixties, pot, pills, acid
21 and speed replaced the booze and glue.

22 Four of us traveled by van from Florida to Mexico to surf.
23 To this day I have not yet surfed. I felt a need to get away
24 and besides I could get high in Mexico legally and be myself.
25 I ended up in jail there. I felt like this was no big deal,
26 because by this time, age seventeen, I had been locked up a
27 dozen times or more. I had done sixty days for driving while
28 intoxicated.

29 I went back to Florida, ended up in Los Angeles, back to
30 Mexico, then back to Florida. I was in and out of jail. The

police were starting to take me a little more seriously and began filing felony charges against me, all drug related-- from possession to theft.

I began shooting a lot of dope (heroin) and could not stop. I went to a methadone clinic with lots of hope that all would be well, after the twenty-one day detox. Three or four years later, still on methadone, still shooting whatever I could find, that hope had completely gone. That was the longest twenty-one days this addict ever spent.

I went to Lexington, trying to get an angry probation officer off my back. Finally I was placed in a religious, drug-free rehab where I was kept for fifteen months. I stayed clean and sober and became very sanctimonious. During the stay in rehab, I stayed clean and sober about seven months.

In between the drinking and drugging, I had married and become the father of two wonderful sons. Later, after the rehab, I was reunited with my wife and sons. Now I was clean, a family man again and back to business. We bought a nice home and a new car. My wife was graduated from nursing school. I joined Kiwanis and was a successful business man. My life was looking real good to me and everybody else, all except for a few beers here and there. I mean, what the hell; I had quit shooting dope. Now I felt like I was a hero or something. People congratulated me and told me how proud they were to know me. I knew I had an alcohol problem and knew sooner or later I would probably start drinking alcoholically. Little did I know; I already was. I felt as though I would be able to drink about fifteen years before I would be in trouble. I didn't know I had a disease, a progressive disease. Within five years there was no wife, no kids, no home, no business, no car, no money, no hope.

I got really paranoid. I could not stop drinking! The compulsion was as strong and uncontrollable as heroin, cocaine or methadone. I couldn't go on. I feared total insanity. I feared being locked up again. Loneliness had set in. I was in a bad way. I hated myself, God, you and everything.

1 Today I am a happy grateful addict who loves life. (I
2 used to hate to hear anyone say this, I felt like throwing
3 up.) I went to N.A. or A.A. meetings every day, sometimes
4 three or four per day. I didn't drink or take anything else
5 to get high on. From day one, the Twelve Steps became part
6 of my life. At first, I allowed only Step One to take hold.
7 Today I have no fear whatsoever of going insane or getting
8 high. I am constantly turning my will over to the care of
9 God. Why not? I sure screwed it up when I took charge
10 myself!

11 Through listening to the experience of others and learn-
12 ing how to apply this to me, life has become pleasant, beau-
13 tiful and sometimes very exciting. Laughter is a common part
14 of my day. Smiling doesn't hurt at all and I am able to look
15 anyone in the eye. At times when the going gets rough, I can
16 turn to my sponsor, group, God or literature--not necessarily
17 in that order either. On different days it works different
18 ways.

19 Recently I was fortunate enough to experience the ninth
20 N.A. World Convention. Words cannot describe the unity felt
21 there in Atlanta. I brought back so much more than I took,
22 just as it is in the meetings.

23 I really don't have any brilliant answers or solutions but
24 I can honestly say this program works. I had never cleaned up
25 or sobered up without being locked up before N.A. Each day,
26 one day at a time, is another record of success for this ad-
27 dict. So long as I listen to what I'm told it keeps getting
28 better and better! What they tell me is, "Keep coming back,
29 it works!"

WHY GOD?

I hope I never forget how I felt that day. I was under 1
a porch, sobbing. I could hear the police sirens as they 2
raced by heading to the scene I kept trying to blot out of 3
my mind. "Why, God? Why?" 4

This day started out like all the rest. And once again, 5
I was terrified, my chest was pounding and my head was throb- 6
bing. Over and over I kept asking the same question, "Why, 7
God? Why?" 8

Why? 9

I stayed in that position for hours, wanting to be a 10
little boy again, held in my mother's arms with her telling 11
me, "Everything is going to be alright." 12

I remember once, when I was a tall and skinny little 13
boy, walking onto the schoolyard where the neighborhood boys 14
were choosing sides for a baseball game. I stood and watched 15
each captain pick players for his team. There were three of 16
us left, and one of us was not going to be able to play. 17

I stood on the side lines watching everybody else play. 18
I felt so alone. I left, wandering through alleys, alone. 19
When I came to the railroad tracks, I just sat and let the 20
train block out the morning, and the noise cover up that 21
misery. 22

I didn't want to be alone, so I began running with a crowd 23
of street toughs with destructive habits. We were into 24
breaking street lights and car headlamps and windshields. 25
As we got older, we became more bizarre. All the time I 26
felt lonelier and more scared. All the time, I was quietly 27
asking, "Why?" 28

By the time I was fifteen, I gave up hope of ever being 29
like other people. I started running with a street gang in 30

1 Chicago. On weekends we went to dances, but mostly we just
2 stood around on street corners or cruised around in cars.
3 I was looking, I guess, for something or someone to make me
4 feel alright.

5 I remember the day I thought I found the solution. I was
6 in a basement on the West Side of Chicago. Someone fixed me
7 with my first shot of heroin. For the first time in my life,
8 I felt like a whole person. The fears and loneliness were
9 gone. Thus began a love affair that was to last for twenty-
10 two years. Heroin saw me through a marriage, two children,
11 a divorce, county jails, penitentiaries, and many geographic
12 "cures."

13 There were to be many days in the fetal position--feeling
14 so utterly alone and so terribly afraid. And all the time I
15 kept asking, "Why, God? Why?"

16 I was thirty-seven and living in California with the same
17 sick relationship-Heroin. By this time, I had lost the
18 ability to survive. I wanted out; it was impossible to keep
19 up any fronts. I had tried everything and failed.

20 I reached the point that I did not want to live, yet did
21 not want to die. It is the saddest place in the world, and
22 totally isolated. By now all self-respect and sense of dig-
23 nity had gone. I knew the situation was hopeless.

24 I had no place left to go. My prayer turned from, "Why,
25 God?" to "God help."

26 Jim (not his real name) came into my life. I know now
27 that God put him there in response to my prayer. Jim invited
28 me to my first N.A. meeting. It was the first place I had
29 been invited to in years; I would have gone anywhere with
30 anybody at this time. Thank God it was an N.A. meeting.

31 I knew I had arrived at a place where I just might find
32 some happiness, right after I said, "My name is N_____ and
33 I'm a drug addict," and everybody said, "Hi, N_____!"

34 Before my first year clean, Jim died of an overdose, and
35 for the first time, I cried for someone else. In one month,
36 I will have ten years clean time, and God has put many Jims
37 in my life; God has given me many miracles.

I no longer have these feelings of hopelessness, fear and	1
loneliness. My life has meaning; I feel fulfilled. Many	2
wonderful people have touched my life and for that I am grate-	3
ful. I pray in turn that I have touched the lives of others.	4
Today, I ask why and God says, "Why not?"	5

GOD PUT OUT THE FIRE

1 Being a young man just out of high school I was ready to
2 conquer the world and give lessons on how a real man could
3 live and lust forever. That was the only goal I had at the
4 time, and it turned out to be short-lived. Within one year
5 I had gotten married in the name of lust only, and ended up
6 divorced that same year.

7 I had joined the fire department to honor my parents'
8 wishes and as a means to support my wife, so I was now a
9 single man making good money with a lot of free time on my
10 hands. All of my friends were older and well-learned in the
11 art of drinking. They ran the ballrooms at night and the
12 pressure cooker bars during the day and I was a willing pupil.
13 I was like a dying man in the desert, the deeper I went into
14 it, the more lost and insane I became, with no purpose but to
15 experience and conquer everything. There was a fire inside
16 me which I could not seem to satisfy or put out and it con-
17 stantly demanded more fuel.

18 To be the best fire fighter was another great challenge
19 to me and I soon became obsessed with it. Early in my pro-
20 bationary period I discovered the adrenalin flow, compounded
21 with blind fear of the unknown put me on a high that no drug-
22 taking experience has ever come close to reproducing.

23 It wasn't very long before I was known as a top fire
24 fighter in Houston and had lots of pats on the back for jobs
25 well done. I received each award like a well-trained dog.

26 Speed was my drug of choice, and I was soon hooked on it
27 as if it were my life-support system. Many times my ego
28 overrode my common sense and the results were disastrous.
29 I went to work so high that I didn't need ladders to get to
30 the tops of the building and I continually put myself into

dangerous situations that give me nightmares even now. I was 1
told by a few "old hand" fire fighters that I was a suicide 2
jockey and that I was running with a death wish. 3

I had been on speed and downers so long that I began to 4
lose touch with reality. I honestly believed that smoking pot 5
was socially acceptable in all circles except in the older 6
groups. Blowing a few joints, or even a lid every day was 7
not harmful and surely pot was not a drug, so I enjoyed my 8
smoking habits. I became a connoisseur of exotic weed, 9
traveling all the way to Alaska just to try some better stuff. 10

Women seemed to come with the drug addiction and I 11
started at the beginning. I wanted to let all the ladies in 12
Houston know that I was available, and had a pocket full of 13
pills and a bag full of goodies to take care of all their 14
fantasies. My ego was constantly being dropped and shattered 15
by these demons in lace. I was a puppet with my strings just 16
waiting to be pulled. 17

Once more I was married, to a master puppeteer. Disas- 18
ter was upon me once again. I did not know how to cope with 19
this woman who put her drug addiction before my selfish male 20
ego. The rent money was being spent on drugs and sexy clothes 21
for her, while I was wearing my uniforms on and off the job, 22
and even to my second job. 23

I was working two full-time jobs, putting in one hundred 24
to one hundred thirty hours per week, and still I was always 25
broke. I was consistently going into fits of rage over her 26
addictions and bad money managements. It was impossible to 27
think of my addiction as a contribution factor to our finan- 28
cial problem because I could rationalize my need for speed or 29
cocaine, just to go to work and my need for downers in order 30
to sleep. 31

The Houston police narcotics division came to visit my 32
home rather abruptly and uninvited one evening while I was 33
having a quiet party with a few friends with the same inter- 34
ests as my wife and myself. These party crashers were not 35

1 very polite but did invite us to join them in a ride downtown
2 to visit the facilities at the main lockup. As I sat behind
3 those bars, I came to the conclusion that this also was my
4 wife's fault and all I had to do was get rid of her and all
5 my problems would be solved.

6 Being a city employee the courts were very lenient with
7 me, but assured me they would be watching my activities in
8 the future so I had to walk on egg shells for a year. Cutting
9 my wife loose was another mistake. I had no connection for
10 my addiction problem; she knew all the street people that had
11 what I needed and also every known "script" doctor on that
12 side of town. I again started searching for a new lady to
13 supply my needs physically and egotistically once more. This
14 time I was smart; I figured a very naive and non-addictive
15 type woman would serve me better. I found her in a very nice
16 bar downtown. I was drinking there and she was serving me
17 in a short skirt with a nice smile and told me how much money
18 she brought home every night. I was in love once more and
19 moved in that night.

20 Everything was on the upswing, in my favor once more.
21 This lady made me feel like her hero, praising and pushing
22 my ego to greater heights. She thought my drug problem was
23 a little out of hand and rather expensive. I could not take
24 her out because I was always broke or too loaded to go out
25 in public.

26 My job was in danger now as the other fire fighters were
27 complaining of my being loaded on the job. I was caught
28 several times going to the backyard of the fire station to
29 cop a high just to get through one more hour or to get some
30 sleep. I remember one freezing winter night we responded
31 to a fire alarm at a popular disco; the whole back end of
32 the building was on fire. I ran into the back door right
33 in the middle of the burning room, shooting water on the
34 blaze and cussing and screaming at the fire like it was a
35 person. Today I realize how insane that action was and how

uncontrolled I was over my actions. After that "battle", I 1
crawled to the front of the disco and found the beer tap 2
coming out of the wall. I was just going to have one quick 3
cold beer to settle my nerves, but it did not end up that 4
way. I was found laid out on the floor so drunk I couldn't 5
stand up. My captain thought I had been overcome by smoke and 6
heat and sent me back to the station to recuperate. 7

From then on every fire my company responded to was an 8
open invitation to a quick high. Every night club and restau- 9
rant had booze of some kind and every house or apartment had 10
cold beer in their refrigerators and usually some kind of drugs 11
or pot in the medicine cabinets, or some hiding place in the 12
bedrooms, and I was acting like a Saint Bernard on a rescue 13
mission. It didn't matter where you hid your stash I could 14
find it and I ribbed myself that I was doing these people a 15
great service by stealing it before one of my redneck officers 16
came across it and turned it over to the man. 17

At a major apartment fire one evening in November 1976 my 18
partner was electrocuted when the ladder he was on swung into 19
a high voltage power line. I had this terrible feeling of 20
hopelessness. This man was more than just a friend to me; he 21
had saved my life several times and I knew that any time I got 22
into trouble or dangerous situations, this guy was always 23
there to pull me out. 24

Here he lay dying in my arms and I couldn't do a damn 25
thing to help him. I wanted to run away and hide, to just 26
get away, because I just could not stand to see him suffer 27
like this. He was hauled away to the hospital finally, and 28
I didn't know if I would see him alive ever again. I was 29
hurting in my guts so bad I got sick. 30

I got off my knees and went back into the fire ground 31
feeling loss and shame. I needed a drink or anything that 32
would get me over this situation. A friend walked over and 33
handed me a joint. That wasn't enough, so I started opening 34
every refrigerator in this burned-out apartment complex. I 35

1 got wiped out in less than an hour on everything I could put
2 my hands on. I don't remember anything after that for three
3 days. By the grace of God, I watched my partner recover even
4 after the doctors said there was no hope.

5 Even then, as sick as I was, I knew there was a God work-
6 ing in my life. I honestly believe today that this Higher
7 Power was trying to tell me to stop the insane behavior. I
8 could and would die if this game of destruction I was playing
9 did not stop. Out of thireteen men at my station, nine of
10 them were hurt on duty and had to be hospitalized in an eight-
11 month period.

12 I did not think I could be the next one to fall, but it
13 did happen. The night of February 9, our company responded
14 to an apartment complex fire. I made my approach through the
15 second story balcony and ran right into the main body of the
16 fire. After knocking the fire down, I started back out the
17 sliding glass door leading onto the balcony. The heat inside
18 and the cool weather had caused the glass in the sliding door
19 to become brittle. As I tried to open this door the glass
20 shattered and the top sheet fell out towards me. I put my
21 hands out to keep the glass away from my face. When it hit
22 me it felt like a sledge hammer. I fell backwards into the
23 middle of the room; I couldn't feel my right hand; I thought
24 it was gone. I had been cut at the wrist and my hand was
25 pulled back and blood was shooting everywhere. I remember
26 very well this scene, as it brought nightmares for two years
27 after the accident. I did not want to die in that dark and
28 dirty place and I was scared right then more that I ever had
29 been, in the ten years of fire fighting.

30 After leaving the hospital, all I did was hide from
31 everyone and feel sorry for myself. I thought I was a mis-
32 fit and cripple and didn't want people to see me like this.
33 The doctors were a big help. Everytime I asked for pills for
34 the pain or my nerves, they gave me a prescription.

35 As an addict, this was my escape from reality. I stayed
36 fixed and doped up for two years before a gentleman that

"read my mail" offered me a chance to live. He introduced me 1
to a group of people that had similar problems. The only 2
difference was they were facing and doing something about 3
their problems. These people seemed to be happy and this 4
was something I had never been. They accepted me with open 5
and loving arms; they really cared about me. They shared 6
with me their experiences and gave me guidance on how to 7
handle my problems. 8

Today I am happy, joyous, and a free man. I no longer 9
hide in drugs or any kind of chemical high. I still have 10
problems in my life today, but the action I chose to take by 11
turning them over to a power greater than myself and not 12
hiding from them makes all of them easier to cope with. 13

I have three beautiful things in my life now. I have a 14
God that is loving and easy to understand. He will help me 15
overcome all obstacles in my life if only I ask for His help. 16
The second is this group of beautiful people that I love 17
and claim as my family. The third is I have found the per- 18
son inside myself that I always wanted to be. 19

RELAPSE AND RETURN

1 My marriage was on the rocks. My wife had sworn out a
2 warrant on assault charges and had confronted me about my
3 addiction. Although I admitted the addiction to her, I
4 was not ready to accept it myself. She told the other
5 family members about my addiction and asked me to accept help.
6 I was not ready for help, but during the court hearing, she
7 told the judge she would drop charges if I would agree to
8 go into a treatment program. Needless to say, I was more
9 willing to go to treatment than to jail, so I did--for all
10 the wrong reasons.

11 While in treatment, I decided to listen to what they
12 had to say. I was soon admitting my addiction, but had
13 difficulty embracing the concepts of a Higher Power. Be-
14 cause of a series of spiritual experiences, I finally began
15 to accept the idea of God. This enabled me to become very
16 involved in my treatment effort and I tried to put aside all
17 outside problems, investing myself totally in my recovery.

18 Treatment went by quickly and I really believed I was
19 equipped to go back into society and pick up where I left
20 off. It only took three days for my security and confidence
21 to be shaken. Three days after my discharge, my wife entered
22 treatment. In the beginning, I was happy she was admitting
23 her addiction. Soon, she was requesting that we have no con-
24 tact and I resented that. I became jealous when she told me
25 she had been advised to get rid of her problem and that I was
26 it. The feelings of rejection were a deep kind of pain and
27 I was resentful over not having been given my second chance
28 to put my family back together. The pain was unbearable and
29 the only way I knew to relieve it was to return to my imme-
diately reliever--drugs.

In much less time than I thought possible, the reality of the progression of the disease, as I had been taught in treatment, came true. In a period of five months, I lost a family, all my material possessions except the clothes on my back, my job and all my friends, and most certainly, any control over my drug usage. I had married again, was heavily in debt and resorted to one thing I had never done before--stealing. The bottom I had hit before treatment was "Ned in the First Reader" stuff compared to this. I felt alone and desperate. I realized that I was no longer comfortable with the drug life.

I isolated myself in my apartment and withdrew myself to be rid of the drugs in the physical-self. The mental craving was still there after withdrawal. I finally decided I couldn't make it by myself. I began to pray again and to try and make conscious contact with the Higher Power. For the first time I got honest about my powerlessness and reached out for help. I called old acquaintances in the Fellowship and asked for help in getting transportation to meetings.

In the beginning of my return to the Fellowship, only the body was present, but at least I had the willingness to get the body there. I felt so hopeless and helpless I considered going into treatment again. After a lengthy conversation with a member of the Fellowship, she told me that I knew what to do; my mind finally caught up with my body and I began to work the Steps.

I went to every meeting available each week and soon I began to feel differently. I was aware of a sense of peace, some of the fear left and for the most part, I was relieved of the craving. Although my material world was still non-existent, I began to distinguish my needs from my wants and got comfortable with what I didn't have. The Higher Power seemed to be taking care of business for me and many of my problems disappeared or resolved themselves.

I became involved in the Fellowship, spending all my time with recovering addicts. I knew I was getting clean

1 and that I wanted to be clean. I became aware of how people
2 care about me and that if I listened to them, God would
3 speak to me through them. Without any effort on my part, my
4 world began to fall into place. I was soon employed again,
5 reconciled with my parents and sister and was able to cope
6 with the outside world just as it was.

7 My feelings of gratitude spilled over. I finally felt
8 I had something to share with other recovering addicts and
9 I couldn't wait to give it away. I became heavily involved
10 in Twelve Step work and returned to the treatment center
11 where it all began, to offer myself as a volunteer for any-
12 thing they needed me for. I drove van-loads of patients to
13 meetings, shared with the patients my experience, strength
14 and hope and became willing to become God's instrument to speak
15 to others in any way He chose.

16 My life has taken on new meaning and I am able today,
17 with the help of the Higher Power, to feel feelings I never
18 allowed myself to feel before. I am more confident, but I
19 know it is God-confidence. I am more reliant, but I know it
20 is God-reliance; I am more independent, but I know it is God-
21 dependency. I am free today to be exactly who I am because
22 I know who I am.

23 Recognizing my dependency on God as I understand Him,
24 continuing to work the Steps of the program and my sincere
25 desire to give away what I have, I can truthfully say, I am
26 a Happy Drug Addict!

THEY CALLED ME "HOPELESS"

No one in my family ever used drugs, except as pre- 1
scribed by a doctor. In fact, no one in my family even 2
drank, and I was taught that people who were drunks and 3
addicts, or couldn't solve their own personal and emo- 4
tional problems were really bad-degenerates. 5

In high school, I started to use drugs, because they 6
helped me feel good about myself. I was so self-conscious 7
and embarrassed about my looks that sometimes I just felt 8
sub-human. As a result, I started to get high and became 9
an over-achiever. 10

College was a bore, until I discovered pot. I became 11
a "hippie", and met a girl who liked to party and we were 12
married. After school, I started using "speed" while 13
traveling in my work. Soon, the constant traveling and using 14
caused my first wife to divorce me. This gave me a good 15
excuse to go wild. I had always wanted to try all the dif- 16
ferent drugs I could get my hands on. I soon came up with 17
a combination of narcotics, sedatives and hallucinogens that 18
became my favorite. 19

I started to lose the small business I had built up and 20
felt guilty about what I had become--a business and social 21
failure. I had to use something every day to obliterate my 22
feelings of self-hatred, shame and guilt. I decided to get 23
rich and go "big time" dealing between Chicago and New York. 24

In order to finance the trip East, I set up my fifteen- 25
year-old lover and had her selling acid to her schoomates. 26
I began buying other drugs at Midwest wholesale and re-selling 27
to students at a major eastern university. Traveling loaded 28
and peddling dope gave real meaning to the words "fear" and 29
"paranoia". 30

1 Then I met a woman I thought I could change for. I thought
everything would be O.K. She helped me control my use and I
3 set out to impress her. My legitimate business revived for a
4 while, but then I began to use heavily again; things got worse.
5 My second wife left me. My business failed.

6 I felt hopeless. All I could think about was drugs. I
7 tried to stay high and began drinking heavily and daily again.
8 I just did not want to feel anything. I didn't like me. I
9 just wanted to escape from myself. I overdosed on Demerol and
10 wound up in the hospital. While still in the hospital, I began
11 to feel better and publicly declared my intention to stop
12 using. I was going to enter the mental health out-patient
13 clinic, solve all the problems drugs had caused and never
14 have to use again. Of course, I continued to smoke pot and
15 drink beer, because after all, everybody did.

16 My business gradually fell back together and I had money
17 in my pocket again. That was my downfall-I could now afford
18 that most glamorous, "non-addictive" substance--cocaine.

19 How wonderful was my new chemical lover. She made me feel
20 so, so good again and again. I began to cheat, lie and steal
21 to get the money for my new habit. I went to several doctors,
22 feigning symptoms appropriate to prescriptions for large
23 quantities of sleeping pills and sedative hypnotics. I used
24 some of the prescribed drugs, but mostly sold them to get
25 coke. Often I used too much coke, and was always in fear of
26 a heart attack, but I could shoot some downs to knock me out.
27 Eventually, I overdosed this way.

28 Again I wound up in the hospital. Once again I started to
29 feel better after a few clean days in the hospital. I re-
30 solved to stop using again, this time I would get help from
31 a psychiatrist. I tried. I told him how bad I was, how I
32 felt about myself, and sometimes how good I felt being clean.
33 I stayed away from the old crowd for a while. The psychia-
34 trist seemed to want to help me. He suggested I take some
35 mood-balancing pills, so I bought some and tried them.

that risk, I can now attend N.A. meetings every day of the 1
week in my area. 2

I want to keep what has been given to me, so I actively 3
share through loving service to N.A. wherever and however I 4
am asked. The Spirit of this Fellowship is in me today. I 5
have come to know unconditional love. 6

INSTITUTIONAL STORY

1 I am a junkie. I am also an inmate who has gotten clean
2 through Narcotics Anonymous in an institution.

3 I came into the program because I was hurting and I knew
4 I needed help. At first, I didn't really know what it felt
5 like to be clean. I came to my first two meetings high. I
6 listened a lot and did very little talking. After my third
7 and fourth meetings, I began to understand the people who
8 were sharing their troubles with dope. Funny thing, I knew
9 where they were coming from.

10 I started smoking pot at the age of eleven. I really
11 started before then, but it was at eleven that I started
12 regularly. After about a year, I couldn't get as high on pot
13 as I used to, so I started chemicals. I used THC, crystal
14 meth and acid for a couple of years. I know now I was really
15 hurting myself and the people around me. I got thrown out
16 of the house at the age of fourteen. I lived off other
17 people's parents by telling them my folks died and I didn't
18 want to live in an orphanage. By then, I was really strung
19 out on meth. I lived from place to place, steading whenever
20 I needed some dope.

21 Finally, I ran out of places to stay and schools to go
22 to. I called my parents and conned them into letting me come
23 back home. I was eighteen at this time. I started my fourth
24 high school in four years, and was introduced to MDA.

