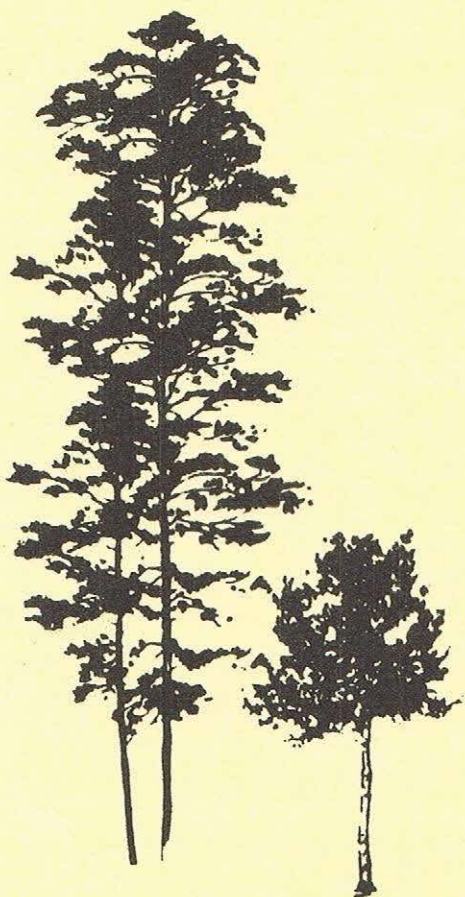


RAINBOW

Connection



Jan. 85



A Poem From The Past

LONELINESS

One is a lonely number.
Two would be fine.
Like a tiny wilted lumber,
Amongst a forest of pine.

Alone is so painful,
lonely, barren, and shameful.
And it hurts to explain,
loneliness' domain.

The reminder is always there,
Lurking everywhere.
It's so hard to contain,
It's so stuffed full of pain.

Alone is so painful,
lonely, somber, and shameful.
And it hurts to explain,
It's so full of pain.

written by,
a now-recovering
ADDICT.



How do you spell relief?

S-U-R-R-E-N-D-E-R

THREE

The A B C's of NA

-A-

When we practice acceptance our lives are simplified. For us, addiction is an obsession to use drugs that are destroying us followed by a compulsion which forces us to continue. Addiction is a physical, mental and spiritual disease, affecting every area of our lives. An addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. As addicts, we are people whose use of any mind-altering, mood-changing substance causes a problem in any area of our lives. Our reaction is what makes us addicts, not how much we use. Addicts are ego-maniacs with an inferiority complex. A dictionary definition of anonymity is "a state of bearing no name." By working together for our common welfare we achieve the true spirit of anonymity. The spiritual principle of anonymity makes us all equal as members of the group. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles. A definition from dictionary for autonomy is "having the right or power of selfgovernment....under taken or carried on without outside control." The autonomy of our groups is necessary for our survival.

FOUR

Autonomy means that our groups are self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Autonomy gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, serve their members, and fulfill their primary purpose

"CONTINUE NEXT ISSUE"

FOURTH STEP

Like many of us, when we are new in the program, the idea of writing a fourth step overwhelmed me. It wasn't the idea of doing a searching and fearless inventory on myself as much as how to go about doing it. I was told to sit down and just start writing, but that didn't work. So I studied and tried to follow every Fourth Step guide that I could get my hands on. For some reason, that didn't work either. The guides would get me started, but then I'd come across something that would throw me for a loop, and I'd be at a loss for words again. For some people, the guides work very well, but some of us are sicker (or denser) than others, and I'm reasonably sure I'm not the only person who has had this problem. Finally, after some praying, the pain outweighed the pleasure, and I devised a Fourth Step guide of my own that worked for me, and I was able to do a thorough fearless and moral inventory I would like to share my experience, strength, and hope on the Fourth Step by sharing what worked for me. Hopefully it will help someone else who is having trouble doing theirs.