25 I thought this drug was the answer to all my problems.
26 When I fired a half-gram, all my problems would go away and
27 the whole world was beautiful. I got strung out on this drug,
28 but really didn't care. A couple months after I turned nine-
29 teen, I was up to doing two to three grams a day. I lived
30 for and needed this dope. I ripped off a large amount of money

and decided to throw a party. I bought a couple of ounces 1
of MDA and a pound of pot. With these drugs and a few friends, 2
we headed for the lake. We got to partying real heavy and 3
found three more friends of mine. They asked me if I had some 4
drugs. I told them I did and they were welcome to party 5
with us. They got high and two of them overdosed and died. 6
Now I'm in prison doing time for their deaths. It really 7
scared me to realize it could have been me instead of them. 8
I needed people like N.A. to help me. 9

I have been in the program nearly nine months, clean and 10
sober. I really have begun to understand and relate. I 11
thank my Higher Power and the fellowship of Narcotics Anony- 12
mous for my recovery. I haven't been on the streets yet, but 13
I know when I get out I am really going to need the program. 14
May God bless all my brothers and sisters in Narcotics 15
Anonymous who have shown me the way to stay clean and sober 16
one day at a time. 17

GEOGRAPHICAL CHANGES

1 Drinking had always appealed to me. I remember my dad
2 and his every-present bottle. Throughout childhood, I was
3 carried off again and again by his many geographical changes.
4 When he died as a direct result of alcohol, I became with-
5 drawn, silent and morbid. I lived in daydreams of my father.

6 The first opportunity to drink was afforded me at age
7 twelve. I blacked out after one beer. Upon coming to, I
8 promptly secured another one. Drinking and pill-taking were
9 my source of amusement for the next two years. I became
10 enamoured of an older man, and together we explored the
11 realms of marijuana, hashish, hallucinogens and cocaine. I
12 achieved an amazing sense of power when I began reaping the
13 material benefits of drug dealing. I lived in a world of
14 defiance; tolerable only when there were enough chemicals
15 in my body to deceive me into seeing life on my own terms.

16 My attention was attracted by heroin, and I toyed with
17 the drug for a while. Second preceding my first fix, a woman
18 said, "You'll never feel this good again." Those words have
19 resounded in my head ever since.

20 Several years after my initial orientation to drugs, I
21 received an urgent phone call from my lover. He asked me to
22 come to his house concerning a matter of great importance.
23 The car radio played, "Lonely, wanna die, if I ain't dead
24 already, girl you know the reason why...". Upon entering his
25 room, I found him serenely lying in bed, needle in arm. When
26 we reached the hospital, he was D.O.A.

27 It was my turn to make a geographical change. I flew to
28 a Middle Eastern country, where I married and had two children.
29 During the following eight years, I became a responsible wife,
30 mother, lover, cook, maid and farmer. I chopped wood, picked

cotton and hand-washed diapers in a basin in extreme heat and 1
in snow. The children and I were subjected to physical and 2
emotional battering. I used alcohol to relieve my feelings 3
of inadequacy, rejection, loneliness and despair. I was con- 4
vinced that I was to live a life of martyrdom, and consciously 5
set out to become an alcoholic and an addict. I abused mood 6
altering pills and cultivated an opium habit. 7

One day my husband informed me that we were to leave the 8
Mid-East for America. I had become so passive and submissive 9
on the outside that it was easy to control my inner joy. I 10
knew that if I appeared to be overjoyed to go home, I would be 11
forbidden to do so. At that moment, a spark of life rekindled 12
itself within, and I waited. 13

I thought that our return to America would terminate my 14
lust for drugs and alcohol. For some insane reason, I thought 15
my husband would change his abusive ways. This was not to be. 16
I delved even deeper into the madness of American alcohol and 17
continued to consume large quantities of opium. 18

One morning I made a decision not to be beaten again. My 19
children, our backpack and I traveled many miles to an obscure 20
city. Here the battering ceased, but the unfathomable terror 21
of being found, coupled with the effects of drugs and in- 22
creased alcohol, drove me toward insanity and death. After 23
an unsuccessful suicide attempt, I was introduced to a 24
chemical-free program of recovery. 25

For the first time since childhood, I was offered un- 26
conditional love. This genuine caring gave me enough hope 27
to try life once again. I was introduced to Narcotics Anony- 28
mous, where I was welcomed and accepted for myself. I was 29
shown kindness at a point when I was bitter and filled with 30
self-loathing. I went to a meeting every night for months and 31
didn't use. The concept of "one day at a time" became meaning- 32
ful. I began to use the power of prayer. Today, God, as I 33
understand Him, is in my life. Since I began consciously to 34
apply the Twelve Steps of the program of Narcotics Anonymous 35
to my life, I have experienced spiritual growth. I maintain 36

1 that through working the Steps, we may be freed from the
2 bondage of self. Here and now, I am overcome with immeasur-
3 able gratitude for N.A. and the people of the Fellowship who
4 loved me when I could not love myself.

5 Today I have that occasional inner peace that comes with
6 spiritual well-being. For the first time, there is a commu-
7 nication between myself and my children. I have friends whom
8 I love and respect. My life-long dream of being a student in
9 a field that I admire, has been realized. Today there is
10 laughter in my life.

11 "I was willing to change when the pain of not changing
12 became worse."

13 I have learned that "the way to enlightenment is to
14 lighten up," because as the song says, "I haven't got time
15 for the pain."

"SPECIAL EDITION"

Even as a child I can remember feeling on the "outside." 1
It seems as though I was always searching for something, 2
searching and wanting to be "special" in some undefinable 3
way. When I was a young girl I tried to be "special" be 4
being a good girl and helping around the house and doing 5
what my parents asked. When I was in grade school I was 6
able to get some feelings of being "special" by being popu- 7
lar. 8

But being "good" and being popular were hard work and 9
there was a lot of insecurity because it all depended on 10
how other people would react to me. When I was twelve I 11
was able to find the feeling of specialness that I was 12
searching for. We lived near a boy's home and one of the 13
guys there had a "still." My first taste of moonshine was 14
not pleasant, but the feelings that went with the unpleas- 15
ant taste were more than worth it. I felt good and warm 16
and pretty and secure and special. I had found it. I began 17
drinking about every other week and began running with 18
people who were quite a bit older than me. 19

The second time that I ever drank was at a party where 20
I only knew a couple of people. It's not real clear what 21
happened, but somehow I wound up at this party all alone with 22
only one other guy. He raped me that night and I remember 23
feeling that somehow I had asked for this and that if I ever 24
told anyone about it they would blame me. But it didn't 25
matter cause I was already blaming myself. 26

After this incident I began drinking a little more often. 27
We would go out almost every weekend and get drunk. I had 28
begun to have blackouts. Part of the insanity of my disease, 29
I think, is that I believed that the blackouts were normal 30

1 and that everyone drank to blackout.

2 I began to feel restless and began feeling less and less
3 special, so I began to look for other highs. I started
4 smoking pot and doing speed. When I finally entered high
5 school my drug usage was already out of hand. I was always
6 in trouble at school. I felt very insecure there. That
7 need to be special had intensified and there was a lot more
8 competition in high school than there had been at any other
9 point in my life. I was skipping morning classes a lot and
10 going out to smoke pot and drink wine. I was coming to
11 school loaded almost every day and was having a lot of problems
12 with my peers and teachers. The people that I was running
13 with at school were confronting me on my behavior and usage
14 so I found a new, older, group of friends and began attend-
15 ing school less and less. At one point during my "career" as
16 a student I got in a fist fight with a priest and I quit
17 school at that time.

18 A few weeks later I was out getting drunk and decided it
19 was time for "the kid" to be on her own. I talked a guy into
20 stealing his girlfriend's car and we left for Denver that
21 night. I had a hundred dollars in my pocket and no place to
22 go. I tried to go into a bar, but they carded me and I was
23 only fifteen. I walked next door to an acoustic shop where
24 three guys were working, and asked them if they knew of a
25 place where I could stay. They offered to put me up at their
26 place so I left with them. Up 'til this point my experiences
27 with drugs had been minimal. These guys were coke freaks and
28 I was soon doing coke on a regular basis. I got a fake I.D.
29 while I was there and I used to sell blood twice a week, for
30 cash. I also did a lot of panhandling. It never entered my
31 mind that I should go to work to support myself.

32 While in Denver I was arrested for public drunkenness and
33 taken to jail. I tried to escape and was handcuffed behind
34 my back, beat up and taken to Juvenile Hall. I think that's
35 when I was forced to do some growing up. There were a lot of
36 folks in the hall who were much more street-wise and tough

than I was. I had a smart mouth and wound up getting myself 1
beat up a couple of times there. Finally a Mexican girl there 2
took pity on me and taught me how to fight and defend myself. 3
I also wound up in isolation for fighting with one of the 4
matrons there. I did a lot of fighting and talking tough in 5
the hall. What was really going on was that I was scared to 6
death but I was afraid to let anyone there see this, for fear 7
that they would take advantage of me. This soon became a 8
pattern for me, acting tough. 9

After a few months they finally let me out of Juvenile Hall 10
and flew me back home. I'd only been home for a few weeks 11
when I started back to school, at my parents' insistence. 12
I was enrolled in school for 90 days and only attended three 13
days of class during this time. When I began school I also 14
began dealing pot. It was also during this time that I fell 15
in love. I quit school and left home again to move in with 16
him. He was also an addict. He was strung out on narcotics 17
and was into shooting up. He was also into robbing drug stores 18
for a living. I had a lot of drugs available to me at this 19
point and I was hungry to try them all. I was too scared of 20
needles at that point to shoot up. He and I lived together 21
for about a year and decided to get married. 22

About this time when he started talking about quitting 23
drugs, this was really threatening to me, so I did my best 24
to discourage him. I was getting pretty burnt out at this 25
point. I could do a lot of drugs and they would affect me 26
little, so I began drinking even more. 27

One night after I had just finished a pint he decided 28
to quit drugs for good. He took an overdose. By the time 29
the ambulance got there he was already dead and I was taken to 30
jail. In jail I had some time to do some thinking. I de- 31
cided that I would never do drugs again. I was feeling 32
scared and guilty. I felt that it was my fault that he was 33
dead. I was laying guilt trips on myself like, "If you hadn't 34
been so drunk maybe you could have helped him," and, "If I'd 35
only quit drugs with him when he wanted to." My resolution 36

1 lasted for three days. His brother came to pick me up for
2 the funeral, and we were both really wasted by the time we
3 got there. I was so drunk that later, when I went up to put
4 flowers on the grave, I couldn't remember where they had
5 buried him. After that I made another resolution to myself.
6 That I would never experience another straight day.

7 I took a job as a bartender and was going to a trade
8 school in the evenings. I was also selling pot and speed.
9 Around this time I had invested quite a lot of money in getting
10 some pot from Arizona, but the pot connection got busted and
11 my friends wound up bringing back heroin. Well, I had to try
12 it to sell it, I reasoned. I watched a couple of other people
13 shoot up before I did. I was really scared but didn't want
14 anyone to know. The guy that hit up before me convinced me
15 that heroin was the escape I was looking for. He booted it
16 up, broke out in a cold sweat, stood up, wet his pants, and
17 passed out on the floor. I thought, "This is for me".

18 It didn't take me long to develop a pretty expensive habit,
19 but it did take me a long time to realize it. We would make
20 a run to Arizona about every three weeks and bring back more
21 heroin.

22 Again, I began having problems in school. I was having
23 to shoot up before I even got out of bed in the morning and
24 again after I got to school. My school counselor knew some-
25 thing was wrong but I wasn't admitting to anything. A couple
26 of girls that I ran with at school became concerned about me
27 after they walked in the bathroom at school one morning and
28 caught me fixing. They were threatening to turn me in "for
29 my own good" but I talked them out of it. A few days later
30 I went to school all beat up. I had gone to a party the night
31 before and had gotten beat up and raped by some guys there.
32 Needless to say my self-worth was pretty low at this point.
33 My school counselor requested that I see a doctor of their
34 choosing before I could attend any more classes so I went.
35 I was really scared and something didn't seem quite right to
36 me. When I got to the doctor's office, he asked me to roll

up my sleeves (it was the middle of summer and I was into 1
wearing long sleeve shirts then). He took one look at the 2
holes in my arm and he asked me to hold out my hand. I did and 3
he slapped it saying, "You've been a bad girl." He then asked 4
my school counselor to come in and told my counselor that I 5
was an addict and that I needed to go into treatment. 6

A few days later I went into treatment to get the pressure 7
off. I truly believed that they were going to teach me how 8
to use drugs socially. I should have stopped to think that I 9
had never heard of a social shooter before. I stayed in treat- 10
ment for a total of eleven days and decided that this was 11
definitely not what I needed. I left that night. By that 12
time I had decided that I would never allow myself to go 13
through heroin withdrawal again so I decided to switch my 14
drugs of choice to other narcotics. Obviously, my thinking 15
was somewhat impaired at this point. 16

I soon had built my tolerance level back up to what it had 17
been before treatment. Only this time, I was shooting Demerol, 18
dilaudid and morphine instead of heroin. I also began over- 19
dosing a lot during this time, and occasionally thinking about 20
suicide. For a long time I had wondered what the purpose of 21
my former lover's death had been, and it was during this 22
time that I found out. I truly believed that had I not experi- 23
enced the pain and guilt of his suicide I would have taken my 24
own life. 25

Instead of becoming suicidal, I became homicidal. Whenever 26
I shot narcotics, I would become increasingly more mean and 27
violent. A lot of the anger was about not being able to 28
achieve the escape and peace that I used to find in drugs. 29
I was beginning to feel trapped but did not know where to 30
turn. Sometimes I thought I was going insane. Then I would 31
remember some of the things I had heard during my brief stint 32
in treatment and I would question my usage. These thoughts 33
were fleeting; I always thought of myself as strong and tough. 34
Being dependent meant weakness so I would not allow those 35
thoughts to continue for long. 36

1 In the year that followed treatment, I overdosed four
2 times and wrecked my car an equal number of times. Almost
3 a year after leaving treatment, I went back in. This time
4 I was able to grasp the first step, though not totally.
5 After I got out of treatment, I was sent to a halfway house
6 where I stayed clean and dry for about a month and a half.
7 My behavior did not change though, and I was still unhappy.
8 I continued to frequent bars and run with people who were
9 using. One night, in a bar, I met another heroin addict and
10 began using again. The difference this time was that every
11 time I shot up I knew I was an addict who was choosing to do
12 nothing about my addiction. My feeling of self-worth went
13 even lower. My behavior became even more bizarre. My life
14 became more hopeless. After about six months of using I
15 decided to try N.A. again. I began going to meetings, but
16 I still continued my old behavior. Something was wrong and
17 I knew it, but I didn't know what it was or how to change it.
18 During the following year my longest period of sobriety was
19 three months.

20 I began bartending again. Thinking I could stay sober
21 as I had not yet admitted my alcohol addiction, I was able
22 to stay clean for two months while bartending, but finally I
23 became so miserable I began drinking again. This time I was
24 determined not to begin shooting drugs. That lasted about two
25 weeks and I was back to shooting again. This time was dif-
26 ferent than my other relapses.

27 My old using friends knew that I had been clean and were
28 reluctant to help me to continue my addiction, so it became
29 increasingly harder for me to copy my drugs of choice. I
30 began feeling afraid. People in the program were no longer
31 trusting me because I had told them after my other relapses
32 that this was the last one. I had used the people in N.A.
33 and had taken them for granted. I always knew that they
34 would be there for me when I came back and I used them for
35 shoulders to cry on. Now I was afraid that they would no
36 longer accept me. A few of the members had told me that they

could only maintain their cleanness by hanging around with "winners". I was a loser and they could no longer jeopardize their clean time for me if I was not willing to work the program. My using friends were telling me that my behavior was too bizarre and that I should get straight again. I was looking ahead at my entire life and saying that there was no way I could stay sober for forty years so why start only to fail again.

One night I found myself again searching for narcotics. I was unable to get any and wound up with a bottle of valium in a rented motel room with just me and my syringe. I was sitting there shooting valium crying and looking back at the insanity and hopelessness of my life. For the last two months I had been living in a condemned house with a guy who was also dependent and into bizarre behavior. I felt as though it was never going to get better and it was going to continue to get worse. My feelings of self-worth were at an all time low. I called an N.A. member and began going back to meetings.

At first I was afraid of rejection. I had used the people in the Program so often that I was afraid they would not give me another chance to use them again. But once again they accepted me back with open arms. They took me to meetings every day for ninety days and sat up and talked with me until all hours of the morning. I was finally able to tell someone of my loneliness, fears, insecurities, and self-hate. No one laughed or told me I shouldn't feel that way, as I had feared they would. No one looked at me strangely or told me I was nuts. They shared that they had felt the same feelings and shared what had helped them to feel better.

They shared their hearts, souls, homes, time, and love with me--all unconditionally. They loved me so much that I began to believe that there must be something there that was worthwhile. I had not believed that for many years, but I was finally able to believe it again.

Looking back, I am able to see that the key to my clean time has been taking risks and allowing people to get to know

1 me. In my previous experiences with the Program, I had only
2 gone to meetings and nothing more. I did not share; I did
3 not develop any kind of spiritual program; I changed none of
4 my old behavior. Without the willingness to do these things
5 it was impossible for me to have a happy clean time. I have
6 now been into recovery for more than three years. I have
7 finally found that specialness for which I searched so long.
8 The specialness does not come from other people or outside
9 things; it is in me. I am special. The program and the
10 Fellowship have helped me to find this.

11 You have given me life, hope and a sense of belonging.
12 You have given me a chance to be somebody and to grow spiritually.
13 You have given me hope. I am grateful.

I FOUND THE ONLY N.A. MEETING IN THE WORLD

1 Getting to the subject of people, places and things, my
2 story is not much different from the executive--just the
3 opposite end of the stick.

4 I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks; poor, deprived,
5 during the Depression, from a broken home. The words of love
6 were never spoken in my household. There were a lot of kids
7 at my house.

8 Most of the things I remember about my life are in retro-
9 spect. While they were happening, I didn't know anything
10 about it. I just remember going through life feeling dif-
11 ferent, feeling deprived. I never felt quite comfortable
12 whenever I was with whatever I had at any given time. I grew
13 up in a fantasy world. Things on the other side of the fence
14 always looked better. My grass was never green enough. My
15 head was always out to lunch. I learned all the short cuts
16 in order to make it through school.

17 I always had a dream of leaving home. It was not the
18 place to be. My great fantasy was that there was going to
19 be good out there somewhere.

20 I started using drugs fairly late in life. I say late in
21 comparison with what they are doing today.

22 My mother ruled her house with a big stick. That was her
23 method. The constant way I gained attention was getting my
24 ass whipped on a daily basis. I found another way of getting
25 attention was to get sick. When I "got sick," I got the
26 things I felt were necessary: love and attention.

27 I blamed my mother because she didn't make a better choice
28 in choosing the people to take care of me. I carried that
29 long after I left home.

30 I went into the military because that was a place to run

to. I stayed in the military a long time because they offered 1
me the same opportunities I had at home: three hots and a 2
cot and no responsibility. I can say I was a responsible per- 3
son because I had rank and did this or that, but it was only 4
because they gave me advance directions of what to do and 5
when to do it and how much. 6

This was one of my first bouts as far as drugs were con- 7
cerned. My first drug, at the time, was alcohol. I found 8
there were two personalities when on alcohol, and later when 9
on narcotics. There was a personality change. 10

I found out later, however, that this personality change 11
went back even further. I was two people before I ever 12
started using. I had learned how to steal early; I had 13
learned how to lie early; I had learned how to cheat early. 14
I used these processes "successfully." I was addicted to 15
stealing long before I was addicted to drugs, because it 16
made me feel good. If I had some of your "goodies" to spread 17
around, I felt good. I had a thing about stealing. I 18
couldn't go into a place unless I took something. 19

I started using drugs late in life, but still fairly 20
early. I say "late in life," because when you get to be 22
eighteen years old today, they figure you've already done 23
all these things. 24

Talk about being naive, I knew nothing about drugs. 25
Drugs were not something that was talked about in the 1930's, 26
and 40's. It is not that drugs have changed, they just 27
didn't talk about them. They didn't talk about sex or drugs 28
or religion, at least as far as discussing them. It just 29
wasn't one of those things that was talked about. 30

I first experienced my drug of choice, heroin, in the Far 31
East. I heard about opium and tried that. I found you could 32
cook up heroin and put it in a spike. There was a great 33
variety of drugs in other countries that you could get just 34
by walking into a drug store and asking for them. So I 35
stayed out of the country nine years. That way, I wasn't 36

1 confronted with the attitudes here in the United States.

2 I knew nothing about the progression of my disease. I knew
3 nothing about addiction. I ran around in the "ignorance of
4 addiction" for a lot of years--not knowing. Just not knowing.
5 Nobody explained to me that when you use drugs over a year's
6 time, you can get hooked. Nobody told me about withdrawal
7 from drugs. The only thing anyone told me was don't get sick,
8 and the way you do that is keep drugs. ..

9 One of the problems I found being in the military was that
10 they give you orders and ship you, and they don't take the
11 connection with you. You get sick. You try to back that up
12 the next time by trying to get a big enough supply, and your
13 month's supply lasts a week, or two or three days.

14 I knew nothing about progression or the disease nor the
15 consequences of my actions. The progression of my disease
16 caught up with me as far as the military was concerned when
17 I started transporting and smuggling. Also, when you use drugs
18 to the extent that you can't be there for duty, they frown on
19 it. The next best thing they do is lock you up and take you
20 away. Then the military did a cruel thing; they put me out
21 on the street.

22 I was ill-equipped to take care of me. I had gone from
23 mama to another mother. They had taken care of me, and then I
24 found myself on the street with no equipment to be taking care
25 of me. I knew nothing about paying rent, working, being re-
26 sponsible. So I had to give that responsibility to whomever
27 I could give it to. I rant through a lot of "mothers." I
28 had to learn about how to hustle on the street. You have to
29 realize that military has a lot of equipment they can sell, and
30 I used to sell it, because I like to steal. You see, I have
31 that habit of taking things that aren't nailed down. I had to
32 learn other processes like running through stores swinging
33 steaks and cigarettes under my arm, jumping from second story
34 windows, and running from policemen.

35 I think there is a certain excitement that goes along with
36 drug addiction. It was a lot like childhood games of "cops

and robbers." I found out they have more policemen than drug 1
addicts, it seems. They were standing around watching you. 2
I could never understand how they could go into a crowd of 3
people and pick me out, and say, "Let's get in the car; let's 4
go." Nine times out of ten they had me dirty. 5

During the process of me finding mothers, one mother 6
found me. I thought I should hem this one up and get papers 7
on her. Then she couldn't run away. 8

I chose correctly in that you choose someone who's not 9
using. I knew about the ones that are using. They were never 10
there when I got locked up. They never had bail money. They 11
could never visit, because they were too busy taking care of 12
their habits. 13

So, I found one of those unsuspecting ones. She was in 14
school, working, had a place to stay. She had one shortcoming. 15
She didn't know that he needed somebody to take care of. I 16
was a prime candidate. I wanted to be taken care of. She 17
was going to help me get my shit together, and I always 18
wanted somebody to help me get my shit together. She proposed 19
to me in jail, and I said, "Yes, I do. Just go down and pay 20
the bail." And for the next three years, I ran her crazy 21
trying to keep up with me. Then she went out and found the 22
only Narcotics Anonymous meeting in the world. How she did 23
that, I don't know. At that time, there was one meeting in 24
the world, and she went out and found it, and I sent her off 25
to the meeting. I had her go check it out. 26

You have to realize that in those days, drug addicts were 27
very unpopular. To just intimate that two drug addicts were 28
going to congregate anywhere would constitute a police stake 29
out. That's the way they treated drug addicts at that time. 30
There was very little understanding about addiction. I was 31
very leery about anything to do with helping drug addicts. 32
I knew what they did with drug addicts; they locked them up. 33
Period. There were no programs to go to, except Ft. Worth 34
and Lexington. 35

1 I always had a sad story to justify my using. One day
2 after one of those six-month trips to go get a loaf of bread
3 at the corner grocery, I came home and my bags were sitting
4 by the door. She had told me fifty times or a thousand times,
5 "You got to go." This time was different. There was something
6 in her voice this time.

7 So I took my bags and went to the only place there was to
8 go: the streets. I had become accustomed to living in the
9 streets. I knew how to live in the back of old cars, old
10 laundry rooms, any old empty building, your house, my house.
11 Of course, I never had "my house." I couldn't pay rent. I
12 never knew how to pay rent. If I had \$3.00 in my pocket, \$3.00
13 was going for drugs, before a place to stay. It was that
14 simple. I think I paid rent one time while I was using drugs
15 and living on the streets, and that was just to move in. It
16 was called "catch me if you can" from then on. It usually
17 didn't make any difference, because I was a ward of the state
18 much of the time anyway. I just ran out there fast in the
19 streets until they locked me up. Then I had a place to stay.
20 I could rest up and get my health back together in order to
21 come back out and do it again.

22 I came to Narcotics Anonymous nearly twenty-one years ago.
23 But I didn't come for me. I came just to keep her mouth shut.
24 I went to meetings loaded. They talked all that funny stuff
25 out of them books like "rarely have we seen a person fail," and
26 "this is how it works," and I just couldn't understand how
27 that applied to my problem of addiction.

28 I didn't have a driver's license. I was unemployable.
29 I had no place to stay. I was the wrong color. I had no
30 money. I didn't have a car. I didn't have an old lady, or
31 I needed a new one. I took all these problems and they would
32 tell me, "Keep coming back." And they said, "Work the steps."
33 I used to read the steps and thought that was working them.
34 I found out years later that I even read the steps and didn't
35 even know what I read. I did not understand what I read.

They had told me in many places that I was an addict. 1
I had been labeled: Addict! From the military to the jails 2
right on down the line, I had been labeled. I accepted that, 3
but I didn't understand. I had to go out and do some ex- 4
perimenting before I got back to the program. 5

One of the things I had to learn to do was understand 6
what the program was all about. I had to be made willing to 7
find out what the program was about. Only after standing at 8
the Gates of Death did I want to understand. I think Death 9
is Counsel Permanent. I had OD'ed a number of times, but 10
that was kind of like the place where I always wanted to be. 11
It was just before going over the brink and everything seem- 12
ingly O.K. Coming out of it, I could say, "Wow, give me some 13
more." That's insanity. 14

The final case for me was that I was about to be shut off 15
of a fence, and not by my own doing. That I didn't like. 16
Playing cops and robbers is dangerous "out there." They got 17
the gunds, and I don't like being used for target practice. 18
There were more and more cases of policemen sticking guns in 19
my mouth and upside my head and telling me to lay up side a 20
wall. 21

My last day of use of narcotics, drugs of any type, I had 22
just fixed and two policemen got me spread-eagled on a chain 23
link fence I was trying to get over. I became immediately 24
sober, clean. Everything became very clear, and I didn't 25
want to die that way. Something clicked on in my head; it 26
doesn't have to be this way. 27

After that last "rest and recuperation," I found out I 28
could work these steps and that the sum total of my life has 29
changed as a direct result. I got involved in working the 30
steps, trying to understand what they were talking about, to 31
really understand what they were talking about. I found there 32
is a certain amount of action that goes with every step. I 33
had to get into action about how the steps applied to ME. 34
I always thought the steps applied to you, not me. 35

When it got down to talking about God and spirituality, 1
I had shit-canned that a long time before. I put that in 2
church, and I didn't have anything to do with churching. I 3
found out that God and spirituality have nothing to do with 4
church. 5

I had to learn to get involved. It has been one hell of 6
an adventure. My life has changed to such an extent that it 7
is almost unbelievable that I was ever there. However, I know 8
from where I came. I have constant reminders. I need that 9
constant reminder of newcomers and talking with others. 10

This program has become a part of me. It has become a 11
part of life and living for me. I understand more clearly the 12
things that are happening in my life today. I no longer 13
fight the process. 14

I come to meetings of Narcotics Anonymous in order to 15
take care of the responsibilities that have been given to me. 16
N.A. gives me the tools to take care of the responsibilities. 17
Today, I crave, I am addicted to the love and caring and 18
sharing that goes on in N.A. I look forward to more of these 19
things in my life. 20

My problem is addiction; it has nothing to do with drugs. 21
It has something to do with that within, that compulsion and 22
that obsession within. I now have the tools to do something 23
about it, the Twelve Steps of Recovery. 24

SLOW LEARNER

1 I'm the kind of person that never learns. If I touch a
2 stove and it burns me, I will go back and touch it later to
3 see if it is still hot. If someone touches the stove first,
4 then tells me it is hot, I don't take their word for it; I
5 got to check it out for myself. That's the story of my
6 life. I don't learn from my mistakes, nor from the mistakes
7 of others.

8 I was reared a military brat. My father was an officer
9 in the Marine Corps and my family would travel with him. My
10 mother died when I was young and I was taken care of by house-
11 keepers until after my father left the service. My father
12 drank heavily all of my life, but after he left the service, he
13 went downhill. At the age of eight, he beat me so badly that
14 he broke my nose and left arm and cracked two ribs. He would
15 get drunk, come home and take everything out on me. Both of
16 my brothers took up for me, but they soon had enough of him,
17 and left home. When I was twelve, my father shot me and I
18 figured it was also time for me to cut a trail.

19 I spent that summer living in the woods near a friend's
20 house. I found a way to pass the time by huffing lighter fluid.
21 I was later turned on to reefers by a girl I had a crush on.
22 I didn't want to smoke it ("That's what those 'drug addicts'
23 use"), but love conquers all and I was soon introduced to the
24 world of drugs. By the end of that year, I had done acid, barbs,
25 coke and speed. But my big thrill came two years later when a
26 buddy of mine and I ripped off a wholesale drug warehouse and
27 I met my true love, morphine.

28 With all the dope we had, I thought I would try my hand at
29 selling some. I soon got busted and had to serve some time,
30 but, like I said, I don't learn from my mistakes. When I got

out, we hit the same warehouse, some doctors' offices and a 1
drug store. 2

I got a girl pregnant and we were married, but she dumped 3
me when she found out what I was really like. That night, I 4
got really messed up and had my first blackout. I did some 5
crazy things that night and was committed by the court for 6
psychiatric evaluation. I was found sane and released to my 7
brother's custody and charges were dropped. 8

I made it through most of the year with my "friend," 9
morphine, for I had found out early that I was hooked. My 10
warehouse stash was running low, and I didn't know where to 11
cop any of my particular drug. I went back to my old home- 12
town to see my buddy and talk him into hitting the same ware- 13
house. He copped me some smack to hold me over until we did 14
the job. 15

The day we were to do the job, I was waiting to cop and 16
while cleaning my buddy's gun, shot myself. A few minutes 17
later, I was paralyzed and being carried out on a stretcher. 18
Six months later I was out of the hospital, off junk and 19
had a prescription in my pocket for some really powerful 20
downers. I was soon out selling again. 21

I found some backers to front me money, and I did well 22
dealing. I prayed that I would make it big. Pretty soon, I 23
looked around and all of my friends were dying! I couldn't 24
figure out why the police were pulling me over, hassling me 25
and holding me for questioning, or why I was always getting 26
beat up or shot at. My backers decided that it was time for 27
me to lie low. All I did for six months was have parties 28
and live on booze and reds. I was finally booked on some 29
charges, and being in a wheelchair, they didn't know what 30
to do with me. They finally decided to drop charges on the 31
condition that I leave the state. I put myself in a psy- 32
chiatric hospital for drugs, and after that, a drug treat- 33
ment center, where I attended my first N.A. meeting. 34

By that time, I was sure that drugs were causing my 35
problems and I was ready to quit. When I went to N.A., I 36

1 knew that I was in the right place. The people there cared
2 and understood. It blew my mind! I had met good people on
3 the street, and I found out that the good people either died
4 or cleaned up. I had found the ones that were still alive.

5 I have it rough at times. I know what it is to crave my
6 drugs. With the help of my sponsor and friends, I am learn-
7 ing to handle my emotions, and to live one day at a time. I
8 have found the friends and ahppiness for which I had been
9 searching seven years. Now I am back in college, and my
10 life is falling back into place. It's still hard at times,
11 but with the help of my Higher Power and N.A., I am clean today.
12 My life is now centered in N.A., but, hell, anyone who sub-
13 scribed to a medical journal to keep up with the new drugs
14 has to do something to fill the void.

15 At age of twenty-four, I have been shot five times,
16 stabbed twice and spent a year and a half in institutions.
17 I am a slow learner, but I have learned that N.A. has saved
18 my life.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IN MELBOURNE

When I got to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1974 I knew in- 1
stinctively that staying sober meant staying off all mood 2
changing drugs as well. As A.A. was for booze I didn't 3
talk about my drug taking very much. I only occasionally 4
mentioned my midnight drives to the paddy fields outside 5
Saigon when I was stoned or drunk, and the paranoia I felt 6
the last time I smoked hashish in Algeciras, Spain. My 7
taking of Stelazine, a major tranquilizer, I put out of my 8
mind altogether. When I got involved in A.A. I came across 9
the name of Hazelden, and wrote to them for their catalogue. 10
While I was reading it, I found there was a fellowship 11
called Narcotics Anonymous, and also one called Families 12
Anonymous. So among a pile of other stuff I ordered the 13
White Book "Narcotics Anonymous" and "A Guide For the 14
Family of the Drug User". 15

In 1975 and early 1976 I was getting more and more tired, 16
and consequently more depressed and irritable. The doctors 17
thought my tiredness was caused by depression; I thought my 18
depression was caused by my tiredness. Eventually, after 19
coughing up blood for six months it was discovered I had 20
tuberculosis, so into hospital I went. Shortly after I went 21
into hospital my wife left me for good. So I had nothing to 22
do but concentrate on getting well. During the latter period 23
of my stay in the hospital, I decided to become a counselor 24
for alcoholics and drug addicts. I then contacted a founda- 25
tion on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, and was taken on for 26
training. It was during this time that I found out just how 27
little there was in Melbourne for the addict who wanted to 28
get clean and stay clean. There were only methadone programs 29
for heroin users, and very little for anyone else. Some 30

1 months before, I had given the White Book to a friend of mine
2 in A.A. whom I knew to be interested in getting N.A. going in
3 Melbourne. Tom was an addict as well as an alcoholic. I con-
4 tacted Tom again and we discussed the possibility of starting
5 Narcotics Anonymous. By this time I had some literature from
6 W.S.O. and a contact in Sydney. I had been given the address
7 in Melbourne of two ex-Sydney members of N.A. Tom and I de-
8 cided that if they would support an N.A. Group, the we would
9 start one.

10 One Sunday afternoon Tom and I went to see Kate and Bill.
11 They told us about Narcotics Anonymous in Sydney, and how the
12 N.A. meetings differed from A.A. meetings. In N.A., we were
13 told, the members concentrated on how they felt, not what they
14 did, and recovery was talked about much more than in A.A. They
15 said they would support the meeting.

16 In the meantime plans had been going ahead to start Fami-
17 lies Anonymous in Melbourne. The Director of Counseling at
18 the Center had arranged a meeting room for Families Anonymous
19 at a Community Health Center. Tom went ahead and booked a
20 meeting room there on Saturday nights for Narcotics Anonymous.
21 As far as I know the first meeting took place in August 1976,
22 with seven members present.

23 From the start the theme of the meetings was recovery. We all
24 knew how to use drugs and we all knew the effect they had on us.
25 The primary thing we were all interested in was how to stay
26 clean, how to cope with life without the use of drugs, how to
27 handle unpleasant feelings and emotions, in other words, how
28 to get better.

29 At these meetings I learned that I was an addict, and that
30 my addictions started as a child, long ebefore I ever picked
31 up a drink or a drug. As a child I became addicted to fantasy,
32 because fantasy was much for preferable than reality. When I
33 got older I basically didn't change, I just used alcohol and
34 drugs to shield me from reality.

35 I broke through many emotional barriers in N.A., and learned
36 a lot about myself by identifying with other addicts who were
37 also.

I'D TRY ANYTHING ONCE

For almost eleven years I was hopelessly addicted to 1
drugs. I felt that I couldn't live with or without them. 2
My whole existence during that time was centered around 3
drugs, not realizing that I was actually committing slow, 4
agonizing suicide. I was dying out there in the streets 5
and I had lost all control of my own life. I have gone 6
through hell to get where I am today, but I'm happily re- 7
covering and I am clean and sober today. I tried it my 8
way for so long, which never worked, but I am thankful to 9
my Higher Power for letting this crazy junkie live long 10
enough to make it to the N.A. program and find a loving, 11
understanding Fellowship of other recovering addicts. 12

I guess I was doomed to be hopelessly addicted way back 13
in 1969 at the ripe old age of thirteen when my family first 14
moved to Atlanta. This is a town where you can find it all 15
and do it all. I was a popular person during my teenage 16
years, and I had lots of different types and kinds of friends, 17
but I always chose to steer more toward the wild crowd. I 18
loved thrills and excitement. I grew up with three brothers 19
and a father who loved to race cars and build and ride 20
motorcycles, so to me, the name of the game was thrills, 21
being daring and bold and trying the things that made me 22
feel good. I'd try anything once and if it felt good, I 23
was hooked. I did it again and again, so it was with my 24
drugs. 25

I experimented with all kinds of chemicals during high 26
school. I learned which ones I liked the best and which 27
ones just weren't for me. It was a lot of fun then, but 28
the drugs really hadn't gotten out of control yet. I went 29
through the turbulent seventies, the rebellions, the drug 30

1 and hippie cults. It was alluring and exciting and it was
2 just plain cool to be doing all those things. It was a
3 major part of our lives and a very major part of mine. I
4 did drugs at school, at concernts, at home and every chance
5 I could.

6 My next big move in life was to marry a rock musician.
7 This was seventh heaven to me. I was constantly exposed to
8 drugs when we traveled on the road. We did drugs to stay up
9 late at night. We partied and swapped drugs with other musi-
10 cians, then we would do drugs to go to sleep. You name it;
11 we did it just to survive in that type of life.

12 After five years of marriage, my husband and I were
13 living like strangers and we divorced. As the initial shock
14 hit me, I became miserable and depressed. My marriage had
15 failed and I felt like a total failure. I wanted somebody;
16 I needed somebody, some type of secure relationship, love
17 and companionship. I sought companionship and comfort with
18 my drugs. I stayed in a zombie-like state for quite a while
19 drifting from sick relationship to sick relationship. This
20 was also the point in my life where my "Lady Jane" symptoms
21 started happening: the ability to attract trouble and the
22 ability to attract sickies. I still continued to use heavily
23 as the way to escape my problems, but in the back of my mind
24 I knew the main reason for my problems was drugs. The drugs
25 gave me such a feeling of power and of being invincible. I
26 developed lots of acquaintances through my jobs and social
27 life the next few years. We all had one thing in common--
28 drugs. I had several good jobs during this time, two with
29 the government and one with an insurance company. It's
30 amazing how white collar, jock executives don't look like
31 drug addicts, but I could sure pick them out of a crowd every
32 time and I sought their companionship and sickness.

33 By this time everyone around me could see that I was
34 having some kind of problem, but I don't really think they
35 put two and two together. I became a good liar and manipu-
36 lator. I was one of the best con artists. I did seek some

counseling and therapy at this time in my life, but I gave 1
up after a while. Professionals had never been down the 2
same road as me and none related to my particular problem. 3
It wasn't just the drugs that were my problem; it was also 4
my distorted personality and all my ways of life that had 5
developed over the years. 6

I tried many times to stop using and associating with 7
the same old crowd, but I was weak and I knew it would take 8
a miracle to get me on the right track. So, until that 9
miracle came along, I continued to use hard and heavy. 10

I had various live-in relationships with men and knew 11
all the tricks of the trade. Their personalities were just 12
as sick and warped as mine, but somehow we met each other's 13
needs--the getting and using of our drugs. I always picked 14
the ones that I could manipulate easily to get what I wanted. 15
My needs were going to be met, regardless of the price. I 16
was using the needle pretty heavy at this time and it was 17
obvious that my meagre salary could not support the tremen- 18
dous habit I had. I started dealing with armed robbers and 19
people with connections in organized crime. This is where 20
the big money and the big dope was. I became paranoid be- 21
cause of the large amounts of illegal drugs I had and be- 22
cause of the large amounts of drugs I was using. Drugs 23
seemed good to me at one time, but they were getting way 24
out of control. I stayed loaded twenty-four hours a day. 25
It's like the N.A. program states, "We lived to use and used 26
to live." 27

I was strung out. I've always been violent to some de- 28
gree, and during thos years of heavy using, my violence 29
raged out of control. I carried guns, knives and other 30
weapons and I know that I would have dilled anyone who tried 31
to take my dope. Whenever my "big time" associates were dry 32
and there was no dope available for a while, I learned to 33
take care of my habit the way a lot of girls learned; I sold 34
my body. I learned quickly that you could make good money 35
selling your body, but the money never lasted when it all 36

1 had to go into your arms. I started staying out of work a
2 lot now; I was too loaded to make it in half the time. When
3 I did make it in, I had to take my little dope kit in with
4 me and I'd spend much of the day locked away in the bathroom
5 getting off. Eventually, I lost my job. Slowly but surely,
6 I was dying and I was beginning to get a taste of what it's
7 like to be sick and tired of being sick and tired.

8 It was then that I decided to try and do something about
9 my problem. I had legal problems out the ears, an uncontroll-
10 able addiction, a family that avoided me like the plague and
11 a lot of mixed-up, confused feelings. I had thought many
12 times of giving up this way of life and trying to meet new
13 people and maybe trying to get myself into a drug program.
14 My ideas were in the right direction, but I never followed
15 them through. I was seriously sorting my life out or trying
16 to at this time, when an old lover and using buddy popped
17 up on my doorstep out of the clear blue.

18 I knew right then where we were headed and I had a feel-
19 ing we weren't going to make it, alive, through this one,
20 this time. We went after what we wanted, and soon the drugs
21 were plentiful and we were back on that same twisted path
22 to hell. Things got way out of hand; the dope started run-
23 ning low; this time I felt more desperate than I ever had
24 before. This, my friends, is where the party ended. We
25 were arrested. The next few days in jail were living hell.
26 I was sick and hurting, mentally and physically. I wanted
27 to die!

28 My family and attorney urged me to seek help with my
29 problem before it was too late. What did they mean, "too
30 late?" Hell, look at the mess my life was in. There was no
31 hope for me now. I agreed half-heartedly to seek help at a
32 drug clinic and undergo drug therapy. What more did I have
33 to lose? At first, I wasn't sincere about giving up drugs
34 or even putting any effort into the drug program. I didn't
35 even know how to begin living without drugs. I knew I
36 couldn't stop through my own power. It was while I was

attending this drug therapy clinic that N.A. was mentioned 1
to me quite often. 2

I knew what the N.A. program was. I had heard about it 3
and had gone to a few meetings, but I had never fully taken 4
the time to understand the program. I thought it was a big 5
joke. But, I went to an N.A. meeting that night with some 6
other people from my drug clinic and saw all kinds of people 7
there with the same problem as me. They were drug addicts. 8
I don't remember too much about the first meeting, my mind 9
was still jumbled and the drugs were still not all out of 10
my system. But certain things that were said at that meet- 11
ing stuck with me and impressed me. There were people there 12
with the same, or worse, problems, yet they were clean. They 13
had learned to live their lives without drugs. I saw then 14
that there had to be hope for me. I couldn't love myself at 15
that time, but everyone in the program loved me for what I 16
was. I kept going to meetings and I started meeting lots of 17
understanding and wonderful people--people that I felt com- 18
fortable around and I knew they could relate to my problems. 19
I really had a willingness in my heart, at this time, to try 20
and I wanted to do it for me instead of my family. 21

I have come a long way and I've gone through hell to get 22
here, but I know recovery is possible and I have seen some 23
good things happen to me since I've been in the N.A. program. 24
I've become a trusted servant of a local N.A. group, which I 25
love. I'm getting in touch with my Higher Power, as I under- 26
stand Him, and He is working miracles in my life today that 27
I never thought would be possible. I am beginning to love 28
myself and I have finally found freedom for the bondage of 29
drugs and I have found a new way of life, clean and sober, 30
one day at a time. I have stopped using and started to live. 31
What a great feeling! The Narcotics Anonymous program works 32
and I love you all. 33

THERE'S NO COMPARISON

1 I started using drugs at about age fifteen. I was basi-
2 cally a very shy person and I had trouble getting along in
3 social situations, like talking to girls. I never felt like
4 I fit in anywhere.

5 I found that by taking a few drinks, I could feel like I
6 was in a whole new world. I could relate to people better and
7 I could be the life of the party. I started drinking at par-
8 ties and on weekends with friends. I did not think I was using
9 alcohol as a drug. My drinking got worse when I got in high
10 school. I got in trouble several times with the law.

11 I would come home drunk and my parents would scold me and
12 ask why I was doing the things I was doing. I really couldn't
13 tell them, and I would feel really bad. They tried to help,
14 but nothing they did could stop me once I started drinking.
15 Drinking caused me a whole lot of trouble going through high
16 school; I spent four years in a three-year high school because
17 of drinking.

18 I didn't use any other drug until I was twenty, when I
19 went away to school. I started taking speed. It was "in" with
20 the crowd I hung around with. During that time, I gradually
21 started using more and more speed and continued drinking at
22 the same time.

23 I came back home and started working in a hospital and be-
24 gan smoking grass. Grass wasn't "in" in those days and only
25 "dope fiends" smoked grass. I felt the same way too. At that
26 time, "using drugs" was something I would never have done, even
27 though I drank like a fish.

28 But I was into being rebellious, and being weird, and I
29 was hanging around with musicians and artsy-craftsy types and
30 we got to smoking a little pot. I thought that was great. I

just thought it was cool. I liked the idea of feeling different from other people. The drug experience seemed real neat. I also said at that time that I would never use any hard drugs; I would never use anything other than pot. That didn't prove to be the case, because about a year after I started using pot, I had to use pills. People came around with other drugs and I tried them. I liked the way they made me feel. They made me feel different from the way I was and if I wanted to feel "up" I could take speed, and if I wanted to feel "down," I could take tranquilizers.

Getting drugs was never a problem. There were always people with drugs around. Drinking and drugging got to be a crazy thing with me--a real nutty kind of lifestyle. I was sponging off my parents, living at their house, because I was spending most of my money on booze and drugs and having a good time. My moods became real intense; I'd stay in my room all the time, unless I was partying, boozing or doping. I became intolerable for them to be around. They didn't know what kind of person I would be from one minute to the next. I had been in jail previously, for being drunk and doing all kinds of crazy and bizarre things--nothing major, never any felonies; but I was always being hauled in for disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. My father was a policeman and it really made him look bad. It didn't seem to matter that I hurt everyone around me when I was loaded. What I said to them didn't mean much to me as long as I was loaded.

I didn't have to face anything--chemicals would help me face any situation. It seemed like with drugs and alcohol, I didn't want to act "normally"; I wanted to stay wasted. I'd been in trouble several times. I had been in car accidents. I had been in jail on several occasions, but it didn't seem to matter to me. None of these things stopped me from getting high or drinking. I'd clean up for awhile, but I'd start back again and it just got worse faster.

When I was twenty-two, I ended up in a state hospital for depression. During that time, I started seeing psychia-

1 trists because I thought I was crazy and being crazy sounded
2 pretty attractive to me. I didn't have to face my drug use;
3 I didn't have to face my alcohol use. The psychiatrist sug-
4 gested that I might have problems with drugs and alcohol, but
5 I side-stepped the issue. I spent a year in the hospital.
6 At the hospital, they kept saying, "Maybe one day, when you
7 get your inner psychic problems straightened out, you'll be
8 able to use alcohol successfully." They never said anything
9 about drugs, and during that whole time, I was on sleeping
10 medication every night. I found I could take my chloral hy-
11 drate at bed time and sit in the men's lounge and enjoy the
12 high--cop a buzz. Then I could go back for seconds. It got
13 to be a real habit with me in the hospital. Every night I
14 got loaded. I began to look forward to bed time.

15 After I got out of the hospital, everything went fairly
16 amooth for three or four months. Then I got a roommate that
17 was in to being "hip" and cool, and so was I, really. I never
18 had a program; I didn't look for a program that would help me
19 stop drinking or doping. I didn't want to; I did not have
20 the desire to never do it again. I started smoking pot again
21 and eventually got into other drugs. I remember the first
22 time I used LSD; I freaked out. Some "real good friends" gave
23 me electric kool-aid at a party and I didn't know it was elec-
24 tric. I was crazy for a week. I was psychotic and had to go
25 get tranquilizers to come down. But that didn't keep me from
26 doing LSD again. I really got into psychedelics.

27 I had a series of jobs after the hospital and later got
28 married. My wife used drugs and alcohol. One New Year's Even,
29 I started drinking again. I thought, "Well, maybe I can handle
30 it now." My drinking got to the point the marriage broke up.
31 During that time, I was using drugs too. Really, I'm a poly-
32 addict, I guess. It seems like whatever chemical, once I
33 use it, I abuse it. That's the way it went for me, regardless
34 of the hell I went through with the stuff; I just kept using it.

35 I felt really good about the divorce, like I was a free
36 person again. I had a good job teaching at a technological

institute, but I began to jeopardize my position by selling 1
dope on the job. A lot of people working at the institute 2
were "heads" and there was a lot of dealing going on at that 3
time. 4

I moved in with two or three other people and we made 5
some money on the side selling some speed and other drugs. 6
We had a lot of parties at our house. It got to the point 7
where my job just didn't matter to me a whole lot. My per- 8
formance began to go down a whole lot. I finally lost the 9
job after an incident that occurred when I came to work 10
after partying until seven in the morning. 11

I was living with these people. Our drugging got to the 12
point that no one wanted to be around us. It seemed like 13
everybody was doing a lot of drugs. Drugs I thought I would 14
never do in my life started ending up in the house. People 15
were bringing over all different kinds of drugs. 16

One of my favorite drugs was MDA. I got introduced to 17
heroin. I didn't do a whole lot of heroin. I chipped a 18
few times and liked it so well I figured I'd better not do 19
any more. But I got just as bad with other drugs. I got 20
to the point that all I was living for was to use; all I 21
wanted to do was use. 22

I lost my job and moved out of a nice apartment into a 23
really cheap, cockroach-infested apartment. I started 24
driving a taxi, and that was convenient. Most of the people 25
who worked for the cab company drank and a lot of them did 26
drugs, and they didn't care that I didn't show up for work. 27
That was okay. I didn't have to work all the time if I 28
didn't want to. It gave me a lot of time to do the things 29
I wanted to do. I got to the point where I was drining or 30
using drugs all the time. 31

I moved in with a "friend;" he was dealing heavy. We 32
started giving out MDA and other junk like pounds of mari- 33
juana and hash. We were dealing to all kinds of people. 34
There were people coming to the house that I didn't even 35
know. On top of that, we were dealing to high school kids 36

1 and I was thirty years old. I never thought I would sell drugs
2 to kids, but I did. It was easy for me to rationalize as
3 strung out as I was. I was into MDA so heavy that I was using
4 a gram in the morning, just to get the ball rolling. It got
5 to the point that although I was dealing, I owed my dope man
6 money because I was using up all the profits and I wasn't
7 working much. Things I said would never happen, did; like
8 people were bringing over stolen stereos.

9 Something happened and I got fed up with it all. I
10 cleaned up my act and got a straight job in a liquor store.
11 Working in a liquor store wasn't very good for me, but it
12 was something. I moved out of that dumpy apartment and got
13 my shit together pretty good for a while. But, again, I
14 didn't have any people who really cared about me and I didn't
15 have a program to go to. I had gone to A.A. once and didn't
16 feel like I fit there, when I really did. I went back to
17 school. I started taking some classes in drug and alcohol
18 abuse and ended up at an N.A. meeting for the first time.
19 That's where I met the people in my area who were just start-
20 ing N.A. I saw something in these people, but I wasn't
21 ready yet. I went to a couple of meetings and then stopped.
22 I started using again and started drinking again; I never
23 really went straight.