What worked for me was simply to break the inventory down into three categories: 1) What do I want to change about myself? 2) What do I want to keep that I

FIVE

already have? This to me was a startling revelation: "you mean I'm not ALL bad?" It's very important to realize this about ourselves, to remember that there is some good in us all. 3) What do I want to gain for myself---NOT in the way of material gain. The first one was a snap. In no time at all, I came up with seventeen things that I'd like to change, and there's probably more. Among these were: resentments, gossiping, laziness, my attitude toward sex, poor self-image, depression, and intolerance of those different from myself. I want to stress here and now that having these defects made clear did not "cure" me of them, it just made me aware that some serious work needs to be done in those areas.

The second section, "What do I want to keep that I already have?" was harder to do. But to my surprise, I came up with twelve assets that I thought I'd like to keep, even though there was room for improvement here, too. After all, I tell myself, we strive for progress, not perfection, and I honestly feel that I am progressing. Some of the nicer things I came up with were my faith and surrender, my gratitude, my laughter and my sense of humor, my intelligence (now if I'd just use it), my musical aptitude, and my honesty. Not a bad start at all!

The third section required some serious thinking, too. If I wasn't talking about material and financial gain, then what did I want out of life? What was left? After some serious deliberation, I came up with only five items. These were: 1) A closer relationship to and better understanding of the will of my Higher Power. 2) More clean time (now I know enough to strive for quality as well as quantity). 3) Self-acceptance. 4) More concern and understanding of other people. 5) a more loving and sharing N.A. relationship

Numbers two and five have come true; I have been told that I'm a very caring person; my Higher Power still isn't cooperating on the understanding deal, and my lack of self-acceptance is one of my more irritating liabilities. Still and all, one day at a time, I'm working on getting better. Who knows? One of these days I may grow up and turn into a pretty decent person, in spite of myself.

Thanks for letting me share this little bit of what worked for me. Thanks just for being there when I needed you.



Once you have recognized that you're in the valley, you are already on your way uphill...



NO ONE SHOWED....

I went to my little home group today and no one showed. I didn't feel alone because the feeling was there. The fact that one member was there and acting differently was enough. The difference was knowing that alone I can't make it. The difference was that I was ready to help or wish well anyone who walked through the meeting room door. I let myself relax and thought of others I love and know well through N.A. There are a lot of them. They all have the disease of addiction but vary as individuals in many ways.

Though there are many I identify with completely, there are a few that defy surrender as I have come to know it. My disease wants me to engage in a tug of war with them over issues which have come up. N.A. has taught me better than that. There is nothing in this world I can truly lose if it is mine to begin with. If removed, it will come back. There is nothing to win I don't already have. I love them all and am prepared to show my love many ways. Starting with well wishing and leading to my time, my telephone, my couch, sharing what N.A. has done for me. Sharing spiritual principles which only come to life in the giving. Trying to be a good solid friend to all I can.

Engaging in useless debate over meaningless issues used to take up a lot of my time. It kept me isolated from many and only permitted me to have close contact with a few. Since coming to N.A. a lot of that has changed. Clearly, I can remember the first time I backed away from imposing my will on others. I wondered if I was surrendering or just being chicken. Later, I could see the wisdom of giving it time.

EIGHT

Time for me to stay clean. Time for others who were doing their best whether it seemed right to me or not. Time for the God of my understanding to step in and work yet another miracle.

The thing I've been able to see, a little more each day, is that reality is my friend. The illusions presented to me as if they were solid facts cut me off from reality and make me crazy. Still, through N.A., I can step back if I don't feel the sense of correctness I associate with the Will of my Higher Power. This reality of feeling and sensing God's Will for me takes precedence over the illusion. When I maintain that good feeling inside, it is reflected in every part of my life. Every time I get to step out on faith. Every time I get to do a good job, I know it comes from my recovery. Recovery remakes me inside so that I can work with reality not against it. Since I can see and hear better, I can respond better.

If I'm with someone who is acting badly, more of their need for security or recognition can be dealt with before what they're talking about or otherwise going through. Sometimes there's no way to do this but by trying, I know I'm willing.