24 The next two or three years rolled by; I was out of
25 school again, working in a liquor store and drinking all the
26 time. I was stealing my employer blind. I was marginally
27 functional. I was trading booze out of the store for dope
28 and selling dope out of the store. The owner trusted me
29 implicitly when he hired me. He gave me the key to his store.
30 One of the nicest people I have ever had the experience of
31 working for in my life...yet I stole from him simply because
32 I needed the booze and I needed the dope.

33 I never ended up in the penitentiary, but I certainly
34 qualified to be there and it's just by the grace of God that
35 I never did end up there. I got to the point where I was
36 using and drinking every day. I had to use Quaaludes and

I had to use tranquilizers to feel good. Drinking and drug- 1
ging because something I had to do just to feel alright. 2
The parties were gone. The people that I used to associate 3
with were pretty neat people. They had their lives together 4
and just used and drank a little bit socially. They didn't 5
want to toak to me anymore. Nobody wanted to say anything to 6
me, to see me any more. The only time anyone wanted to see 7
me was to buy something or to get something from me, and it 8
got to the point where I didn't want to see anyone either, 9
unless they could do something for me. I didn't care about 10
myself or anyone else. 11

One day, following a week bender on booze and downers, 12
I think I reached that moment of sanity that people in the 13
Fellowship talk about. I was living in a sleazy dive in an 14
area of town where I had never thought of hanging out in my 15
earlier days. I really saw myself and knew I was an addict. 16
I was an addict, and an alcoholic. I couldn't handle drugs. 17
I had made a mess of my life. I had known it intellectually 18
for a long time, but this was the first time I really felt 19
it in my guts. I didn't handle booze and I didn't handle 20
drugs--they handled me. I would do anything to get my hands 21
on drugs or alcohol. They ran my life. I didn't have any 22
control once I started, once I took that first fix, pill or 23
drink. 24

I had reached the point where I would black out for days 25
at a time, and I would end up places not even knowing where 26
in the hell I had been, with people I would never have thought 27
of hanging around with anyway. I was doing things I never 28
conceived of doing when I first started. I was hurting people 29
that were very close to me. I realized that I was thirty- 30
five years old and I didn't have shit to show for my life. 31
I had nothing to show for it, except withdrawal when I got 32
up in the morning, when I didn't have anything to take, 33
when I didn't have anything to drink. I hurt my family; 34
I had sponged off of them most of my life and I was on a 35
dead-end road. I thought I was either going to die or I was 36

1 headed for the penitentiary or going crazy. If I went crazy,
2 there wasn't going to be any getting well to it. I knew that
3 I needed help.

4 I had some friends that had gotten straightened out. They
5 had been in N.A. for three years. One was a girl I had been
6 loaded and drunk with a lot. There were a couple of other
7 friends who had gone through a treatment center a couple of
8 years before. I called my father and asked him to come and
9 get me; my car wouldn't run and he came and got me.

10 My father asked me if I wanted to go home, and I said,
11 "No, I want to go to the hospital." He asked why, and I said,
12 "Because I'm an addict and I'm an alcoholic and I can't
13 handle my life. My life is a shambles, and I need some help."
14 He asked if I was sure I wanted to do that and I said I was
15 sure. I went to the hospital and then to a detox center where
16 they didn't give me any drugs or alcohol to come down with.
17 There was a part of me that was thinking that when I get to
18 the hospital, I'll get a lot of drugs and I'll come down easy
19 and then I'll be alright. Maybe I can get squared away doing
20 the same thing I had done before, many times. I spent a week
21 once in a state hospital doing it. Another time, I spent a
22 year in a state hospital doing it--having the cushy ride.

23 I had gone to doctors and emergency rooms to get prescrip-
24 tions that just led to more drug use eventually. I finally
25 realized that I couldn't quit this thing by myself; I couldn't
26 handle it.

27 I didn't like the sound of this detox center when I got
28 there, but I went in anyway. The next day I woke up so sick
29 that I knew I couldn't make it to work that day, even if I
30 could leave the place. I called my boss from there and told
31 him where I was and what had gone on. Everybody who worked in
32 the detox center were alcoholics or addicts and they were
33 giving me support. I stayed five days in detox and then went
34 to a treatment center out of town. I was shaking so bad that
35 I could hardly keep food on my fork. I stayed in treatment
36 for thirty-seven days.

During treatment, I got a solid education about A.A. I 1
learned a lot about me, and I learned a lot about feelings. 2
I learned a lot about God. There was a real spiritual base 3
to this treatment center. I not only learned a lot about A.A., 4
but I learned some about N.A., and I knew there was N.A. back 5
home. I knew that when I got back to town, I would have some 6
place to go. I would have meetings to go to. 7

At the treatment center, I was told, "Don't drink when 8
you get back; don't use any drugs and go to meetings. Stick 9
with the winners and work the Steps. And don't take on any- 10
thing you can't handle. Back home I moved into a halfway 11
house and went to my first N.A. meeting--the first one I had 12
been to in a long time. 13

This time I was serious about N.A. I saw people still 14
there who had been there four years before. No one told me 15
to leave because I had been such an ass at that first meet- 16
ing a few years before. They said, "We're glad to see you and 17
we love you and we'll help you, if you want us to; if you'll 18
let us." I was home. I knew I was with people who cared 19
about me. I could just feel it in the room. I knew that 20
God was looking out for me because I could feel His presence 21
in that room with those people. I have never felt that I 22
could get any kind of spirituality in church, and it suddenly 23
hit me that God works through people. 24

For the last year and a half, I haven't found it neces- 25
sary to use any drugs or drink because of my involvement with 26
the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It's just been a com- 27
pletely different life. I've gone through a lot of changes 28
and I've had some bad times, but things are really Okay. My 29
best day drinking and getting loaded is ten times worse than 30
my worst day straight and sober. I have my problems today, 31
but it seems like there's one thing a lot of people say in 32
the program: "This too shall pass." I have found that to 33
be true, but it passes quicker the longer I stay straight 34
and sober one day at a time. 35

1 The neatest thing about N.A. is that I don't have to
2 quit using for the rest of my life. I can just quit for right
3 now and it's a whole lot easier for me to think about because
4 I can't handle thinking about the rest of my life.

5 I hear neat little slogans like "God doesn't give me what
6 He and I can't handle." That's true as long as I don't drink
7 and I don't use; good things happen to me. It's a program that
8 gives me a way to work on character defects of characters.
9 I'm not the person I used to be. I now believe that I'm a
10 good person, and I can accept other people caring about me.
11 I can care about others. It's all possible because of the
12 Steps and the Fellowship. I don't have to worry about my little
13 playmates or playgrounds or playthings now, because I've got
14 a whole lot of friends that really care. These friends are
15 not like the ones who just wanted something out of me when I
16 had dope or booze. These new friends really care and I can
17 depend on them.

18 Life today is just so much better, I don't even know how
19 to describe it. It is so completely different from what it was
20 like when I was using and drinking, there is just no compari-
21 son.

BEING CLEAN AND SERENE IS FUN

Thank God, I'm clean. I love being clean and serene. 1
I love being a member of N.A. I love all of you, my fellow 2
addicts.

Without God's grace and you people, I wouldn't have sur- 3
vived drug addiction. I thank each and every one of you for 4
helping me save my life and enjoy a satisfying cleanliness. 5
You gave me the unconditional love of one addict for another 6
that's essential in my recovery. Your unjudging acceptance 7
enabled me to drop the rock of Old ideas. You helped me 8
enjoy living in the here and now. Today, life's worthwhile. 9
Being clean and serene is fun. 10

Now that I'm clean, the worse is over and the best is 11
happening to me on a daily basis. 12

I'm so grateful for today clean, I love to go to a meet- 13
ing in order to celebrate cleanliness with you and to carry 14
the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. To 15
me, service is like a commitment to God that we'll help new- 16
comers through the grace period early on and beyond this 17
transition into a healthy, enjoyable and spiritual cleanli- 18
ness. 19

Yet, it's the responsibility of those of us who have 20
cleanliness to remind addicts: "WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OUR 21
GROUP EXPERIENCE THAT THOSE WHO KEEP COMING TO OUR MEETINGS 22
REGULARLY STAY CLEAN." 23

I don't tell newcomers to use drugs if they're having 24
doubts about being an addict because I don't know what the 25
next use of drugs might do to them. I don't kill my fellow 26
addicts with such insane advice. 27

Instead, I welcome them unconditionally to N.A. and 28
offer them what the program suggests: "MANY OF US HAVE HAD 29
SOME RESERVATIONS AT THIS POINT, SO GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK 30

AND BE AS THOROUGH AS POSSIBLE AT THE START. GO TO STEP TWO, 1
AND SO FORTH AND AS YOU GO ON YOUR WILL COME TO AN UNDER- 2
STANDING OF THE PROGRAM FOR YOURSELF." 3

I use meetings like I used drugs. Since I used drugs 4
regularly, I now use meetings regularly to stay clean. I've 5
been able to adapt to N.A. meetings because they really work 6
well with me. I love the caring and sharing. I love the 7
cheerfulness and laughter. I love having a place where I can 8
enjoy Fellowship with people just like me who are clean and 9
serene. 10

I was so desperate to have to go to meetings; I got into 11
the habit of going. After the first year and a half of my 12
mind telling me every tenth of a second, "It's all over, for- 13
get it, you're dead;" it suddenly dawned on me, "Well, looks 14
like I'm going to survive; now, what do I do?" I go to meet- 15
ings. 16

I have a positive addiction to meetings. My dose is five 17
meetings a week. Take away that many or attend less per week, 18
and I'd go through physical withdrawals. My nose would start 19
to run again. Palms would sweat; I'd feel like an itch. 20
Speech would stutter, hearing would nod, vision would be as 21
shaky as me and a strange look would come over my face. My 22
emotions and stinking-thinking would play basketball with my 23
head. I'd crawl up the wall with my fingernails. The third 24
day in a row away from meetings, I'd forget they ever existed. 25

Other addicts may have their rate of grasping and develop- 26
ing the program; mine is at least five meetings per week. I 27
need regular attendance of meetings in order to survive and 28
I need the 12-Steps to help me enjoy cleanliness. Like we 29
say in N.A., "IF IT WORKS DON'T FIX IT." 30

Arrived at the program, my first meetings seemed like 31
something I was stuck having to do. Being in meetings gave 32
me some place to be while I died. Whether stuck or not, I 33
survived to love celebrating cleanliness at a meeting. I'm 34
no longer fighting into, during, out of meetings; and crying 35
waterfalls after it. I'm enjoying smiles, hugs, kisses and 36

1 peace of mind. I'm no longer knocking the money basket across
2 the meeting room nor throwing a candle through the tabletop.
3 I'm clean and serene, and into service.

4 Gratefully, I see stinking-thinking as proving my mind
5 isn't the best indicator of what's happening. Things aren't as
6 bad as my mind tries to paint them. By doing the footwork and
7 depending in God, there's lots of room to survive. I've done
8 a lot of things the program suggests, thinking, "God, you're
9 really wrong this time." And afterwards, admitting, "Okay,
10 God, right again."

11 On days I'd get to a meeting too early, my head would try
12 to take over and I'd sit debating whether I really wanted to
13 stick around for it. Did I really want to deal with me? A
14 meeting was like a "House of Mirrors"--so many sizes and shapes
15 of me being reflected back. Did I really want to go in there
16 and face it? Then, the secretary would show, the door would
17 open and the habit of going to meetings would save my cleanli-
18 ness by automatically getting me into the room regardless of
19 what I was thinking.

20 In the meeting, there'd be a tremendous relief of not hav-
21 ing to decide about going to it. I was in it. Once it started,
22 I felt better and usually uplifted after it ended.

23 One meeting, I was having difficulty feeling a part of the
24 program. In the middle of my stinking-thinking, a friend of
25 mine jumped up, yelled at everybody in the room, stormed out
26 of the meeting and gave me some serenity. I knew I wasn't
27 alone. I wasn't the only crazy person going to meetings. This
28 fact saved my cleanliness that day and my staying clean, saved
29 my life.

30 You see, my stinking-thinking at times has a lot to do with
31 my addictive personality. My addict's mind tries to isolate
32 me, then divide and conquer. Just like we say in N.A., "AN
33 ADDICT ALONE IS IN BAD COMPANY." My addictive mind doesn't
34 want to give up control, so it will try getting me upset enough
35 to go back out and die in drug addiction. And it seems to me,
36 when one addict's mind can't get an addict to use drugs, several

of our minds will gang up and try to get a whole group of 1
us to go out and die. 2

Sometimes, it's simply the feeling of togetherness that 3
I love. A simple thing like picking up cups during the clean 4
up was to me like "WE CAN DO WHAT I CAN'T." This participa- 5
ting in the clean up made me feel a part of the meeting and 6
glad to be a part of the N.A. recovery team. 7

It's easier for me to enjoy cleanliness when living with 8
what we have in common. The support we give each other in 9
N.A. and the welcome we give newcomers are important. 10

Now that I'm in a safe harbor sheltered from the storm of 11
obsessive drug abuse I've a tendency to forget about the 12
storm. I need seeing the new people because they remind me 13
how progressive and fatal is the disease of drug addition. 14
It's also necessary for me to be with clean addicts because 15
they encourage me to stay clean and keep on boogying the path 16
of happy cleanliness. 17

My spiritual progress is like being chained to a truck. 18
I can keep on trucking smilingly or get dragged. In either 19
case, I'm going one way--the way God has in store for me in 20
living the principles of this Fellowship. I find both hope 21
and help in N.A. meetings. 22

Before this, there'd been years of drug addiction without 23
hope or help. I'd lost the power to do anything about my drug 24
addiction. My life became extremely unmanageable because 25
drugs reached a point with me where they failed to work. With 26
or without drugs my life was a mess. As my tolerance and 27
adaptability to pain and drugs collapsed, I finally went from 28
being very casual one day to a casualty the next. 29

Turning my will and life over to my automobile and going 30
home, I got in it, locked the doors, pulled on the emergency 31
flashers, got on the freeway, put the pedal to the metal and 32
drove between the traffic in the fast lane and the green 33
fence--right down the middle, following the "Yellow brick 34
road" warning tiles until it totalled in a chase with another 35
greater power, the highway patrol. H.P. said, "Come with me," 36

1 and I did.

2 My family bailed me out, there was a person in a newspaper
3 article we got to be my lawyer who later turned into a member
4 of the program right before my eyes, during the arraignment pro-
5 ceedings. I went up to school and just as I was about to let
6 them know I wouldn't be there at finals week because of impending
7 court appearances, my mind decided it wanted to run somewhere
8 deep inside my head and hide.

9 I was afraid of dying, so everything suddenly jumped into
10 tenths of a second. Using the ideas of a traffic signal and
11 the mouse looking for green cheese in a maze, I went on green
12 and stopped on red. When I saw a person wearing something red
13 I'd stop and when I saw green I went. Finally, there was another
14 arrest.

15 At court lockup, there was an argument with the jailer over
16 our manliness. I took off my clothes, climbed the bars to the
17 ceiling and tried shaking the bars while screaming like a monkey.
18 I'm told my case jacket reads; the trial judge came back to see
19 about the commotion. We exchanged greetings and I was sent over
20 to a county hospital for observation because he felt I wasn't
21 ready for court that day. I don't know anything about the judge
22 being real or not because I don't recall what happened between
23 going up the bars and the two policemen coming to take me away.
24 I do remember everything was okay at the hospital until they
25 put me in a room by myself.

26 Somehow, I found matches inside the sheetmetal of the room
27 heater and soon had the bedding, pillow and mattress going up in
28 yard high flames. The staff ran into the room. I ran out and
29 made good my escape. Except the double doors I jumped through
30 at the end of the hall were locked.

31 Crashing to the floor, I crawled away, found a shower and
32 hid until an orderly found me. A nurse stuck me with a shot and
33 they shipped me via Sheriff's certification to a state hospital.

34 From reading a newspaper in the lobby while waiting for the
35 entry interview, my mind came up with the story about being a
36 depressed alcoholic who occasionally experimented with other

drugs socially. The interviewer placed me on the alcoholic 1
and drug wards one week each. 2

After the state hospital and medical isolation at the 3
county jail, I was finally well enough to have a nervous break- 4
down my third or fourth day in "Restraint #3" and casually 5
admitted it to the nurse who brought the next meal. The nurse 6
said, "What stamina." 7

Fortunately, one of the other restraint units was broken, 8
so I had to give mine up when someone started a screaming jag. 9
At the end, I was brought before the judge and given the 10
average nudge of automatic 90days at the state institute for 11
the criminally insane or would I like to go to the program? 12

While my mind was thinking about the nurses at the state 13
institute, my mouth was given the grace to say I'd go to the 14
program. I was given two years probation for reckless driv- 15
ing and disturbing the peace, warned not to get a traffic 16
ticket and restored to society in the custody of my lawyer 17
who took me to a meeting the night of my release. 18

Having been criminally insane one moment, the judge 19
declaring me legally sane the next and this program being 20
the society I was restored to when out of jail, I can't hon- 21
estly tell whether the people here in the program are crazy. 22
All I know is that I've been restored to sanity as far as the 23
compulsion to use drugs is concerned because through God's 24
grace and the 12-Steps of N.A., I've gotten my priorities in 25
order. I'm clean and my number one priority as a drug addict 26
is staying clean one day at a time. I don't use drugs. 27

Instead, I use the N.A. program of 12-Steps and helping 28
the addict who still suffers. When I'm helping someone else 29
stay clean, seems like all the spiritual wealth of the pro- 30
gram surfaces. Today, I use all the tools of recovery like 31
inventory, sponsorship, telephone therapy and service. I have 32
all the tools necessary to help me through the day. 33

Someone told me whatever was happening, "To expect a 34
miracle." I find a pocketful of N.A. phone numbers is like 35
having a pocketful of miracles. Any time I need a miracle, 36

1 I can call one on the phone.

2 I always suggest getting lots of phone numbers because of
3 my first experience with telephone therapy. I'd been driving
4 myself crazy as par for the course back then and finally could
5 no longer handle another moment of it. So, I went to the tele-
6 phone even though I disliked having to use it. Contempt prior
7 to investigation.

8 Anyway, I pulled out my one telephone number. No answer to
9 dialing it. Naturally, I think, "That don't work." And I hang
10 up. I get so upset about it not working that I had to go for a
11 walk. It worked. I found a vigorous walk could bring my blood
12 pressure down to normal; whatever that is.

13 I also got more phone numbers. I got into the habit of using
14 the phone regularly by calling people up "Officially" rather than
15 personally, and asking them whether they're going to the meeting
16 and could I catch a ride, or would they like a ride? From the
17 official calls my habit progressed to the point that telephone
18 therapy has saved my cleanliness and helped me smoothly through
19 some rough spots. I even make unofficial, personal calls to
20 people in N.A. today. I'm even enjoying sponsorship now. The
21 only reason I had a program sponsor to begin with was to have
22 something to say when people asked me, "Who's your sponsor?"

23 I went through a lot of sponsorship relationships getting
24 clean. I had to learn to "LIVE AND LET LIVE" with them. Rubbing
25 up against some of the personalities before principles I've met
26 here occasionally has surely sandpapered the rough exterior I
27 had and turned it into a smooth work of art in my living situa-
28 tions.

29 Any time sponsors in the program appear to be human and fall
30 off the pedestal, I'd put them back up there because I don't
31 want them in the trenches trying to clutter up my life. At
32 least, that's what I used to feel.

33 As a result, amends were necessary when I also got into
34 sponsoring situations. However, I'd rather be friends.

35 I remember I used to put sponsors on a pedestal, paint a
36 big target on them, and the, fire insanity at them to see what

they did with it. Watching what sponsors do to survive it helps a lot. They go to their sponsors and say, "You should see what's come up this time."

And their sponsors say, "We know. We went through it with you."

I watched them turn it over. Do inventory. Call sponsors on the phone. Do steps. Go to meetings. And not use drugs. So, when insanity struck me, I'd do the same as sponsors do to survive it.

Sponsors can help make up the difference between what it takes to finally stay clean. Having someone nearby who knows how to swim can be important when I'm diving off the deep end.

Yet, most importantly, I go to meetings regularly.

Being in a meeting is very significant to me because the moment I heard about "A LOVING GOD" as may be expressed in our group conscience, I thought, "Maybe, there's hope here for me."

I find I can go to a meeting and someone will say what I need to hear or while I'm talking something will air that I didn't know was about to surface, and the loving God in the group conscience gives me the support I need in order to face, accept, admit and survive being me without having to use drugs.

Of course, I've been into all the talking from the start. My first meeting was a topic discussion. It was on the 12-Traditions. "If I had any, they're the dirty dozen," I said and you went on with the rest of the meeting.

I felt like a dead battery those first meetings. I was like a dead man with moveable parts. I had completely used up my energy. I feel God's grace simply gave me the energy to get to the program. And a loving God charges me up ever since. Talking about God in a meeting helps me store up God conscious energy. At any low point during the day, thinking about what was said about God taps into this reserve and helps me get through it.

1 My early program days were ghastly. Socially, all my sur-
2 face communications seemed burnt like melba toast. From the
3 face back there was a void filled with stinking-thinking and a
4 continuous buzzing. My emotions were bare like panic buttons
5 worn on my sleeves. Every time I met someone, these emotional
6 buttons would get pushed and stick on pushed. I was like a
7 bizzaro. Like an emotional vampire flying to latch onto some-
8 one at a meeting and suck up all the self-esteem I could. I
9 drained or strained one relationship after another. It's all
10 I had as a survival kit besides drugs.

11 I used people, places and things to get drugs; now, I was
12 using you up to get clean.

13 I simply couldn't handle energy once it reached a certain
14 level. Someone would say, "Hi, how's it going?" that would be
15 okay. The third or fourth person saying it would get a chair
16 to duck. I could seem all hugs and kisses, friendly, then flop
17 into annihilation over little more than a look or comment. Any
18 question to me was like an incoming attack. Any time someone
19 asked, "D'you know?" I thought it was directed at me. I had to
20 sit in the corner alone in a room full of clean addicts because
21 of the fear of hurting people I loved. I felt like I had, "Two
22 chances, slim and none. I could tread water all I liked; until
23 I picked a direction, I was going to drown." So, I used to sit
24 in meetings drowning in my slim or no chance. Talking my head
25 off during discussion meetings, yet drowning.

26 Here's where the first Three Traditions are important to me.
27 I love the common welfare and unity; the loving God, and the
28 only requirement for membership in N.A. being the desire to stop
29 using drugs.

30 Our common welfare coming first brought a lot of clean addicts
31 over to shake my hand at the meetings. The loving God through
32 you people broke down the walls of my self imposed exile. Your
33 care and acceptance broke through my false pride and self-hate.

34 I'd been afraid to trust you because I couldn't trust me.
35 Needing you to help me stay clean was frightening. Yet, your
36 love did it. I was hugged back into caring about myself. It

dawned on me, as long as I was willing to grow along spiri- 1
tual lines, this is all the direction I need to keep me bou- 2
yant in life's changes. 3

I had difficulty living life on life's terms in the past. 4
Good, bad or indifferent, my reaction to life on life's terms 5
was using drugs. 6

By the grace of God and using the 12-Steps, I'm living 7
life on God's terms. Anything that happens in cleanliness, 8
I know God's in it and a lesson of trust in God's love is 9
available. 10

I still have addictive tendencies. When there's a half 11
pint of food at the deli, I buy a full pint to make sure. 12
When someone invites me to dinner, I eat dinner first, then 13
go. This way I'll get enough. I occasionally buy fruit 14
juices and go sit in the park to drink. It's helped my 15
cleanliness sometimes when the urge to use drugs came on me. 16

Basically, I know I'm clean only by the grace of God. 17
God is the cure. 18

God is giving me the gift of cleanliness. My cleanli- 19
ness is a proof to me of God's reality. 20

My powerlessness and unmanageability as the result of 21
drug abuse had already been recorded long before this in 22
jails, institutions and near death situations. I was unable 23
to stop using drugs on the basis of self-will or self- 24
knowledge. I was unable to start a run or stop a run. I 25
was using or not, depending upon what I was doing when other 26
people met me. I had no control over it. 27

I'm incapable of being clean one day at a time. Yet, 28
I'm clean. As far as I'm concerned, a power greater than 29
myself is giving me the grace to be clean. God is working 30
in my life to keep me clean. 31

Even though I first admitted being an addict at the meet- 32
ings because I'd rather say that than crazy, I'm glad there's 33
a room of clean addicts because your saying you were addicts 34
made it easier for me to break through the alibi system of 35
denial and admit, "I'm an addict." 36

1 I need to be with clean addicts in the meeting. I have
2 a tendency to seek the approval of the people with whom I
3 socialize. When I'm with clean people regularly, knowing
4 you're here helps me get through the day clean so I can go
5 to the meeting and have your approval.

6 I'm glad the only requirement for membership is a desire
7 to stop using drugs. Or even a desire to have the desire to
8 stop. I feel the desire to stop is a gift from God.

9 The fertilizer of my drug related experiences brought the
10 desire to stop using drugs to the surface. That's what it
11 took to get my attention. That and the watering of the seed
12 of abstinence.

13 A meeting is like a pool of cleanliness.

14 At a meeting, someone may say, "EASY DOES IT." I go to
15 a hundred meetings and "EASY DOES IT" gets watered a hundred
16 times. The next thing I know, I'm going around saying, "EASY
17 DOES IT," and I'm not really sure where it came from. I just
18 know it works because I'm clean.

19 Today, I know a lot of my insanity was drug related. Yet,
20 a lot of it was me. I used drugs as a defense against how I
21 felt and an excuse for what I did. Even having no excuse was
22 an excuse to use drugs. I had a pyshological addiction to
23 drugs long before it progressed into a physical one. Being
24 me meant using drugs.

25 Whenever I'd be me, friends would say, "Don't mind him,
26 he's crazy." So, I started doing what they did and they'd
27 say, "Don't mind him, he's loaded." Now, I'm a member of N.A.
28 they say, "Don't mind him, he's clean."

29 What's different? I don't mind being me any more. It's
30 okay being me. I have value simply being human. In the Great
31 Chef's favorite recipe, I'm the ingredient who's supposed to
32 be me so that I can gradually merge into God's love. By
33 being clean and serene, I'm able to have cake and eat it, too.

34 God helps me face what's happening today. I accept my
35 actions, thoughts, feelings and emotions. I admit them. And
36 everything isn't such a big deal any more.

My most frightening times are when I feel "Meeting'd out." I remember this ha-pening to me very seriously between my first marriage and divorce in the program. I had moved to another state after the separation and in the city where I was going to meetings, there was one I'd attend in the morning of a weekend day, then return for the afternoon meeting at the same place.

This one moring, the meeting just wasn't doing it for me. So, after it was over, I wandered out in to the city not knowing whether I was ever going back to any meeting let alone the afternoon. I got into what my head calls, "The flow." Ending up in the transportation system of the subway, I sat at one of the green benches in the middle of the station platform.

The bench had a divider and curled up a la fetal position in the other portion was a person who hadn't waked up yet. As I looked, his body started to tilt off the bench. I reached over to help, the thought, "A person has to be allowed the dignity to suffer what has to be suffered in order for it to take what it has to take to make the program" And I watched him roll off the bench and fall head first onto the concrete where the contact acted like an alarm clock that rang his bell.

He came to and shook himself awake. He saw me sitting there and reached up a hand to me. I reached down and helped pull him onto the bench. He began to talk in a very fast whisper of unknown sounds more like scratches than words. Finally, I gave him a card with the 12-Steps and 12-Traditions on it. He focused on what it was and spit on it. So, I felt there's nothing more I could do and caught the next subway train as it came into the station and stopped.

I went in and sat across the aisle as he got up and followed, sitting opposite me as the doors closed and the train left the station. Again, there's the fast, low pitched whispers of a conversation he's having. This lasted until the conductor came by saying we'd have to move to the first

1 four cars in order to get off as the next station platform's
2 shorter than the number of cars in the train.

3 I was given the grace to get up and move forward. He re-
4 mained behind. At the next station, I got off. He remained
5 behind. The train left the station. Suddenly, I realized as
6 the car went by with him sitting alone--all the other cars in
7 the train had their lights lit. Not the one we'd been in during
8 our short trip. The car was completely unlit.

9 It now dawned on me what people meant when they say, "We
10 can arrest the disease of drug addiction at any stop along
11 the way. We don't have to take it to the very end."

12 God's grace through that experience saved my cleanliness.
13 I hurried back to the afternoon meeting at the same place on
14 a weekend day.

15 Feeling "Metting'd out" can mean, I'm going through a phase
16 of recovery that's difficult for me or I feel incapable of
17 surviving. Sometimes, God walks me through things where my know-
18 ing about it while it's happening would totally blow me away.
19 So, God allows me to feel "Meeting'd out" or uncomfortable with-
20 out my having to know what's really the matter until we're out
21 of my danger zone.

22 As long as I keep going to meetings, letting you know where
23 I'm at, how I'm continuing to use the program and depend in God
24 even though I may not know what's bothering me at the moment and
25 stay clean--it passes.

26 To me, a human being is normal only when turning will and
27 life over to the care of God.

28 As long as I had the choice whether to use drugs--I did.
29 Thank God, I got to a point where I no longer had a choice--drugs
30 had destroyed me. I was powerless to do anything except sit
31 in those meetings and wait to die. I felt doomed and the only
32 concept having my attention was survival. Later, I was happy
33 to consider the program in terms of from five to life. Any-
34 thing I'm going through now compared to those days--today is
35 better.

Drug addiction has proven to me it's a progressive 1
disease. I went from parties on the holidays to partying 2
weekend nights to weekend days to partying weekday nights 3
to weekday days to partying and nothing else, so help me 4
God, until the party was over. 5

I used drugs because I could not stop using them. 6
I lost the power of choice whether to Use drugs. When I 7
used drugs I could no longer guarantee my actions. To 8
think I could just do one whatever was insanity because 9
using it once would give drugs power over my thinking 10
again. "ONE IS TOO MANY AND A THOUSAND NEVER ENOUGH." 11
Finally, drugs controlled me, drugs used me and drugs 12
killed me. And today, God saves me. 13

God gives me the gift of cleanliness. God gives me 14
the 12-Steps and the tools of the N.A. design for living 15
clean. God gives me you people my N.A. family to enjoy 16
being clean together. We're all in this together. There 17
is nobody against anybody in N.A. We all get well 18
together. God gives me the newcomers to cave my clean- 19
liness by carrying the message. 20

I no longer have to go out and take in order to 21
stay clean. I can live within the grace of God's love 22
and simply accept what's being freely given to me on a 23
daily basis. God is giving me the energy and love to 24
put in the footwork. 25

God's grace and doing the footwork. The footwork 26
releases more energy to do the next indicated action in 27
cleanliness until everything eventually solves itself. 28
Through the footwork, I have the maturity gained to 29
respond to living in the here and now. 30

Doing the footwork in like healing a mental or 31
emotional disorder as it's durfacing on schedule in God's 32
time to be let go of here and now. On God's schedule, 33
the preparation is also happening that let's me grasp 34
and develop what God gives. As I concentrate on the 12 35
Steps and do the actions based on staying clean, God 36

1 cleans us the rest of my act.

2 To me, the 12-Steps are like a present given to God's
3 children. As I play with the Steps, my mind focuses on
4 the program and not on messing up my life. I use the
5 program, letting God deal with the total picture.

6 In my case, it's like having a circle, triangle and
7 square. As an addict, I pick up the triangle peg and try
8 putting it into the circle space. I keep trying to get
9 the triangle to fit the shape of the circle. God lets
10 me do it until, finally, on God's schedule; the triangle
11 peg must go into the triangle space. So, God gives me
12 the square peg and try fitting it into the circle space.
13 And while I'm doing this, God places the triangle peg
14 into the triangle space. All on schedule. Peg by peg,
15 step by step, action by action, God gets everything into
16 place until there's only the circle peg to to into the
17 circle space.

18 I don't mind being powerless because God's powerful.
19 I don't mind being unmanageable because God manages quite
20 well. God's alive and well, and living inside the here
21 and now.

22 Once I got to N.A., my drug career ended and
23 recovery began--"There's nothing worse than a body full
24 of drugs and a head full of N.A.".

25 There may be relapses while I'm in N.A., however,
26 they are no longer part of my drug career. They are part
27 of my recovery career.

28 In drug addiction, it's natural to have relapses of
29 the disease on a mental or emotional level because of
30 the process of learning how to let to and let God.
31 Stinking-thinking and emotional benders let me know the
32 tension is building up inside me. I'd better start
33 applying the tools of the program or the tension of the
34 emotional or mental relapse will snowball into the
35 avalanche of a physical relapse into drugs.

The tension I have comes from the stress of letting 1
go and letting God; letting go of the things that have 2
served their purpose and letting God help me develop 3
what works here and now. 4

All my old ideas are like having both my hands 5
squeezing my throat--I need to let go absolutely in order 6
to breathe. Living in God's will for me rather than mine, 7
everything happens on schedule while God is actually 8
preparing me to handle what's coming up next. 9

This is where not being too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, 10
Tired or Serious (HALTS) helps me stay clean. I mention 11
serious because I may get by a while being too Hungry, 12
Angry, Lonely or Tired--my danger is taking myself too 13
Serious about it. When HALTS happens I may need food, 14
a meeting or rest. 15

Sometimes, I'll go, "I'm not tired, I'm not tired, 16
I'm not tired;" until I collapse of nervous exhaustion. 17
As I'm denying any area of my HALTS maintenance, the 18
tension inside me is starting to build. 19

I ignore where neglecting HALTS is taking me and 20
just as I am about to snap, I will get the urge to use 21
drugs. Or I will start thinking about them more frequent- 22
ly. Thinking about drugs is a red alert to look at my 23
HALTS maintenance system. Where am I getting too HALTS? 24

Just because my mind is thinking about drugs to get 25
my attention, doesn't mean my body is asking for drugs. 26
It may be asking for a meal to ease the hunger; some rest 27
to ease the tiredness; or a meeting to ease the loneliness, 28
anger or seriousness. 29

When I'm getting enough food, rest and companionship 30
in this program, almost nothing can happen to bother my 31
serenity. Take away the meeting, the food and the rest-- 32
watch it. 33

Today, I shake hands instead of throats. Each moment 34
of the day is a turning point either to continue spiritual 35
progress or turn back into drug addiction I need complete 36

1 faith in God's Care and protection.

2 An inventory helps me keep pace with clealiness.
3 When looking back at all my turning points I know God
4 can develop the potential in my living situations. Just
5 because I got into drug addiction at one turning point
6 doesn't mean I can't enjoy spiritual progress now. An
7 inventory of turning points in life can be useful
8 step in learning about my potential interests.

9 Of course, even procrastination can work for me when
10 it gives me the opportunity to stop using drugs, regroup
11 and start fresh with the 12-Steps. However, I'd better
12 start addressing what is bothering me and talk about it
13 or I may never get to it. I need to start participating
14 in my own recovery by doing some of the suggested steps
15 in addition to showing up at meetings to be with you
16 people.

17 Your example shows me the importance of the 12-Steps.
18 Without your clean example, I would have hurt a lot longer.
19 You people are special with me. One of you told me as a
20 newcomer, "I'd like to see you make the program." Thanks,
21 you helped save my life.

22 Three months into the program, I met another of you
23 at my first convention. Conventions are fantastic. I
24 went from poor me in a room full of people to a meeting
25 hall internationally clean and serene with hundreds of
26 people praying, sharing, loving and living in unity. Yes,
27 conventions are great.

28 Though I have had to learn how to pace myself through
29 a convention using the HALTS maintenance, I feel conven-
30 tions can really aid the recovery process. They are a
31 place where we can carry the message by showing people
32 it is possible to have fun clean.

33 Anyway, I was introduced to someone who actually sat
34 with me and gave the time to freely share experience,
35 strength and hope of what it was like, what happened and
36 what it's like now. This person taking what I thought

was time out from busy activities to share with me also 1
served to help save my life. It made me feel, "Hey, 2
people really do care." 3

As a result of this, I am available to the new people. 4
I feel it is important for us to sit one on one and share 5
what the program really has to offer. It's important to 6
let people know what a beautiful gift cleanliness really 7
is. I'm as happy or happier than I've ever been before 8
I came to the program. Living clean is indescribably 9
lovely. 10

Yet, the only real way a person can know how happy 11
or worthwhile is recovery and being clean is to do the 12
suggested steps. 13

I was so energized by that convention, I lost my fear 14
of failure about doing an inventory. I started writing 15
everything I could remember on paper. My first inventory 16
was more like a written Fifth Step of admitting the exact 17
nature of my wrongs. I had so much garbage to dump that 18
I simply wrote a fearful, immoral inventory. 19

Afraid of facing anyone with this inventory, I 20
mailed it to the person who had shared with me at the 21
convention. One day, I got a phone call, "I got your 22
letter; how's it feel to be like all the rest of us?" 23

It felt so good, I hung up. I had to call back 24
immediately and apologize. I was told, "That's okay." 25
From actually doing this inventory to the best of my 26
ability at the time, I learned, "I'm like all the rest 27
of us and it's okay!" This was news to me. This was 28
the first time I'd suffered innocence by association. 29

Family had said before this, "You're okay it is those 30
friends you keep." It was guilt by association though I 31
was doing as much or more than anyone. 32

I no longer feel guilty nor ashamed with what I 33
used to do. The morals I had were necessary to live with 34
what I was doing back then. I find all my liabilities 35
can be turned by God into assets when helping a new 36

1 person achieve cleanliness.

2 Admitting all of it helps me lighten the load and
3 helps them identify with someone in N.A. Telling them
4 what I used to be like may also help them let go of shame
5 and guilt. However, the Fifth Step is taken with someone
6 who can handle it. Getting clean at someone's expense
7 doesn't work.

8 When I share with newcomers I am careful about what
9 I say and how much. I do not force information on them
10 like a pusher. Too much information overloads their input
11 system. It is better to just remind them to go to meetings
12 and don't use drugs.

13 Removing drugs from me, brought a lot of thoughts,
14 feelings and emotions up at once which was confusing. I
15 couldn't handle it. My switchboard blew fuses. Inventory
16 helped.

17 I have a tendency to think negatively. Writing
18 inventory puts it in a different light and I can look at
19 it more positively.

20 Confusion is best handled by writing all of it on
21 paper one thought, feeling or emotion at a time until
22 every bit of the confusion is inventoried. This gets it
23 out of the head and onto the inventory where I can deal
24 with it by using the program on it.

25 I can call someone and talk about one of my feelings.
26 I can inventory one item in depth. Or I may just turn it
27 over. Gradually, I'm in touch with a wide range of
28 feelings because I know what they feel like when I am
29 clean.

30 I know what it feels like to go to meetings, to share,
31 to write inventory, to do what actions a day of clean-
32 liness indicates. I've developed through the 12-Steps the
33 ability to survive being me.

34 Serenity happens sometimes because I am used to the
35 process of living clean. I'm not as fearful now. God
36 doesn't make any mistakes. We are all part of God's plan.

We are a vision of hope to the addict who still suffers. 1
In N.A., people who are hopelessly and helplessly addicted 2
to drugs can and do recover to live clean and happy lives. 3

Keep is simple--SMILE. This is important to me be- 4
cause it gives me a positive way to look at K.I.S.S. 5
especially smiling about the way I learned something of the 6
power of love. 7

I was stopped by a patrolman and there wasn't a 8
license tag on the bicycle I had borrowed from a friend 9
in the program. I refused to sign the ticket because some- 10
one reading cards had told me not to sign any legal docu- 11
ments. So, the bicycle was impounded and I went to jail. 12

At court, everyone had a nice laugh about the explan- 13
ation. I was released on condition of getting the bicycle 14
a license. 15

Three of us from the program; the owner, myself and 16
a friend of ours went to pick up the bike. At the police 17
station, the detectives on the case were arranging its 18
release when I kissed someone's hand. 19

Suddenly, a detective came barging over to us, eyes 20
bulging. He asked, "Do you know this person?" 21

"No," I said. 22

"Don't you know you can be arrested for assault?" 23

"I love all my brother's and sister's. . ." 24

"I'm not your brother. . ." he said. 25

"I know. Your're older--you're my father." 26

And he quickly backed against the wall away from me 27
as if I'd pulled a loaded gun. And he didn't bother us 28
anymore. We got the bike and had a license tag put on it. 29
And I learned something about the power of love. 30

I smile a lot more. My pilot light is always lit. 31
When I react to what people are doing it's not because I 32
dislike them. I'm reacting to what they're doing. Their 33
actions may show me something I need to deal with by using 34
the program. Usually, it's an area I've been avoiding. 35
So, I get upset because the actions of others tend to 36

1 remind me what I need to be working on in order to stay
2 clean. Applying the program calms me and I can once more
3 get along with people.

4 Anytime the ability to be agreeable begins leaving,
5 I get the person's attention before it gets physical. I
6 explain it may have to be settled later because I can't
7 deal with it now. Talking to the sponsor in this case,
8 helps me ease the tension so it's not taken out on a third
9 party. Feelings are okay. I just need a kinder way of
10 communicating them. Gentle words are more acceptable than
11 throwing chairs.

12 The Fourth Step inventory takes the lid off what's
13 happening and admitting it in a Fifth Step exposes it to
14 the sunlight of the spirit. Once the sunlight touches it,
15 the emotional and mental disorders begin to evaporate.

16 My formal Fifth Step was with a member of the program
17 because it was hard for me at that time to go up to some-
18 body on the street and say, "Heay, I'm a drug addict. I've
19 got to talk to you." Civilians rarely understand where
20 I'm coming from during a conversation.

21 Sometimes, I feel like a coward of internal warfare.
22 An unknown soldier who almost died from selfinflicted
23 wounds.

24 After the Fifth Step, I was told, "Be good to your-
25 self." Thank God, I can't think of any other way for an
26 addict like me to be clean than N.A.

27 Being clean in this program by living the 12-steps
28 of recovery, really is being good to myself.

29 If I'd come up with one other thing to do besides
30 this program, I'd be dead now. Sometimes, I think I
31 really did die. I'd get afraid that God's simply keeping
32 me alive long enough to show all the beautiful life I
33 could have had. After I admit it, the plug's going to be
34 pulled.

35 Now that I admit it, somehow, it's okay. It doesn't
36 bother me as much as it did. I like whatever God has in

store for me because I have been shown the program works. 1

During my probation, I had an investigation for a homi-2
cide I did not do where my alibi was the fact I was out of 3
state at the time while hitch-hiking to a convention. I 4
got two traffic tickets in one week then had an arrest and 5
jailing for reckless driving. There was also a totalled 6
automobile in another accident. And I still got off pro- 7
bation on schedule because the program works. 8

The whole truth is that while I was going to meetings 9
and letting you know what's happening with me and how I'd 10
applied the 12-Steps to it, God brought another lawyer to 11
the program. 12

My first Probation Officer who's so capable and 13
friendly got promoted. So, I was given a rookie to train 14
who felt it's necessary to go to court to be taken off 15
probation. 16

On the way up the elevator the day of the court 17
appearance, I noticed my newcomer P.O. looked nervous 18
about something. Perhaps this was a first time before the 19
bench. "It's going to be okay," I said, sharing some 20
"Easy does it," don't worry support. 21

When my case was called the Prosecuting Attorney 22
turned and looked smiling at me, and asked if this was all 23
that stuff I'd been talking about in meetings the past 24
two years? 25

"Yes," I smiled and the P.A. went into Judge's 26
chambers. When they came back I was taken off probation 27
and told to keep going to meetings. 28

I loved it because I now knew the importance of 29
meetings. Having gotten away from meetings for a month 30
while hitching to that convention, I'd been taught quickly 31
I was too new on the program to be that long away from 32
meetings. Someone offered me drugs and I got loaded. When 33
I got to the convention I had to move my cleanliness date 34
up from my first year. 35

1 I admit today, "The exact nature of my wrongs was the
2 inability I had to turn my will and life completely over
3 to the care of God."

4 I am glad the 12-Steps work because I lost faith in
5 my decisions. My feelings and thoughts based on my
6 emotions are all part of my using drugs pattern. I am
7 incapable of having faith in my choices. I need to apply
8 the principles of this program to all my living situations
9 and depend in God.

10 That is why it's important each person in the program
11 develops a contact with God that works for that individual
12 member of N.A. Go with whatever works for you to keep
13 you clean. I'm not writing these attitudes or opinions
14 here as a roadblock to someone else's recovery. This is
15 not intended to trigger any reactions in you. This is
16 simply the insanity I've been having the need to apply 12
17 Steps to in order for my survival and continuing spiritual
18 progress in cleanliness. It's the simple slogans in the
19 program that are easier to remember.

20 I'm so far over the edge, it just seems the part of
21 the edge I've been given to deal with. Only I deal with
22 it by turning it over to God. In order for me to survive,
23 I must turn not only my will and life over to God; I must
24 also turn everybody else over to God.

25 I don't expect things of a meeting; I don't expect
26 things of people, places and things; I don't expect things
27 of me; and I don't expect things from God because my mind
28 is not the best indicator of what things to expect. As a
29 result of having no expectations of life; it's very easy
30 for me to be without feelings of frustration. I'm also
31 able to pace myself more realistically. I set short range
32 goals and am willing to let them go or accept whatever's
33 the result. I'm living at my rate of grasping and develop-
34 ing.

35 Though sometimes I may fail at something a thousand
36 times and on the 1001st accomplish it, then think, "Those

weren't failures, I'm merely improving the technique"; 1
I'm still willing to let go of my schemes and go with God. 2

Someone once told me, "God takes away the things we're 3
proud of and gives us the things we're grateful of." 4

So, I'm learning to be grateful; to cultivate an atti- 5
tude of gratitude. It's the altitude of my attitude that 6
helps most times. And when my attitude is one of gratitude, 7
I feel naturally high. 8

I find this attitude of gratitude works in every bother- 9
some area of my life. Gratitude even heals my resentments. 10
I'm given constant opportunities. Having gratitude always 11
helps me develop my conscious contact with God and enjoy 12
God's love being freely given inside me. 13

Any time I'm bothered, I use it as an opportunity to 14
find an item of gratitude. With resentments, I list what's 15
bothering me on one side of a sheet of paper and balance it 16
with at least one item of gratitude. Usually, I can find 17
many items giving me gratitude in each situation. 18

When I don't know what's bothering me exactly, I give 19
thanks for getting through the insanity of the resentment or 20
situation without having to use drugs. Generally, I can 21
always find some gratitude even when it's just, "I'm grate- 22
ful for this situation because it gives me an opportunity to 23
look for an item of gratitude." 24

Hitting an intellectual bottom in the program, I felt all 25
my intellectualizing was simply rationalizing and justifying 26
fear. 27

Fear isn't a big deal as far as I'm concerned, it's only 28
natural. Not discounting anyone's feelings about fear; mine 29
are very strange. 30

I feel the way my mind acts is like a filter blocking me 31
from the tremendous amount of energy God has available for 32
me when I can let go of all my fears. 33

What my mind does it get me into unmanageable situations 34
and when it discovers no way to deal with these because it 35
doesn't have experience in them, it simply bails out and 36

1 leaves me holding the bag.

2 With my mind going out to lunch, there's no longer as con-
3 scious a filter separating me from all the energy God has
4 ready to deal with the situation. Since the feel of this energy
5 is something I'm not accustomed to at the moment, I think it's
6 fear. Actually, it's a tremendous surge of God's energy
7 without the mind filtering it. Oh, well, so much for the
8 strangeness of my thinking. I can't think about the disease
9 of drug addiction with my rationale because it's an irrational
10 disease. I must deal with this disease by applying the 12-Step
11 to it.

12 I don't necessarily buy into anything my mind comes up with
13 as real. Reality is a phase of recovery. Taking the big deal
14 to a meeting, talking about it in terms of the program and de-
15 pending in God--all the big deals pass. And the ones that
16 don't, I use the tools I have to survive and stay clean long
17 enough until God lifts them from me or lifts me from them.

18 I was at a state hospital. I got myself into a lifestyle
19 where I was forced to live on a drug ward. And I was writing
20 what I ghought was the most revealing stuff ever written. Like
21 each word in each sentence was the tip of the iceberg, keying
22 massive concepts at once. Fantastic rainbows of vision.

23 Later, well after my release, I happened upon part of this
24 masterpiece in some of my belongings. It was barely readable
25 and what could be read, could not be understood at that moment.

26 What I think is appropriate may be completely inappropriate
27 the next moment. That's if I survive the mistake of acting on
28 the insanity of my decisions. And just because I know better,
29 doesn't mean I'll do better.

30 I was really set up once for spiritual awakening. In the
31 city, I was applying for some financial program to help an addict
32 go to school. After we talked about my addiction, the counselor
33 asked if I had any other problems.

34 "Yes," I admitted, "Jaywalking." I'd been doing this instead
35 of working the program. Any time I felt tense or needed an
36 adrenalin rush or I don't know what, I simply jumped into six

lanes of traffic. I was having difficulty not doing it. 1
"Do you have any friends?" 2
"Yes, God." 3
"God I" 4
"Yes, God is the only friend I have." 5
The counselor okay'd the application. Only I decided to 6
let it go. 7
Then, I'm in another city. I've a letter to mail. I'm 8
in the "flow." I don't find a mailbox. I'm catching a bus 9
and suddenly there's a mailbox across the street. I go for it. 10
The bus driver or somebody honks. I clear the curb parked 11
bus. At full stride, I'm hit by a green van and flipped 12
about twenty feet into the intersection. I land on my sit- 13
ting muscles and get up; make it across the street; mail 14
the letter; then, settle back into the energy of the accident. 15
Emergency personnel arrive; I'm asked if I want to go to 16
the hospital. "No," I answered. I got my ticket for running 17
the red "Don't walk" sign. Apologized for the van. Was 18
told something like it was okay. Then, caught a bus to the 19
office of a therapist. 20
"Here I am." 21
I was in so much shock I looked like I was on drugs. I 22
was given something to deal with the shock. I took it. And 23
I moved my cleanliness date up simply because at the moment 24
I didn't want my mind having the slightest chance to open 25
the door on my addiction to drugs. I'm very grateful that's 26
what I did. 27
I've been clean and serene ever since. It made me grate- 28
ful for having survived something. And then, I realized I'm 29
grateful for having survived my drug addiction. 30
Besides, it knocked a lot of hostility out of me. 31
I'm not suggesting this as a way to get gratitude that 32
works. It's the spiritual awakening I had that got me over 33
my fear that my mind was always trying to set me up for ill- 34
ness and accidents so I could use drugs. I knew no matter 35
what happened to me, I was determined to stick with the pro- 36

1 gram even when a relapse happened. I'm grateful to have sur-
2 vived the relapses of this disease.

3 Please be assured, this isn't a signal for others to have
4 similar experiences in order to get spiritual awakenings. It's
5 not necessary to go to such an extreme length. Gratitude can
6 come from the joy of having survived a day clean. It can come
7 when we thank God at the end of the day for our cleanliness.

8 My gratitude is being clean. A lot of expiences get my
9 attention. Yet, I love being clean. Being clean is a spiritual
10 awakening.

11 Making amends is also a spiritual awakening. We're ready
12 for our final steps into God consciousness when we make amends
13 and balance the books by God's grace and the principles of this
14 program.

15 I'm learning not to discount someone's efforts to make
16 amends. A lot of spiritual progress goes into amend making.
17 When people come up with amends, I let them know it's okay. I
18 thank them and thank God. I like to forgive others as I would
19 like to be forgiven. I forgive them and I forgive me.

20 A person came to me with amends, saying my showing up at
21 meetings was the cause of a resentment. However, the resentment was
22 no longer there.

23 "It's okay, " I said. "we're getting well together."
24 Besides, I couldn't think of a nicer person to resent then.
25 Even I resented being me when I got here. I don't any more. I
26 enjoy cleanliness.

27 It seems to me the program's been working whether or not I've
28 been keeping track of it. Amends are being made. Bills are
29 getting paid. A lot of my character defects have simply vanished.

30 Most of my shame, guilt, remorse and resentment is lifted
31 from me. My load's much lighter. There's nothing else left that's
32 seriously bothering me at the moment. I'm stuck being calm and
33 happy. I'm doomed to being happy, clean and serene. Guess I'll
34 have to accept it and be grateful. It's a miracle.

35 Using drugs is not part of my basic makeup, otherwise I wouldn't
36 be able to give it up.

What I've had all along is a spiritual disease. Once 1
I'm given the ability to turn will and life over to God, 2
serenity comes along and stays with me. God's love is an 3
infinite love. God's love for each of us is infinite. 4
Inside, we have a contact with the infinite love God has 5
for us. 6

I'm no longer worried about the problems of living. Now 7
I concern myself with applying the program. As a person who 8
ran from life, I'm running to the program instead of the 9
problem. I'm picking up the phone, shaking hands and writing 10
inventory instead of using drugs with my automatic reach 11
for it. 12

Of course, it's been a matter of practicing the program 13
until it became easy to do. It's hard at first because I've 14
no practice at being clean. Once I did apply the footwork of 15
all the suggested steps put into practice in my living situa- 16
tions, I got clean feedback from the actual doing it. I 17
know what works. Thank God, it's a simple program. It just 18
takes practice. 19

Now when I get up from whatever side of the bed or fall of 20
my cloudy perch, I automatically fall back into the old ideas 21
of doing inventory, calling someone on the phone, going to 22
meetings and helping others help me stay clean. 23

Some of it's also very trying to everyone involved. 24
That reckless driving offense during probation happened as 25
the result of my not wanting another ticket for something I 26
felt I didn't do. 27

I'd been to the meeting, to the after meeting meeting 28
and was giving someone a ride when I backed out of the restau- 29
rant parking lot because the parking lanes were blocked 30
with people parking and talking, and I didn't have the 31
patience to wait. As I backed onto the highway, the only 32
traffic happens to be a police car. The person in it gave 33
what I thought wasn't the loss of love. So, I signalled to 34
turn. He turned around and came after me in order to warn me, 35
as he explained later, about the hazards of entering the road- 36

1 way in that manner.

2 I turned at the corner and on came the pursuit lights.
3 The siren wailing as we drove into the foothills, I headed
4 towards a sponsor's house. I'd been told to come visit if I
5 ever had a problem.

6 The sponsor came to the front yard to see what the noise
7 was as I pulled up at the curb, telling the person with me not
8 to move because the officer was going to pull a gun. The patrol
9 car drove up and parked diagonally across the front of us.
10 He got out, positioned himself behind the roof of it and
11 kept his gun drawn on us. As I was being frisked, I said,
12 "That feels good."

13 The sponsor said, "Shut up." And I did. Seems like I can
14 take direction very well when there's someone on hand to direct
15 me. Left to my own devices--it's a high speed chase.

16 I was taken to jail and my passenger let go. It was sug-
17 gested by the court that I could volunteer for a program if I
18 wanted to participate in some community service since it didn't
19 appear like jail or fine would do me any good. The court felt
20 I was a person who got nervous when the police came and would
21 thus take off.

22 I nodded approval and was released on my own recognizance.
23 I served 80 hours volunteer action doing clerical work.

24 This proved a blessing in disguise, later when I was in the
25 same court. Because of this O.R. I was able to also be released.

26 I'd been to pick somebody up at a recovery house and drove
27 back to the place where several of us on the program were living.
28 As I arrived, someone was making sandwiches. As that person
29 went to the phone, I moved the sandwiches over, got out some more
30 bread and started making more for those of us who had just
31 shown up. I guess someone thought I was taking the other sand-
32 wiches because I was right in the middle of watching peanut butter
33 swirl when I felt a lot of energy coming my way. In one motion,
34 I turned and watched myself slapping someone down to the floor
35 and then have another person rush into the kitchen to get me.

36 After sticking that person with the knife, neither of us

could believe it, so I was charged again with the same consequences. Fortunately, the knife being used to swirl peanut butter had been a dull metal one instead of a sharp steak.

The police were called. An arrest for assault and trespassing followed when I was living there and the other person who was visiting had attacked me. Because of the previous O.R. requirements having been met, I was released even though people were trying to detain me for some testing.

On the trial date, I was freed of the charges because the other person had failed to appear in court. Thank God. All of us have since made amends and we're friendly with each other now. We're no longer fighting over peanut butter sandwiches. So, I'm glad nobody was dead because we have a lot in common now that we're clean and serene. A kiss on the cheek to each of them.

My feelings about people, places and things may seem the same today as when I first got here, yet, my reactions to them are much more serene. That is--my reaction to my reactions to people, places and things is better. The program is working to help me be a fellow among fellows in N.A. and the community.

Being clean is one amend being made because I'm no longer part of the problem. I'm part of the program. Being clean is an important amend. I'm no longer being an intentional problem to the community. A clean addict in N.A. is one of the community's most important assets. We're all a resource in helping the addict who still suffers. I remember going back to all the meetings I'd gotten my early cleanliness and making amends for my actions new on the program. The people said, "That's okay." I was told not to be so hard on myself; I'd reminded them what it used to be like. All of it had served its purpose.

The 12-Steps have a lot of meaning to me because they helped me understand the power of prayer. Praying can lift negative thoughts. The Serenity Prayer is very helpful. However, I've progressed to the point that gratitude speaks

1 a lot.

2 There was a job once that taught me a lot about prayer.
3 I was going up the elevator on the outside of a building
4 under construction and the foreman was explaining the need
5 to clean the stairwells at the end of the floor we had now
6 reached. I went from listening closely to looking off the hori-
7 zon and it felt like everything had suddenly jumped off the
8 building. I was shaking when at the stairwell. So, I prayed
9 to have God remove my fear of heights. No sooner had this
10 happened when the foreman came back and handed me a wire
11 brush.

12 I was told to get a safety belt and clean the couplings
13 that attach the prefabricated walls to the structure of the
14 building. These had been covered by the fireproofing being
15 done. I went to the construction box, got a safety belt and
16 went over to a girder, -rabbed it and started cleaning a
17 coupling.

18 The foreman came up and asked what I was doing. "I'm
19 cleaning the couplings."

20 "Where's your safety belt?"

21 "Right here, " I said, pointing to the belt around my
22 waist.

23 "Where's the hookup?"

24 "I couldn't find one."

25 "You're safety tools aren't going to work unless you
26 use them."

27 Having a tendency to think of things in terms of the pro-
28 gram, I thought, "The 12-Steps aren't going to work unless I
29 use them."

30 "If you have a problem, come see me," he said.

31 "If I had a problem, go see the sponsor." I already knew
32 that one.

33 He got me a hookup and I concentrated only on doing what
34 was immediately in front of me to do. As a result, my fear
35 was gone. I moved from hookup to hookup until the task of
36 cleaning the couplings resolved itself. However, I promised

myself to be careful what I prayed for because I might get it. 1

Then one night, I was walking beside a road and thinking 2
about a course I was taking and the certificate being offered. 3
I thought, "I'd sure like to get that certificate." And a van 4
swerved to avoid a rut, straightened up and just missed me. 5
"Not that certificate," I said. From now on, not only was I 6
going to be careful what I prayed for, I was going to be very 7
specific. 8

I began to actually realize the power of prayer. This 9
stuff works. It got to a point I had to be very careful what 10
I even wrote on paper. During one phase of recovery, I was 11
writing some short range goals and it dawned on me as I re- 12
read the list that there was nothing I could do to accomplish 13
any of it besides just stay clean and continue going to meet- 14
ings. I turned the inventory over to God. A month or so after 15
this, I'm looking for something at my desk and I find the list 16
of short range goals that had seemed so impossible back then. 17
Every item on the inventory had been taken care of. And I 18
hadn't done anything besides turn it over to God and keep 19
going to meetings clean. This had an impact on me. 20

I no longer wanted to have the responsibility of prayer. 21
I began praying for just God's will for me and the power to 22
do it. Then, it dawned on me. As a person whose life and 23
will were turned over to God, prayer seemed a lack of faith 24
in God's ability to know what's best for me. I now use my 25
God given energy in the act of giving thanks. Whatever the 26
day brings, I give thanks. I know God has a plan for my 27
spiritual progress. I'm willing to accept whatever God has 28
in store for me. It's no longer a bad day or a good day; 29
it's just, "Thanks for the day." 30

Thank God for a day clean. Any time an addict gets through 31
a day clean by the grace of God, that's a successful day. 32
Everything else is an opportunity to grasp and develop the 33
spiritual principles of this Fellowship. The opportunity is 34
also here to depend in God and merge into God's love. 35

1 Practicing this program in every living situation, helps
2 me give my using time to N.A. All day the 12-Steps work to ease
3 the tension. Sometimes there's so many things happening that
4 seem crazy, I don't have to act crazy any more.

5 As a clean member of N.A., I'm doing 12-Step work by being
6 an example of the program working and by applying the princi-
7 ples in all my affairs. Nothing else works or worked until
8 letting go, coming into N.A. and letting God develop my spiri-
9 tual progress. I love this society of clean addicts. I didn't
10 get me clean. We did. God and all of us living clean together
11 did it.

12 Now that I practiced the 12-Steps on my drug addiction, I
13 know they work. KNOWing they work, I apply them to every area
14 of my life. Like I'm powerless over being happy, and my life
15 is unmanageable because of it. I'm coming to believe God will
16 restore me to sanity as far as being happy is concerned. I'm
17 turning my happiness over to the care of God. Now I'll do some
18 inventory of being happy and admit it's possible to survive back
19 to back days of being happy clean.

20 There's something about the Fellowship of the Spirit that's
21 noticeable at the meetings. We actually are in this together.
22 There's a climate. An atomosphere of cleanliness. An environ-
23 ment of serenity. When it's raining it's not just raining on
24 me. It's important to show up at the meetings and help form a
25 recovery pocket system for each other. Being together with
26 clean addicts is very encouraging.

27 Even when I was new and thought I couldn't sleep, knowing you
28 were here in case I needed to call on the phone, helped me get
29 the body rest I needed to function even though my mind was off
30 somewhere in a thinkathon.

31 As I progressed in recovery, the realization came that I'm
32 addicted to being in the here and now. Not being in the present
33 has caused me to feel withdrawal pains. I'm addicted to the
34 energy God has available to enjoy living in the here and now.
35 I'm addicted to God's love.

When I'm thinking about the past--I feel guilty about 1
not being in the present. When I-m thinking about the 2
future--I feel anxious about not being in the present. So, 3
I use guilt and anxiety as signs of the severance paind of 4
withdrawal from the present. I'm withdrawing into the past 5
when I feel guilty and I'm projecting into the future when 6
I feel anxious. I need to have the faith and the courage to 7
live in the here and now. God and the 12-Steps provide what 8
I need. The 12-Steps are a way back into the present. I 9
love being clean. 10

I love it when people say, "When we got what we needed 11
we found it's what we wanted all along." Of course, some 12
languages the terms need and want are reversed. Thank God, 13
cleanliness is the language of the spiritual heart. 14

What I need to hear in meetings today is the same thing 15
I needed to hear in those first meetings. "Don't allow 16
yourself to stop going to meetings. Moderate your life; 17
continue going to meetings; give as you would receive; live, 18
laugh, love and be happy." 19

Drug addiction is a progressive, fatal disease. Once 20
drugs become a problem, either the problem is removed or 21
the problem takes over complete control--and then, the prob- 22
lem removes the person. 23

God removes my dependency on drugs and gives me the 24
faith and courage to live clean in the present by going to 25
meetings regularly and traveling the 12-Steps as guides to 26
spiritual progress. 27

I'm told by the people with lengths of cleanliness that 28
unresolved reservations seem to allow people to pick up the 29
first whatever, "Some people feel they may be able to do 30
it and always come back. It's tough to get back. It's 31
tough to stay back. It's easier said than done. 32

I'm grateful I've given all my reservations to God. 33
I'm an addict. To use drugs is to die. I can no longer 34
deny drugs are a problem. I can't deny my life is un- 35
manageable. I'm powerless over drug addiction. 36

1 Living a life of cleanliness and serenity is a beautiful
2 way of being. I'm glad God's given me cleanliness, and the
3 ability and opportunity to attend meetings regularly. Contin-
4 uing to go to meetings, applying the 12-Steps and depending
5 in God are the best insurances for cleanliness and serenity.
6 Every bit of it has been worth it.

7 Slowly, gradually, it happens. Being clean and serene is
8 fun.

9 Keep the clean and serene faith.

10 God works. The meetings work, The 12-Steps work. The
11 tools and Fellowship of N.A. work. Whatever works for you to
12 keep you clean and enjoying spiritual progress is more impor-
13 tant now than it's ever been. We don't ever have to use drugs
14 again. Be clean. Here in N.A. is a way to be clean and happy.

15 The joy of being clean and helping others live clean is
16 with us. Welcome to N.A. The literature, the 12-Steps, the
17 meetings and God are yours to enjoy. God is loving every
18 moment of it--we might as well.

LONG DISTANCE RECOVERY

My name is Jim, and I'm a junkie. When I was about nine 1
years old, my dad, who was a truck driver, turned me on to 2
speed and juice. I started using these heavily and got into 3
glue. I was mostly looking for some camaraderie, and I spent 4
most of my early teens just hanging out. 5

I got into cough syrup and inhalers. I really cut back 6
on the booze, because I didn't like the hangovers. I started 7
to think that there might be something wrong with me, and I 8
asked my parents to get me some kind of help from a psycholo- 9
gist or psychiatrist. They told me that I was all right, and 10
that this was just a stage I was going through. 11

I was working by this time and I was a hard worker. I 12
would always throw myself into anything I did. 13

When I was 16, I was jailed for the first time. I had 14
done a hit and run while I was loaded. I started devoting my 15
time to raising hell. 16

When I was about 17 or 18, I killed an old man in a car 17
wreck while I was loaded. This didn't affect me too much at 18
the time. I just thought it was something that happened and 19
was just a bit of bad luck for both of us. 20

I started making excuses for my behavior, and that turned 21
into my main occupation when I drank. I would drink to black 22
out. I first started thinking about stopping everything and 23
just killing myself. 24

Though I was a good worker, I tended to miss days and going 25
loaded. So, I changed jobs often. In one year, I had 13 W-2 26
forms. It was when I was about 19 that I first hit "skid row". 27
I did odd jobs, panhandled and occasionally rode the rails. 28
I owned what I had on and nothing else. 29

1 After doing this for a bit, I decided to clean up. So, I
2 took a bath, got some clothes and a job. I managed to stop
3 using for about 18 months. I met a lady during this time
4 that I married. She was an epileptic and I started eating
5 her barbs and copping extra scripts.

6 We had a child and I thought that I was finally going to be
7 able to stay under control.

8 I had an accident while working that landed me in the
9 hospital for about two months. I got introduced to Darvon
10 and other pain killers there.

11 When I got out, the bills were really piled up. I de-
12 cided that I was going to pay them all fast. I got a second
13 full time job and started using speed to keep me going. I
14 would get up at 10:00 P.M. and do some speed to get me up.
15 I would work until 7:00 A.M. and then eat, some more speed
16 and go to a bar until 8:00 A.M. when I went back to work. I
17 went back to the bar with the guys for lunch. I went home
18 at 4:00 P.M., ate dinner, drank some whiskey to pass out so
19 I could get some sleep.

20 After about six months of this, I was doing so much drugs,
21 my wife and I separated.

22 I was drafted shortly after that and wound up in the Army.
23 In the Army, I did booze, drugs, LSD, mushrooms, peyote, pot,
24 anything to keep me screwed up.

25 I hated people. I thought that I had been shit on and I
26 was going to shit on them back.

27 I started dealing and other crimes to support my habit.
28 I had no motivation at all. I started to run with some "peace
29 freaks." I was just another low life with high ideals.

30 I hit the stockade a few times. I got sent to the Army
31 shrinks, who were no help. I was having a lot of trouble and
32 went to see a priest, even though I ranked God somewhere be-
33 tween Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny.

34 I got boosted out of the Army with an honorable discharge.
35 I got that only because of the people that would have come
36 down with me otherwise.

In the Army, I had been called "Joe Shit the Rag Man." I 1
had no self-respect. People treated me like I was crazy and 2
I did my best to live up to their expectations. 3

I got into cheap thrills. I did a lot of using and abusing 4
the ladies. I was really screwed up. 5

I was still legally married, which I had done because of 6
my son. My wife finally sued for divorce. That hurt really 7
bad, even though I had been living with this girl for a year. 8
She walked out on me about the same time, and that hurt a lot 9
too. 10

I was always drunk and had booze nearby, so when I got 11
picked up, the cops wouldn't look for anything else. After 12
a long series of DWI's, public drunk charges and other alco- 13
hol-related offenses, I was paroled to A.A. for one year. 14

In A.A., I found a little hope. I was able to identify with 15
the alcoholics there, somewhat, but it was not perfect. After 16
about six months in A.A., I found N.A. There I could talk 17
freely about my drug experiences, which I wasn't allowed to 18
do at A.A. 19

It was at that first N.A. meeting that I felt really at 20
home. 21

I was deep in debt and had no resources, but I stayed 22
clean. I was still going from job to job and even tended bar 23
for a while. I would still work the streets for a buck. I 24
couldn't put two sentences together. I didn't know anything 25
about prayer. All I could say was, "If there's anything up 26
there, and I don't think there is--then help!" Eventually, 27
from this beginning I was to get comfortable with my own 28
Higher Power. 29

My ego continued to get me in trouble. I was either super 30
high or super low--on some kind of ego trip. I was still hurt- 31
ing people and getting hurt by them. I had lady troubles. I 32
finally got divorced. My girl friend moved out and then got 33
killed. I got very depressed, but I didn't use. My attitude 34
was, "I'll show you, you S.O.B.'s." 35

1 I finally found an N.A. meeting and got a copy of the
2 "White Book," and started reading it. I was really begin-
3 ning to feel at home in the meeting. There was one other
4 junkie in town that was staying clean, and he got loaded.
5 After that, I felt that N.A. had let me down.

6 I moved to Iowa and experienced the same problems I had
7 had in Kansas. I tried to get the local drug council interested
8 in N.A., but they were too interested in their own program,
9 when they weren't arguing over money problems.

10 I heard a couple of good Fifth Steps during that time,
11 however, and that inspired me and taught me to be more open
12 about myself.

13 I had a lot of telephone contact with W.S.O. in Califor-
14 nia. When I couldn't take it any more, I would call W.S.O.
15 and just talk.

16 I went to A.A. meetings in town and sat quietly in the
17 back. I tried to get as much out of those meetings as I could.

18 I heard there was good A.A. and some N.A. in Lincoln,
19 Nebraska, so I moved there. In those early days, there was
20 only four or five of us in that first N.A. meeting in Lin-
21 coln. That group is still going today.

22 I learned to live just one day at a time. I started learn-
23 ing to be responsible. I did a lot of service work and did a
24 lot of praying.

25 I was running with a new girl, and she got cleaned up and
26 got some education. Life started to get a little easier. The
27 financial problems started going away. There were still some
28 hard times. I would get depressed and sometimes, I thought
29 about getting loaded. Sometimes I just had to stand still
30 and hurt.

31 N.A. in Lincoln would start to grow and build up, and then
32 it would drop to one or two clean addicts. But it got better
33 each time when I stuck it out.

34 I now had enough money to travel a little and could get to
35 new meetings outside Lincoln. I started attending N.A. con-
36 ventions which were a real shot in the arm.

I enjoy helping junkies trying to recover. I try to do
what I can so they won't die loaded. I have been to a lot
of funerals.

Early on in A.A. I picked up the slogan KISS--Keep It
Simple, Stupid. I try to work a simple program.

The fellowship in Lincoln began to grow. Today, we are
active in world service.

I am more comfortable with God and myself today. I have
all kinds of mood changes: sometimes I was a lazy, no good
SOB; sometimes I was Okay; sometimes it seemed I was back-
sliding. No matter what, however, I haven't had to use.

It is still a struggle, at times. But the longer I am
clean, the more responsible I am. The longer I am clean, the
more I am somebody. Today, I do live one day at a time. Today,
I care. I try to live and love somebody. Today, I can dream
and make plans. But most importantly, I accept it as it is
today. I thank God for both the good and the bad. I try
to handle my fears as they come up.

Today I am not lonely. I have learned to be myself. I
can let others get close.

I have learned that I am not unique. I have learned
that I am not strange. I am just a junkie doing whatever I
need to do in order to recover.

I have been re-united with my family. My ex-wife and I
are on speaking terms. We are friends. My parents accept,
respect and admire me. My son accepts me as I am.

I have changed my attitude to one of gratitude. My
serenity is taxed from time to time, but I know more serenity
is just around the corner. There is always hope.

I have learned that I grow by studying the steps and
traditions and putting them into practice in my life to the
best of my ability. I grow by going to meetings.

I am especially grateful for the principles of spirit-
uality and anonymity. Today, I am part of a large and
growing, beautiful fellowship. I have hopes for it to grow
even more. I feel we best grow when we are most anonymous

working the program and working with others. I look for a larger fellowship so that we can all become more anonymous in our service work.

THE MONKEY

I came into the program from the streets. For me there was no medical detox. The whole weight of what I had physically done to myself came down when I stopped using. I had a job I could not afford to lose and a host of living responsibilities I could not afford to walk away from. In my addicted head, I had sold myself on the notion that it was as bad to go into an institution as it was to keep using. So I got sicker in an attempt to get better.

Too, I was scared of putting myself in an institution. I was melted into the passenger seat of the car that delivered me to my first meeting. I was too sick to drive and too busy thinking up excuses for changing my mind about the meeting to notice "it was time."

What I heard at that first meeting made me uncomfortable. Even though I was hurting so bad, I could still pick up on the sincerity and caring of the message. By the end of the meeting, I had convinced myself that this was just a room full of psychos who could not handle dope, not addicts, so I made a steady pace for the door. I was stopped by a no-nonsense member who began to talk program. It was straight, up-front program spoken like one street addict to another, with no group therapy overtones.

I left feeling lousy, hurting, sick, but with the illusion shattered about recovery of people like me. I left with the first hope of my recovery. I believed that if I was going to do this without signing into the hospital, I had to completely surrender from the beginning or there would be no beginning.

The first week I was so raunchy with the green sweats that I could only make it to three meetings. All three were in institutions. After each meeting I felt so bad, and I had

1 this inexplicable feeling that I would never make it without
2 enrolling in a hospital for the full course. I had the mon-
3 key telling me that I would be back out in a couple of weeks,
4 so what's the use! But, one day at a time, I made it the
5 first week. At the end of the first week, I made a non-institu-
6 tional meeting where I could relax and listen without looking
7 over my shoulder. There was something in the ease with which
8 these people accepted my misery that there was no doubt they
9 were of my kind. With this meeting, I found a solid footing
10 for riding out the first weeks of the fog.

11 I felt like a reptile crawling onto a rock, waiting to be
12 stepped on by civilization. That first morning, I had to make
13 myself get up and go to work. All the while, I could sense
14 that big foot overhead about to crush me. I made it by making
15 it from hour to hour, from one break to the next break, from
16 lunch to the end of the day. It was the longest day of my
17 life. However, because people were used to seeing me in an
18 unusual state of being, the withdrawals did not stir any out
19 of the ordinary comments at work. I guess people around me
20 just knew I did not have much longer on this earth.

21 The first day I took time to memorize the Serenity Prayer.
22 Saying the prayer over and over in my head did not work a
23 major miracle, but it overrode the voice of that constantly
24 babbling monkey, saying, "It ain't no use...It ain't no use...
25 It ain't no use.."

26 I felt really awkward praying; my monkey would say, "Who
27 are you kidding...Who are you kidding...Who are you kidding.."
28 It was no coincidence that I heard about the monkey at my
29 first meetings. It was this image that saw me through detox.
30 I hated the self-doubt and feelings of uselessness the crea-
31 ture fed me. I hated the monkey enough those first few days
32 that I acquired the Power not to hand my life over to the
33 monkey. Hate for the monkey enabled me to find the softer
34 way, handing my life over to spiritual principles. Those
35 first days, it was hate for the monkey, and not love of God,
36 that kept the dope out. I knew that I was fighting

for my life and it was a melodramatic struggle for which I 1
was poorly prepared. 2

I don't know how I looked the first week at work, mud- 3
dling through the job, but I made it. My erratic behavior 4
had long been accepted there and the withdrawals brought 5
no comments or complaints from either co-workers or manage- 6
ment. Only once did some active "users" offer to turn me 7
on to a few Quaaludes and a little smoke to cool my jets. 8
I yelled that nobody was going to kill me, and they backed 9
away. The subject never came up again. 10

My memory was so shattered that I had to carry a note 11
pad and make notes concerning everything. I could trust nothing 12
to memory. I was sure of only one thing. I had been beaten 13
by the dope and I was going to recover. I felt I couldn't 14
afford to walk away from the job in a daze, because I knew 15
I could handle it when I got better--"courage to change the 16
things I can." So I carried my note pad, making notes and 17
hoping the strange sounds and nauseous sweats would soon go away. 18

The saving grace of detox was that during the ever-chang- 19
ing mood-swings, just as I was about to climb the wall, there 20
would come a period of simple ease, with some degree of com- 21
fort and a feeling that I was okay. 22

After the first week of realizing how I had been physi- 23
cally raped by the monkey, I stepped into the emotional 24
struggle. The emotional battle is where the Program made its 25
greatest impact on my monkey. The Fellowship could not take 26
the hurt out of detox for me, but they did set in motion the 27
wheels which led me to what recovery is all about--the 28
spiritual awakening just around the corner waiting to stomp the 29
life out of the monkey. 30

I believe the Spiritual Awakening began for me when I 31
stopped backing away and allowed the hugs and smiles into 32
my life; I let the Fellowship replace the running mates. 33

Meetings every night filled the bill on what to do about 34
my self-centered, pitiful condition, how to handle the 35
miserable problem. The meetings kept me out of the presence 36

1 of my old friends and their well-intentioned poison. I could
2 take my compulsive nature to a meeting and let myself be sur-
3 rounded by "It can be done," instead of "When are you gonna
4 backslide?"

5 After the first couple of weeks, I was able to pray
6 without feeling like a jerk. With the comfort of prayer
7 came the conviction of recovery. It has gotten better.
9

ONE THIRD OF MY LIFE

Today has been one of those days. It was Friday and Monday all together. Trying to get something done was like trying to make a connection when the heat was on. It was a panic all day, but when I got home and lay down for an hour, it felt good. I can go on a natural nod, because I have nothing up here now but a clear conscience. The old hassle is gone, I can lie down, take it easy and be comfortable. The longer I stay clean, the better it gets for me. It's real groovey to get up in the morning and not care whether it's foggy or the sun's shining, just so long as I'm clean. No cramps and no sweats now. I remember the times when I'd be afraid to go to sleep, because I had a "git up" there on the dresser; but if I took my "git up" I'd have nothing when I got up and then I'd be sick again.

I never thought I'd feel good being out here with the squares, but now I think sometimes I feel the same things they do. I don't have all those petty little things going through my mind now, like I did when I thought I was hip--so slick. The only one I was being hip and slick with was me. Everybody else could see right thru me. I don't have a running nose anymore and no itches unless it's an allergy or something. I can go home now at night to clean sheets and blankets, say my little prayers, and go to sleep. It's real good for me. Yesterday was pay-day. I went out and bought myself a few presents--not X-mas shoplifting you know. Now, I can go thru these stores and not even a temptation to steal. I was thinking of this when I said X-mas shopping. This is my third X-mas on the bricks and I can't think of anything I've stolen since I've been out of the joint. I feel that I was basically honest from childhood, I stole to keep up my habit, to get my stuff, to keep my head on

1 my chest to keep my stomach from grinding and to keep my nose
2 from running--that nose, it was always running whether I was
3 sick or not.

4 My story is similar to many others, I hit one nuthouse
5 when I was 13, I really don't remember much about it. That
6 was on an O.D. of amphetamines, they thought I was a manic-
7 depressive till I cleaned up off the pills and then they figured
8 I was just a neurotic.

9 It progressed though. I started to make the joints. I'm
10 thirty now and there's twelve and a half years gone out of
11 my life like this, and twice at Ft. Worth. Man, I sure don't
12 want anymore of it. Since I've been out of the joint about
13 three years I can't say I haven't had the temptation. I
14 can't say I haven't had some obsession, I can't say I haven't
15 had the passing thought of wanting to use because I have had
16 at times. Now, however, it's like the passing thought of
17 "There is a real nice car there. I'd like one like that," and
18 then it's gone and so is the thought. I notice that the times
19 and the periods are getting farther apart when they happen.
20 I haven't had a driving obsession to get my head on my chest
21 for over two years now, and this is really something. I now
22 try to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I
23 understand Him. Sometimes I like to try to play God and run
24 everything but it doesn't work that way. The longer I stay
25 around and stay clean, the groovier it gets. The last time
26 I came out, I was a scared, sniveling little snot, double
27 hip, double slick, still walking that walk and talking that
28 talk. Now, I go back to the institutions every week I can
29 make it. I went back to my home group a while back and it
30 was greater than my birthday. This was a T.l. Federal and
31 you know those guys accepted me back and were glad to see me.

32 I gave a lot of them a hard time, with the attitudes
33 I used to have. At that time nothing was any good, everything
34 was rotten, except dope. Sure, I had a craving for narcotics,
35 but anything that would get my feet off the ground at that
36 time I was ready for it. Now, however, I know that anything

that would get my feet off the ground that isn't an airplane, 1
will head me for real trouble. I sincerely believe this, I 2
don't know if I work the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability 3
or not, but I do know I've been clean about three years by 4
practicing them the best I can. 5

When things start buggin' me now, I know where most of 6
the trouble lies: me. Now, I find I have a greater toler- 7
ance for people and a lot more patience all around; this is 8
a big change for me. Practicing the principles of this pro- 9
gram, the way I understand them and staying clean a day at a 10
time and sharing experiences with other addicts who are new 11
to the program, has changed my whole outlook on life. It's 12
a good way to live. 13

I CAN'T DO ANY MORE TIME

1 I came to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as an
2 addict, out of the California Institution for Women at Corona.
3 I came the first night I got out and it's been here that I've
4 learned how to live, so that it hasn't been necessary for me
5 to drink, or to use pills--barbiturates, amphetamines, or
6 tranquilizers--or to use any narcotics, in my daily life. It
7 has been here that I've learned a lot about myself, because
8 we are so very much alike. I've always seen another side of
9 myself, whenever problems and suggested solutions have been
10 discussed at our meetings. I have learned, from those who
11 are following the program of recovery to the best of their
12 ability, how I can do the same if I am willing to make the
13 effort. Also I have learned from those who have made mistakes.
14 I feel bad when I see that some leave this Fellowship to try
15 the old way again, but I know that I don't have to do that if
16 I don't want to. Also it has not been necessary for me to
17 steal or to write any bad checks.

18 My addiction goes way back. I was drinking alcoholically,
19 when I first started at sixteen, and I realize today, that
20 the reason for that was, I was sick to being with. I had this
21 emotional illness and it was very deep. I don't think that if
22 I hadn't been emotionally ill to begin with, that I would have
23 been carried away with alcohol and drugs. When it became
24 noticeable that I was using alcohol more and more, being in
25 the nursing profession, I tried experimenting with drugs. It
26 grew and grew and became a horrible problem. Altho' this is
27 certainly a suicidal path in itself I did, when I was aware
28 and in lucid moments, realize I was hopelessly addicted. I
29 did not know that there was any answer. There really wasn't at
30 that time. It was in San Francisco, not knowing which way to

turn, that I tried suicide and was unsuccessful. I was twenty- 1
six years old at that time. I now think that if it had been 2
possible for me, I would have come to this program like a lot 3
who are here today, at that same age. My pattern, however, 4
continued and when I finally reached Camarillo I had lost not 5
only my self-respect but the respect and love of my family, my 6
children, and my husband. I had lost my home and my profession. 7
Somehow or other, I hadn't reached the point where I wanted 8
to try this way of life or to try it all the way. I just had 9
to go on and try in my own way. I tried drugs again and 10
alcohol again and was finally committed to the Institution 11
at Corona three times. The last time I went there I just 12
felt that I couldn't do any more time. I didn't immediately 13
connect it with my addiction. I just couldn't do any more 14
time. It wasn't the thought I can't use drugs, just I can't 15
do any more time. I just felt completely hopeless and helpless 16
and I didn't have any answers. All of my emotional and spirit- 17
ual pride had gone. I'm sure that at Corona they doubted my 18
sincerity in ever wanting to do anything about my problem. 19
However, I did want to do something about it, and I know that 20
this program doesn't work until we really do want it for our- 21
selves. It's not for people who need it but for people who 22
want it. I finally wanted it so bad I knocked on the doors 23
of psychiatrists, psychologists, chaplains and anywhere I could. 24
I think one of the counselors at Corona, who just naturally 25
loves all people, gave me a lot of encouragement, for I 26
thoroughly took my first three steps. I admitted I was 27
powerless over alcohol and my addictions, that my life was 28
unmanageable. I had tried so many things so I decided a Power 29
greater than myself could restore my sanity and to the best of 30
my ability I turned my life and my will over to the care of 31
God as I understood Him and tried in my daily life to under- 32
stand God. I had read all kinds of metaphysical books, I 33
agreed with them and thought they were great, but I never 34
took any action on them. I never tried any faith in my daily 35
living. It's amazing getting just this far, how I began 36
to get a little honesty and could see myself as I was. I 37

1 doubted that I could get honest but I became aware of my-
2 self by looking outside myself, at the addicts around me
3 and getting to know them and understand them, and be friendly
4 with them. I would like to give credit where credit is due
5 and I do believe that my daily attendance at psychotherapy
6 groups in Corona with very understanding psychologists helped
7 me become aware of myself so that I might do something about
8 my problem; that when I came out, I thought, Oh! can I make
9 it outside? So many times, institutions took so many years
10 out of my life, that I wondered if I could stay clean and sober
11 and do ordinary things. I doubted whether I could go ahead
12 with just normal living but God has seen fit to see that I
13 have been provided for in this last year and a half. I've
14 been able to work regularly, I didn't have steady jobs at first
15 but there was never any long period in between them. Although
16 for a time I threw out the idea of going back to my profes-
17 sion, which is nursing, I have since reconsidered this and
18 am now in the process of perhaps returning to full-time nurs-
19 ing. With the help of some very understanding people I have
20 met, the future here looks very bright. In the meantime, I
21 give myself, as best I can, to my job every day and have been
22 doing it successfully, despite the fact that when I left
23 Corona everyone thought I was unemployable.

24 To me this is a spiritual program and the maintenance
25 and growth of a spiritual experience. Without the kind of
26 help and the therapy of one addict talking to and helping
27 another, I know that it wouldn't have been possible for me.
28 The obsession to use drugs or to drink has been completely re-
29 moved from me during this period, and I know that it's only
30 by the grace of God, I now give my attention to my daily
31 problems. It's amazing, having had a pattern of fear,
32 anxiety and resentments and self-pity, how much of this
33 too had been removed. No longer do these sway my life. I
34 ask for help every morning and I count my blessings every
35 night and I'm real grateful that I don't have to go through
36 the sickness that accompanies the taking of drugs of any kind,

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including alcohol. I think one of the biggest things that 1
helped me here, was that this is a program of complete 2
abstinence. I got over the idea that I had a dual problem. 3
I don't have a problem with drugs or alcohol, I have a living 4
problem, and this is all I need to think about today. I have 5
a lot of help from my sponsor, it seemed that everyone had 6
let me down, both family and friends. I don't know what I 7
would have done had it not been for the doors that she 8
opened in her letters. She shared her experience, her 0
strength and her hope with me, and it was very beneficial. 10
She continues to be my very good friend. Here in N.A., I 11
have found a family, friends, and a way of life, my own 12
family has also been restored to me through working these 13
steps, and not through directly working on the problem. A 14
lot of wonderful things have happened to me, I can't con- 15
ceive of anything ever happening that would make me want 16
to forget this way of life. 17

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

1 In writing this I hope that I can help other addicts like
2 myself, who are trying to overcome their addiction by sub-
3 stituting one thing for another, that was my pattern. I
4 started drinking, whenever possible, at the age of fourteen.
5 With this I added weed so that I could feel at ease and be
6 comfortable with my surroundings in the social activities
7 in high school. At seventeen, I started on heroin and quickly
8 became addicted. After using heroin for one and a half
9 years, I decided to turn myself in to Ft. Worth. When they
10 accepted my application, I got scared and joined the Army
11 after kicking at home. I thought that being away from my
12 environment, I would be able to solve my problem. Even
13 here I found myself going AWOL to get more heroin. I was
14 then shipped to Europe and thought that if I just drank,
15 that would be the answer, but again I found nothing but
16 trouble. Upon my release I came back home to the same en-
17 vironment, again I was using heroin and various other seda-
18 tives. This lasted for two years. The rat race really be-
19 gan when I tried to clean up--cough syrup, bennies, fixes,
20 etc. By now, I didn't know where one addiction left off and
21 the other started. A year before I came to Narcotics Anony-
22 mous I found myself hopelessly addicted to cough syrup,
23 drinking five or six 4 oz. bottles a day. I needed help so
24 I went to a doctor; he prescribed dexedrine and would give
25 me a shot that made me feel good; I found myself going to
26 him practically every day. This continued for about eight
27 months and I was very happy with my new found legal addiction.
28 I was also getting codeine from a different doctor. I now
29 became insanely afraid and began drinking, too; this went on
30 around the clock for a month and I ended up in a mental

institution. After being released from the hospital, I 1
thought I was free from narcotics and now I could drink 2
socially. I soon found out I could not. It was then that 3
I sought help through N.A. 4

Here I learned that my real problem did not lie in the 5
drugs, including alcohol, that I had been using, but in a 6
distorted personality that had developed over the years of 7
my using and even before that. In N.A. I was able to help 8
myself with the help of the others in the Fellowship. I 9
find I am making progress in facing reality and I'm growing 10
a day at a time. I find new interests now, that mean some- 11
thing, and realize that that was one of the things which I 12
was looking for in drugs. Sometimes I still find it diffi- 13
cult to face things but I'm no longer alone and can always 14
find someone to help me over the rough and confused spots. 15
I have finally found people like myself who understand how 16
I feel. I'm now able to help others to find what I have, if 17
they really want it. I thank God, as I understand Him for 18
this way of life. 19

SOMETHING MEANINGFUL

1 I am not the great leader or philosopher that I tried to
2 make people believe I was. The great man that I tried to
3 make believe I was, I know now, I am not. After fifteen years
4 of trying to live this illusion, I now find that I am being
5 accepted for just what I really am. All my life before this, I
6 did things my way. If anyone else ever offered advice or
7 suggestions, I rebuffed them with a closed mind without ever
8 trying what they had to offer, to see whether it would suc-
9 ceed or fail. It seems, that, though my way always failed,
10 I had to use or drink again, until repeated trips to jail
11 began to convince me that something was wrong. I reached
12 the point of desperately wanting to do something with my life
13 that would be meaningful. I had to try something else that
14 would work. I had found N.A. several years previous to this
15 decision, but then I was not ready to change and although I
16 closed the door on N.A. on many occasions, I have always been
17 welcomed back every time.

18 Since I have become willing to do something about my life
19 with the N.A. program, it has been fuller and with more
20 meaning. I could not experience life before on a daily basis,
21 without drugs, sedatives or alcohol. I needed these just to
22 face each day. I know I have to alter this pattern of think-
23 ing and living if I am to stay completely clean. This I am
24 doing through the principles of our program. Although I do
25 not now desire or need narcotics, I have to fill the void
26 left, with something worthwhile. I have found this in the
27 fellowship of N.A. I have to stick with the winners and go
28 in the same direction that they go, and as long as I follow
29 the steps of the program, I know I can make it, too. Although
30 I don't find the program easy, it is simple enough for a
31 complicated person like me to follow.

I WAS DIFFERENT

My story may differ from others you have heard, in that, I was never arrested or hospitalized. I did, however, reach that point of utter despair which so many of us have experienced. It is not my track record that shows my addiction but rather my feelings and my life. Addiction and dependency were my way of life; the only way of life I knew for many years.

Thinking back, I must have taken one look at life and decided I didn't want any part of it. I came from a "good-old-fashioned, upper-middle-class broken home." I can't remember a time when I haven't been strung out. As a small child, I found out I could ease the pain with food, and here my drug addiction began.

I became part of the pill mania of the 1950's. Even at this time I found it hard to take medication as directed. I figured that two pills would do twice as much good as one. I remember hoarding pills, stealing from my mother's prescriptions, having a hard time making the pills last until the next refill.

I continued to use in this way throughout my early years. When I was in high school and the drug craze hit, the transition between drugstore dope and street dope was a natural. I had already been using drugs on a daily basis for nearly ten years; these drugs had virtually stopped working. I was plagued with adolescent feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. The only answer I had, was that if I took something I either was, felt or acted better.

The story of my street using is pretty normal. I used anything and everything available every day. It didn't matter what I took so long as I got high. Drugs seemed good

1 to me in those years. I was a crusader; I was an observer;
2 I was afraid; and I was alone. Sometimes I felt all-power-
3 ful and sometimes I prayed for the comfort of idiocy (if
4 only I didn't have to think). I remember feeling different--
5 not quite human-- and I couldn't stand it. I stayed in my
6 natural state...LOADED.

7 In 1966, I think, I got turned on to heroin. After
8 that, like so many of us, nothing else would do the thing
9 for me. At first I joy-popped occasionally, and then used
10 only on weekends; but a year later I had a habit, and two
11 Years later I flunked out of college and started working
12 where my connection worked. I used stuff and dealt, and
13 ran for another year-and-a-half before I got "Sick and tired
14 of being sick and tired."

15 I found myself strung out and no longer able to function
16 as a human being. During this last year of my using, I
17 started looking for help. Nothing worked! Nothing helped!

18 Somewhere along the line I had gotten the telephone
19 number of a man in N.A. Against my better judgment and
20 without hope, I made what may well be the most important
21 phone call of my life.

22 No one came to save me. I wasn't instantly cured. The
23 man simply said that if I had a drug problem, I might bene-
24 fit from the meetings. He gave me the address of a meeting
25 for that night. It was too far to drive, and besides I was
26 kicking. He also gave me the address of another meeting a
27 couple of days later and closer to home. I promised him
28 I'd go and have a look. When the night came, I was deathly
29 afraid of the dope fiends I would find there. I knew I
30 wasn't like the addict you read about in books or newspapers.
31 Despite these fears I made my first meeting. I was dressed
32 in a 3 piece black suit, black tie, and 84 hours off a two-
33 and-a-half year run. I didn't want you to know what and who
34 I was. I don't think I fooled anybody, I was screaming for
35 help, and everybody knew it. I really don't remember much
36 of that first meeting, but I must have heard something that

brought me back. The first feeling I do remember on this program was the gnawing fear that because I'd never been busted or hospitalized for drugs, I might not qualify and I might not qualify and I might not be accepted.

I used twice during my first two weeks around the program, and finally gave up. I no longer cared whether or not I qualified, I didn't care if I was accepted, I didn't even care what the people thought of me. I was too tired to care.

I don't remember exactly when, but shortly after I gave up, I began to get some hope that this program might work for me. I started to imitate some of the things the winners were doing. I got caught up in N.A. I felt good, it was great to be clean for the first time in years.

After I'd been around for about 6 months the novelty of being clean wore off, and I fell off that rosy cloud I'd been riding. It got hard. Somehow I survived those first doses of reality. I think the only things I had going for me then were the desire to stay clean, no matter what; faith that things would work out "OK," so long as I didn't use; and people who were willing to help when I asked for help. Since then, it's been an uphill fight, I've had to work to stay clean. I've found it necessary to go to many meetings, to work with newcomers, to participate in N.A., to get involved. I've had to work the 12 steps the best I could, and I've had to learn to live.

Today, my life is much simpler. I have a job I like, I'm comfortable in my marriage, I have real friends, and I'm active in N.A. This type of life seems to suit me fine. I used to spend my time looking for the magic; those people, places, and things, which would make my life ideal. I no longer have time for magic. I'm too busy learning how to live. It's a long slow process. Sometimes I think I'm going to go crazy. Sometimes I think "What's the use." Sometimes I back myself into that corner of self-obsession and think there's no way out. Sometimes I think I can't stand life's problems any more, but then this program pro-

1 vides an answer and the bad times pass. Most of the time
2 life's pretty good. And sometimes life is great, greater
3 than I can ever remember. I learned to like myself and found
4 friendship. I came to know myself a little bit and found
5 understanding. I found a little faith and from it freedom.
6 And I found service and learned that this provides the
7 fulfillment I need for happiness.

FEARFUL MOTHER

I thought an addict was a person who was using hard
drugs, was on the streets or was in jail. My pattern was
different, I got my drugs from a doctor or friends. I
knew something was wrong yet I tried to do right, in work-
ing, in marriage and in raising my children. I really
tried hard. I would be doing well and then I'd fail. It
went on like this and each time it seemed like forever;
it seemed like nothing would ever change. Wanting to be
a good mother. Wanting to be a good wife. Wanting to
be involved in society yet never feeling a part of it.

I went through years of telling my children "I'm sorry
but this time it will be different." I went from one
doctor to another asking for help. I went for counseling
feeling everything will be alright now, but the inside was
still saying "What is wrong?" I was changing jobs, chang-
ing doctors, changing drugs, trying different books, reli-
gions and hair colors. I moved from one area to another,
changed friends and moved furniture. I went on vacations
and also remained hidden in my home. So many things through
the years. Constantly feeling, I'm wrong, I'm different,
I'm a failure.

When I had my first child I liked it when they knocked
me out; I liked the feeling of the drugs they gave me. It
was a feeling that whatever is going on around me, I don't
know and I don't care, really. Through the years the tran-
quilizers gave me the feeling that nothing is really that
important. Toward the end, things became so mixed up I was
not sure what was and what was not important. I was shaking
inside and out. Drugs and alcohol (another form of drug)
would not help. I was still trying, but very little. I

1 had quit work and was trying to go back but I couldn't.
2 I was trying to communicate with my family but I couldn't.
3 I would be on the couch afraid of everything. I was 103
4 lbs. and had sores on my lips and in my nose. I had dia-
5 betes and shook so that I had a hard time putting a spoon
6 to my mouth. I felt I was out to kill myself and people
7 around me were out to hurt me. Physically and mentally I
8 had a breakdown. I had just become a grandmother and I
9 could not even communicate with a small child. I was al-
0 most a vegetable. I wanted to be a part of living but did
1 not know how. Part of me said I'd be better off dead and
2 part of me said there has to be a better way of living.

3 When I started on the program of N.A. there were a
4 lot of people who suggested just everyday things for me to
5 do. Things like: eat, take a bath, get dressed, go for
6 a walk, go to meetings. They told me, "Don't be afraid, we
7 have all gone through this." I went to a lot of meetings
8 through the years. One thing has stuck with me, one thing
9 they said from the beginning, "Betty, you can stop running
0 and you can be whatever you want to be and do whatever you
1 want to do."

2 Since being on the program I have listened and watched
3 many people and have seen them go through many ups and
4 downs. I have used the teachings I felt were best for me.
5 My work area has had to change and I have been going to
6 school. I have had to relearn all the way back to the gram-
7 mer school level. It has been slow for me but very reward-
8 ing.

9 I also decided that I need to know me better before I
0 can have a meaningful relationship with a man. I am learn-
1 ing to communicate with my daughters. I am trying many things
2 which I wanted to do for years. I am able to remember many
3 things that I had pushed out of my mind. I have found that
4 Betty is not that big pile of nothing but is someone and
5 something that I never really stopped to look at or listen
6 to. April 1 will be my fifth N.A. birthday. How's that for
7 April Fool's day!

FAT ADDICT

I am an addict. I used at least fifty different types of drugs on an on-going basis for a period of eighteen years.

I didn't know it when I started using, but I used drugs only for one reason; because I didn't like the way I felt. I wanted to feel better. I spent eighteen years trying to feel different, I couldn't face the everyday realities of life. Being a fat kid, fat all my life, I felt rejected.

I was born in ARizona in 1935 and I moved to California in the early 1940's. My family moved around from state to state and my father was married several times. He was what you would call a periodic alcoholic, either he was in a state of self-righteousness or a state of complete degradation. This is one of the many reasons we moved so often.

As I moved from school to school, I would relate various experiences that I had and I would talk about my various step-mothers, for some reason, I was thought to be a liar. It seemed the only company that accepted me, no matter where I went, was the so-called lower level people and I never felt I was a lower level person. It made me feel like I had some self-worth by being able to look down on them.

My family life was confused and painful but a lot of sound moral values were passed on to me in my upbringing.

I always made the attempt to stay employed and as a matter of fact, on most occasions, I managed to be self-employed in some type of business. I was even able to maintain some civic status by belonging to fraternal organizations.

I was 5'5" tall, and weighed 282 lbs. I ate compulsively to try to handle my feelings and emotions and to make me

1 feel better. As a matter of fact, this is how I originally
2 got into using heavy drugs. I wanted to lose weight so
3 desperately that I became willing to use heroin. I thought
4 I would be smart enough not to get hooked and that I could
5 use and lose my appetite, feel good and out-smart the game.
6 I ended up in penitentiaries and jails and bounced around
7 the country. This was the beginning of the end; not only
8 was I a compulsive overeater and remained fat, but I was
9 also addicted to the drugs I was using.

10 Somebody told me about the fellowship of Narcotics Anony-
11 mous when I was in the complete stage of degradation and
12 desperation. Seemingly, having no place to go, I walked into
13 this fellowship feeling as low as a person can feel, like
14 there was no way out; I was completely and totally morally
15 bankrupt. I knew nothing about spiritual values. I knew
16 nothing about living. Life ultimately was nothing but pain
17 on a daily living basis. All I knew was to put something
18 in me, food, drugs, alcohol, or to abuse sex to feel good;
19 which just didn't do it for me any more. I couldn't get
20 enough of anything.

21 When I came to this program, I found something that I
22 had never experienced before - total acceptance for who and
23 what I was. I was invited to keep coming back to a fellow-
24 ship that told me there was no fees or dues, that I had
25 already paid my dues, via my past life; and that if I kept
26 coming back, I would find total freedom and a new way of
27 life.

28 Today, many years later, I find that I am free from
29 drug addiction, compulsive overeating, and I have status
30 in the community. I have a nice home, family, executive
31 position and most of all I have a personal relationship
32 with my God, which has made all these things possible. I
33 am able to feel good, to feel joyful, blissful and to feel
34 serenity, even when things are not as good as they might be.

35 There is no question about it, I owe my life to the
36 Narcotics Anonymous fellowship and God. I can only extend
37 my hope that if you, too, are suffering as I once was,

that you will practice the principles of Narcotics Anonymous, 1
and find freedom from pain and a meaningful, prosperous life. 2

APPENDICES

I.

"A PHYSICIAN'S VIEWPOINT"

The subject presented in this book is of lifesaving importance to those afflicted with drug addiction and chemical dependency. I say this with a background as a clinical associate professor of both medicine and psychiatry with two years of formal training in addiction and alcoholism. As one of a new breed of medical specialists know as "addictionologist," I have a real sense of satisfaction and regard in being asked to contribute to the book of Narcotics Anonymous, a blueprint of recovery for the drug addict.

Six years ago, I attended my first meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. Three years ago, I sat on the floor of a small house in Marietta, Georgia, in another N.A. meeting. Because of my professional training, as well as my personal life, I was in-depth knowledgeable about Alcoholics Anonymous. I quickly recognized the need that this largely young group of drug addicts and alcoholics were responding in this meeting of N.A. Some years later, when one of the originators of the literature movement in N.A. suggested that I might contribute to the N.A. book from a medical specialist's standpoint, I was both flattered and humbled, because William D. Silkworth's letters of more than 40 years ago came to mind. There are profound truths and wisdom presented in his correspondence, and I would hope to be able in part to replicate this worthy contribution.

Since that first meeting, I have cared for many addicts, those suffering from addiction to narcotics, sedatives, stimulants, and hallucinogenic drugs as well as alcohol. It is now apparent that these individuals are not weak-willed, ignorant, lack guts or will power, nor are they bad or evil. They are certainly not crazy and most have no primary psychiatric disease. They do, however, suffer from a biochemical-genetic disease called drug addiction. As an addictionologist, with training in both medicine and psychiatry, I have watched and participated

in many forms of treatment. It is established truth that the self-help groups of Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous are the single most effective treatment tool we have. It is true that many individuals suffering from the diseases of chemical dependency and drug addiction will need hospitalization for detoxification. Many greatly benefit from treatment centers where education into the disease concept is taught and new, non-chemical coping concepts are tutored. But critical to after-care in the drug addict is Narcotics Anonymous.

In addition, as I have observed N.A. through the years, an increasing number of adolescents and adults have achieved cleanliness through regular attendance at Narcotics Anonymous meetings alone. So, I have come to appreciate N.A. and its value both as a partial and a total treatment program.

There are many stories of recovery in this book which are similar to those I have witnessed, played a part in. A pattern runs through each of the "miracles of recovery" that are documented in these pages. First, the individuals recognized that they were ill, sick, and needed help. Then through the precepts and teachings of Narcotics Anonymous, they recognized the need for a moral inventory and an acknowledgement of their faults and weakness in their personality structure. Following was the requirement to make amends to those they have harmed, either psychologically or physically. Then, appreciating that the best way to keep their cleanliness and recovery was to give it away, they embarked on a life of helping others. Invariably in those who achieved cleanliness and serenity, this was accompanied by a feeling, often initially vague, tentative and undefined, that they could no longer do this by themselves; that they needed a power outside themselves. Many called this a Higher Power. Some referred to it as the group; others called it God as they understood Him; some combined them both. All agreed they couldn't use mood-changing drugs and they couldn't get well by themselves.

I have watched the Narcotics Anonymous growth, as a complement and a derivative of Alcoholics Anonymous. I saw that tradition and practice had made A.A. a fellowship of usually older people where the primary drug of choice was alcohol, al-

though Dr. Bob had used sedative drugs as well. A need existed for the new generation of chemically-dependent individuals where the drug of choice was narcotics, sedative-hypnotics, hallucinogens or stimulants and Narcotics Anonymous was born. Taken in perspective, there is no substance or excuse for conflict, as both fellowships are directed toward helping different segments of people suffering from a common illness--the disease of chemical dependency.

As the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has grown, so has the need for a primer, a guideline, a recovery map similar to the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have witnessed a segment of the effort in Atlanta, Georgia. A dedicated, unselfish group of individuals entirely without financial profit motive have banded with N.A. members throughout the United States to write this book. It is needed, indeed it is critical reading for those who wish to recover, using the guidelines of N.A.

Current medical and scientific evidence indicates that addiction to any and all drugs is a disease, a biochemical-genetic disorder, but we have no pills, no shots, no insulin to effect a cure today or in the near future.

Those of us who are medically trained and work with these addictive diseases are numbed by our impotence utilizing traditional medical and psychiatric techniques in curing people suffering and dying from drug addiction. Likewise, we are both impressed and humbled by witnessing the positive effects on the drug addicts who attend and follow the program of Narcotics Anonymous. As I used to give the drug inserts from the boxes of antibiotics to my patients, I will give those patients with drug addiction the book of N.A. It's simple; it's inexpensive; and above all, it works.

I am so reminded of Silkworth's words in the big book of A.A., as I say to you, "I sincerely advise you to read this book. Though you may have come as an unbeliever, or even to scoff, you may remain to pray and begin recovery." Cleanliness, peace and serenity await you at the end of its chapters.

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II.

¿QUIEN ES UN ADICTO?

La mayor parte de nosotros no tenemos que pensar dos veces acerca de esta pregunta. Nosotros sabemos. Nuestra vida entera y pensamientos estaban centrados en drogas en una forma u otra el conseguir y usar y encontrar modos y maneras para conseguir más. Nosotros usamos para vivir y vivimos para usar. Muy simplemente, un adicto es un hombre o una mujer quien su vida está controlada por drogas. Nosotros somos personas en las garras de una enfermedad continua y progresiva que termina siempre en los mismo: Carcel, Instituciones y Muerte.

¿QUE ES EL PROGRAMA DE NARCOTICOS ANONIMOS?

N.A. es una sociedad de hombres y mujeres para quien drogas eran un problema muy grande. Nosotros somos adictos recuperados que nos reunimos regularmente para ayudar uno al otro para quedarnos limpios. Este es un programa de abstinencia completa de todas drogas. Hay solamente "UN" requerimiento para hacerse miembro y eso es el honesto deseo de para de usar. No hay ningun "tener que" en N.A. pero nosotros sugerimos que tengan su mente abierta y que se den una chanza. Nuestro programa es una serie de principios escritos tan simplemente que nosotros podemos seguirlos en nuestra vida diariamente. La cosa mas importante de eso es que "DAN RESULTADO."

No hay ninguna cuerda sujetos a N.A. No estamos unidos con ninguna otra organización, no tenemos directores, no hay cuotas de iniciación, o precio de entrada, no hay que firmar ningun contrato, o prometer nada a nadie. No estramos conectados con ningun

grupo politico, religioso, o grupo de cumplimiento forzosa. y no estamos bajo ninguna inspección en cualquier momento. Cualquiera puede asociarse sin hacerse caso de edad, raza, color, creencia, religión, o falta de religión.

No estamos interesados en que o cuanto has usado, o quienes eran tus conexiones, que has hecho en el pasado, que gran cantidad de cosas tienes, o que poco tienes, nos importa nada mas lo que quieres hacer acerca de tu problema y como podemos ayudarte. El recién-llegado es la persona mas importante en cualquier reunión, porque la unica manera que nosotros podemos quedarnos con lo que tenemos, es dandolo. Con nuestra experiencia de grupos hemos aprendido que las personas que siguen viniendo regularmente a nuestras reuniones son las que siguen limpiando.

COMO TRABAJA

Si tu quieres lo que nosotros tenemos que ofrecer, y estás bien dispuesto a hacer el esfuerzo para obtenerlo, entonces estas listo para tomar ciertos pasos. Estos son sugeridos nada mas, pero son los principios que hicieron nuestra recuperacion posible.

1. Admitimos que estabamos sin poder sobre nuestra adicción, que nuestra vida habia llegado a ser in manejable.
2. Llegamos a creer que un poder mas grande que nosotros mismos podia restablecernos la cordura.
3. Hicimos una decisión de dar nuestra voluntad y vida al cuidado de DIOS como nosotros lo entendemos.
4. Hicimos un inventario examinante y sin temor de nosotros mismos.
5. Admitimos a DIOS, a nosotros mismos y a otro ser humano la especie exacta de nuestros mal echos.
6. Estabamos enteramente listos para tener que DIOS nos quite todos los defectos de caracter.

7. Le pedimos humildemente a EL que nos quite nuestras faltas.
8. Hicimos una lista de todas las personas a quien le hicimos daño y nos hicimos voluntarios a hacerle compensacion a todos ellos.
9. Le hicimos compensacion a esas personas cuando posible, exepto cuando las lastimara a ellos o ostros.
10. Continuamos a tomar un inventorio personal y cuando estabamos equivocados lo admitimos puntualmente.
11. Buscamos por rezo y meditaci3n para mejorar nuestro contacto consiente con DIOS, como nosotros lo entendemos rezando nada mas que por el conocimiento de la voluntad de EL para nosotros y el poder para llevarlo ha cabo.
12. Haber tenido un despertamiento espiritual al resultado de esos pasos, tratamos de llevar ha cabo este mensaje a adictos y practicar estos principales en todos nuestros asuntos.

Esto suena como una orden muy grande y no lo podemos hacer todo a una vez, no llegamos a ser adictos en un día, asi que recuerden--LLEVA CON CALMA LAS COSAS.

Hay otra cosa que mas que nada nos vencera en nuestra recuperacion, eso es la actitud de indiferencia o intolerancia hacia principales espitituales. Aunque no hay ningun--tener que--en N.A. hay tres cosas indispensables, estan son, Honradez, Tener la mente abierta, y la Voluntad de tratar. Con esto andamos muy bien en nuestro camino.

Nosotros creemos que nuestro modo de plantear el problema de addiction is completamente realistico, porque el valor terapeutico de un adicto ayundando a otro adicto es sin apralelo. Nosotors sentimos que nuestro modo es practico, por que un adicto puede entender y ayudar mejor a otro adicto. Nosotros creemos que lo mas pronto que nos afrontamos con los problemas dentro de nuestra sociedad, en la vida do todos los dias, asi más rapido vamos a llegar a ser miembros aceptables, responsable y productivos de esa sociedad.

La unica manera de mantenerse de obtener o continuando un vicio es que no se tome esa primera aguja, pildora o trago. Si tu eres como nosotros, ya sabes que uno es demasiado, y mil nunca van a ser suficientes. Nosotros ponemos, gran énfasis en esto porque sabemos que cuando usamos drogas en cualquier forma, o sustituimos una por otra, soltamos nuestra adicción de nueve o creamos una nueva.

La sustitución de alcohol ha causado que muchos adictos se formen una nueva adicción, que en su progresión trae tantos problemas como antes. A nosotros se nos parece olvidar que alcohol es una de las drogas más viejas. Aparentemente, parecemos ser gente con personalidades adictivas quienes son fuertemente susceptibles a adicción alcohólica.

¿POR QUE ESTAMOS AQUI?

Antes de venir a la confraternidad de N.A. no podíamos manejar nuestra propia vida, no podíamos vivir o disfrutar de la vida como lo hacen otras personas. Nosotros teníamos que tener algo diferente y pensamos que lo habíamos encontrado en drogas. Habíamos puesto el uso de drogas antes del bienestar de nuestra familias, esposas, esposos y nuestros hijos. Teníamos que tener drogas a toda costa. Le hicimos daño a muchas personas pero más que nada nos hicimos daño a nosotros mismos. Por nuestra inhabilidad de aceptar responsabilidades personales, estábamos creando nuestros propios problemas. Parecíamos ser incapaces de enfrentarnos con la vida en sus propios términos.

Casi todos realizamos que en nuestra adicción, estábamos cometiendo suicidio despacio, pero tan astutos enemigos de la vida son narcóticos y sedantes que habíamos perdido el poder de hacer nada acerca de ello. La cárcel no nos ayudó para nada. Medicina, religión y psiquiatría no parecían tener ninguna respuesta que pudieramos usar. Todos estos métodos no fallaron, y en desesperación buscamos ayuda de uno al otro en Narcóticos Anónimos.

Despues de venir a N.A. realizamos que eramos gente enferma que sufrian de una enfermedad come Alcoholismo, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. Noy hay ninguna "CURA" para estas enfermedades, pero se pueden controlar a algun punto y entonces "Recuperación" es posible.

En N.A. seguimos u programa tomado prestado de Alcoholicos Anonimos. En los ultimos cuarenta años, mas de un million de gente se ha recuperado en A.A. casi todos estaban tan desesperadamente adictos a alcohol como nosotros estabamos a drogas. Estamos profundamente agradecidos a la confraternidad de A.A. por haber apuntado el modo para nosotros poder encontrar una manera nueva de vivir.

III.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

A CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- June 1953: Six people met at Sun Valley, California for the purpose of organizing the first "AA-NA" group. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were adapted for use by the group from the very beginning. Between mid-June and September 14, 1953, this original "governing" or "steering" committee held various meetings for the purpose of writing by-laws.
- September 14, 1953: After checking with the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office, the committee voted to change the name from San Fernando Valley AA-NA to "Narcotics Anonymous."
- September 21, 1953: The committee met one last time to iron out details for the first N.A. meeting.
- October 5, 1953: The first meeting was held in facilities rented from the local Salvation Army Dad's Club, Sun Valley, California. Seventeen people attended that first meeting. These original members made a commitment to continue for one year, agreeing that one recovery would be "significant."
- 1956 (or later) The first N.A. (unofficial) publication, "Narcotics Anonymous," was printed. This was a brief (eight-page) information pamphlet containing the "20 Questions," a brief outline of N.A., the Twelve Steps and the addresses of groups at Studio City and San Diego, California.
- November 1959: N.A., per se, disbanded briefly. It was almost immediately revived by several original members. The early years of N.A. were a period of slow growth.
- 1960: Entering the new decade, N.A. again entered a period of crisis. The Fellowship was still in a state of slow growth. During the early 1960's only four groups contributed to support of a general service office. All in California, they were at Studio City, Hollywood, Burbank and Los Angeles.

1962: The original white book, the pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published without stories.

1963: In order to insure unity of purpose, the general membership in California established a Board of Trustees. A literature sub-committee was established as part of the service arm of the Board of Trustees.

1966: The new white book with stories and a white cover was printed.

1967: The Board of Trustees was expanded in size.

February 1968: Volume I of the Voice appeared.

1969: Because of continued growth, the limited capacity of the Board of Trustees to adequately coordinate a unified "world" effort and frequent regional conflicts, a decision was made by the Board of Trustees and the general membership to establish a central office. This central office was to function as a clearing house, rather than a legislative body.

As a result, the Parent Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous was created.

197-1971: The name, Parent Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous, was changed to Narcotics Anonymous Central Office Committee.

July 23, 1971: The Board of Trustees authorized a central office.

November 5, 1971: The first "world" convention was held at LaMirada Country Club, LaMirada, California. The convention ran November 5 through November 7.

November 6, 1971: At a business meeting during the world convention, the general membership voted to elect a Narcotics Anonymous business manager with a "formal" office. Various problems followed the establishment of a business manager/business office--primarily money. There were inadequate resources to pay the manager and he was unable to serve without pay.

November 15, 1971: The financial statement for the general service office for January 15, 1971 through November 15, 1971, reported income received from groups in Georgia, Nevada, Colorado and Idaho, as well as California.

December 13, 1971: The Narcotics Anonymous Central Office Committee announced by letter the firm decision to open a "world central office: in January 1972.

January 1972: The world central office opened at 2335 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles, CA.

February 15, 1972: The Board of Trustees authorized by letter the publication in hardback of an N.A. book on recovery--not yet written.

October 23, 1973: The first Area Service Committee, the San Fernando Valley (CA) A.S.C., was created.

November 1974: Following moves to 1346 Highland Ave., Los Angeles; a room in the Suicide Prevention Center, Los Angeles; a room above a bail bonding company on Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys; the World Service Office was moved to its present location in Sun Valley.

Following the move to Sun Valley, it was discovered that several boxes of records and other historical data had been lost.

Prior to the move to Sun Valley, the name had been officially changed from World Central Office to World Service Office.

November 15, 1975: At the California Service Conference, Arroyo Grande, CA, the first "N.A. Tree" was accepted for publication. In addition, the California Service conference authorized publication of a World Director.

November 17, 1975: The "N.A. Tree" was published. This publication is the parent Service manual of Narcotics Anonymous.

January 7, 1976: The Board of Trustees accepted the "N.A. Tree" as an official N.A. publication.

August 28, 1976: The first foreign language (Spanish) publication was authorized. This was followed by a German translation in late 1976, early 1977.

October 24, 1976: At the general business meeting of the Ventura County Convention, Ventura, CA, three major decisions were rendered: an "N.A. Tree" Committee was established to revise and republish that pamphlet; the qualifications for Trustee as they now exist were established; and the decision for a "World Service Conference" was made.

November 13, 1976: The "first" World Service Conference was held at Ventura, CA.

January 25, 1977: The World Service Office was incorporated.

April 17, 1977: The first Regional Service Committee, the Southern California R.S.C., was created.

July 1977: The first "N.A. Newsletter" outside California (Kansas) began publication.

November 1977: The "second" W.S.C. was held in conjunction with the Seventh World Convention at San Francisco.

The conference was cancelled due to lack of quorum as defined by the "N. A. Tree." Only three people showed for the conference.

November 11, 1977: The Board of Trustees predicted by letter that the next two or three years would hold greater growth for the Fellowship than that of the preceding twenty-five years.

December 1977: Two more "N.A. Newsletters" appeared outside California, in Georgia and Pennsylvania.

During this period, through early 1978, printed copies of the white book were in short supply, and groups were furnished emergency photocopies.

February 1978: W.S.O. assumed publication of the Voice.

April 1, 1978 The "third" World Service Conference (the first as it is now known) opened at Van Nuys, CA. The basic concepts of world service and the World Service Conference as they now exist were formulated at this two-day conference.

The Literature Committee as it exists today was established at this conference.

Early 1979 Mainline began publication.

April 28-29, 1979: The World Service Conference, meeting in Los Angeles, directed the Literature Committee to conduct a World Literature Conference for the purpose of collecting material to write an "N.A. book on recovery."

May 19, 1979: The groundwork for a World Literature Conference was laid at a meeting in Atlanta, GA.

May 27, 1979: The steering committee for the World Literature Conference meeting in Atlanta, tentatively scheduled the conference for Wichita "in the fall."

August 26, 1979: The conference committee in Wichita held the first planning session for the conference.

October 6-7, 1979: The first W.L.C. was held at Wichita, KS. Attending the conference were a total of thirty-five members from Kansas, Ohio, Nebraska, Georgia, California, Tennessee and Virginia.

This conference established an initial style guide for the proposed book and began the task of cataloguing hundreds of pages of material submitted by the Fellowship worldwide. The Wichita conference staff guide was later edited and released in pamphlet form as "The Handbook for Narcotics Anonymous Literature Committee."

The Wichita Conference opened at 9:00 A.M. Saturday, October 6, at Ash House. Morning details included a presentation by various members of the steering committee on the history of N.A. literature and the need for a definitive text. The members then were presented a proposed workshop agenda and the session closed for lunch.

The conference reconvened in the Offices of Home Owners' Trust Insurance, Parklane Shopping Center, in workshop form at 1:00 P.M. The Saturday sessions closed at 4:30 P.M.

The conference reassembled at 9:00 A.M., Sunday, and continued in workshops until noon break. Reconvening at 1:00 P.M., the workshops presented a report to the full assembly. The conference ended with a group consciousness session to approve the two-days' work. The conference closed at 5:00 P.M.

In addition to preliminary work on the basic text, the Wichita conference established general guidelines for the Literature Committee concerning the need for a treasury, ways and means of raising money, the need for area newsletters and guidelines for publication, and expanding and improving the I.P. library.

Respective of the basic text, the conference proposed a Fellowship-wide effort that would be an N.A. work--not a supplement to the A.A. big book. Guidelines for collecting material were established. Of 62 proposed topics of material to be included, 59 topics were accepted. Fourteen chapter outlines were proposed and twelve were adopted.

More than 500 man-hours of effort went into the Wichita Conference.

Sept. 8-12, 1980:

The second W.L.C. was held at the Lincoln Federal Building, Lincoln, NB. Attending this conference were thirty-six members from Georgia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, British Columbia and Oregon.

The meeting opened with a background report on the growth and development of literature. Five achievable goals were proposed for the conference: establish an outline of chapter headings; inventory materials collected; collate material into outline form; select material ready for print; and determine further material needed.

The first goal was tentatively achieved on day one when the assembly, reporting back from workshop, adopted a ten-chapter outline with additional preface, introduction, dedication, personal stories and appendix.

Beginning with day two, the actual sorting of material began. Due to the large volume of materials, each chapter was subdivided in various categories. By the end of day three the inventory and sorting process had produced an initial draft of "Chapter One" ready for rewrite. By the end of day four, the ten chapters had been divided into nearly 100 sub-headings.

Prior to the end of the conference on day five, the various workshops had sorted through hundreds of pages of raw material and had produced 511 sheets of paste-up material, the genesis of the book. These 511 sheets were the basic outline of a rough draft. Of 42 pages of paste-up devoted to Chapter One, six final "rough draft" sheets were set aside as the "first draft." The conference ended with a book in recognizable form.

The members at the Lincoln conference worked around the clock during the last three days of the assembly. More than 1100 man-hours of labor went into this conference.

January 31 -
February 8, 1981:

The third W.L.C. was held on campus at Memphis State University, Memphis, TN. The conference opened with 27 people from 8 states in attendance. The initial meeting of this conference established two goals: complete the final draft of the N.A. book; and submit the approved text to the Fellowship as a whole two months prior to May 1, 1981, the date of the World Convention, with final approval for a hardback publication to be sought at the Los Angeles convention.

Day two of the conference began with a consensus on workshop guidelines. It was decided by group consensus to divide into smaller groups and to put each chapter through more than one workshop. It was also decided to "workshop" one chapter at a time until a final draft was achieved.

Beginning with day two, the assembly began daily contact with the local areas. Members in various areas and regions were located to accept long distance calls for the purpose of further input, as well as to solicit funds.

From day one, January 31, through day nine, February 8, the conference worked nearly around the clock in shifts. Each line in every paragraph, on each page of every chapter went through several group-conscious workshops before reaching "final typing." Chapters were rewritten, revised, expanded, cut and edited several times. Not all of the final effort was done at Memphis. One chapter was roughed out in California and air-expressed to Memphis. One chapter travelled to Ohio with a committee member, and was re-written on the plane back from Ohio to Memphis. Long distance calls were made from coast to coast to verify input, assemble new data and to collect stories.

Some of the chapters were found to be in an acceptable first draft stage, based on the work performed at Lincoln. One chapter was incomplete through day six of the Memphis conference.

During the course of the Memphis conference, more than 70 people from 13 states were in actual attendance at some time during the nine days. In addition, dozens more members from coast to coast were consulted by telephone and contributed either by phone, mail or air express.

At Memphis alone, more than 4,500 man-hours were expended in the various stages of writing, rewriting, assembling and final compilation. Nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette players, two telephones and a dictaphone were kept in almost continuous use; and more than 20,000 sheets of paper were used to produce 200 pages of basic text.

February 9, 1981:

The Memphis conference ended and the files, equipment and now-approved text of the review copy were moved to a local member's home. A small group of committee members from Kansas, Ohio, Georgia, California, and Tennessee remained to carry out the conference directive to have the work printed and assembled for mailing.

The members from Georgia, California, Kansas and Ohio eventually returned home and the few dedicated members from Tennessee continued working around the clock to coordinate efforts with the stenographer and printer. This group remained in constant telephone contact with committee members from Georgia, California, Oregon and Ohio.

The eleventh hour efforts of the group in Memphis included dozens of telephone calls to Georgia, Oregon, California, Missouri and other areas, as well as miles of driving from the work area to the stenographer to the printer; lengthy visits with a lawyer (for copyright of the review copy) and post office (for mailing permits); trips to Western Union to collect money orders and to the bank for deposits; the slow, tedious task of proofreading and final assembly of 1200 copies; and the actual addressing and mailing of the review copy to the Fellowship worldwide.

February 27, 1981:

The review copy is mailed.

IV.

STYLE SHEET FOR COMPOSITION REVIEW

<u>Use the word/phrases:</u>	<u>In reference to (instead of):</u>
CLEAN	Condition of abstinence from drugs (Sober)
CLEAN TIME	Sobriety
ADDICT/ADDICTION	Identity as people powerless over chemicals (Drug Addict, Alcoholic, Drug Dependent, Drug Abuser, Dope Fiend)
USING	Operating, Practicing
STOP	Quit (i.e., I didn't quit, I stopped using drugs)
WE/US/OUR	Those, These, They (in reference to experience with addiction/recovery)
THEM'THEIR	He/She/His/Him/Her (remove gender)
USEFUL	Normal
WORKING THE STEPS	Taking steps
LIVING A DAY AT A TIME/LIVE TODAY/JUST FOR TODAY	One day at a time
TAKE IT EASY	Easy does it
IT WON'T LAST	This too shall pass
PRIORITIES	First things first
ACHIEVE ADEQUACY NOT PERFECTION	Strive for progress rather than perfection