I never used to know. After all the dope I put in my system I'd become adapted to living loaded and that forced me to move in tiny circuits without ever really facing issues or being able to initiate or maintain the courses of action required to effect the living changes I wanted and needed desperately. Always I would get distracted. Clean, I'm more and more the same person with similar likes and dislikes day after day. I spend more of my time doing things I really care about and less and less time is wasted in futile

efforts or assumptions. This way the good grows and isn't wiped out every time the tide changes or I encountered a forceful personality.

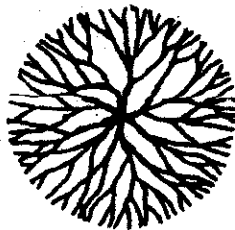
Something about the life before N.A. made me kind of "entranced". I had to eliminate all the changes I could because I couldn't handle any of them. Today these changes are like food to me and I have a healthy appetite. Usually I'm up to them and it feels good to say that in writing. It was not always so. Without these changes, I was becoming a zombie.

By practicing spiritual principles (especially surrender, faith and hope) I'm able to act in a manner which feels good at the time and again later on. If I'm insufficient, I surrender. If I can help, I step out on faith. If I don't know, I can hope. Simplistic as it sounds, these work for me. Part of the point is that these actions never ask me to do anything which is beyond my ability and I expect to be able to keep it up a long time clean.

Carrying a sense of God in my heart and letting my purpose be to help others, especially others like me, fills most of my days with love and laughter. I work, I pray, I meditate, I can admit fault without it being a big deal.

No one showed up for the meeting today but what you have given me was here with me and I'm glad I came. I'll be back.

N.

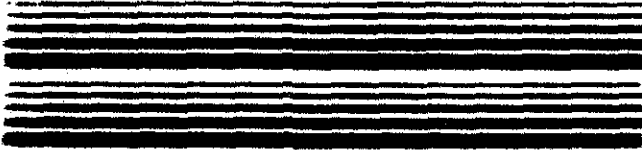


A.



"BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER"

Who is your flock?



GROOVIN' ON STEP NINE

I had been clean for a year and a half. My sanity had returned and I had become a productive person. I was making meetings every night, going to conventions and service conferences, and trying to help the suffering addict on a regular basis. However, the past continued to plaque me day and night.

I came from an exceptionally good and loving family who suffered tremendously through my addiction. After years of turmoil, they finally had to disown me.

Just before I came into Narcotics Anonymous, I moved 900 miles away from my family. Three years had gone by since I had seen them.

ELEVEN

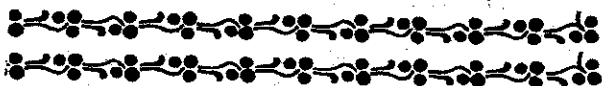
After taking my fourth and fifth Steps I consulted my sponsor, who agreed that the time had come to go see my family and make amends to them.

Having not been around to watch me grow during my recovery, my family was quite pessimistic, to say the least. However, they still consented to see me. Words could not possibly express how scared I was. I knew that they had a totally negative image of me and that I was going to have to completely level with them. I knew that I couldn't do this without God's help.

After continuous prayer and meditation, my Higher Power gave me the courage and guidance to carry out this difficult task. After a three-hour, gut-level rap in which I spilled everything, an indescribable glow came across their faces. For the first time in over a decade, they became excited to be in the same room with me, and made me feel welcome. All of a sudden our relationship had taken on a new meaning that it never had before, based on honesty.

What was also amazing was that my parents were speaking of God again for the first time in years. Previously, my addiction had driven them to a loss of faith altogether.

It was a wonderful experience. Not only did it bring happiness back into the family that I almost succeeded in destroying years ago, but it also rectified my past. Due to the beauty of Step Nine, I will never have to allow the past to plague me again.



COMMUNITY

Human beings are social creatures and have lived in communities of various sorts from the beginning of history. Working and living together in a state of reasonable harmony is our natural state of being, but somehow that doesn't seem to work for some of us. We have a disease which mainstream society is unable to answer. Their tools - medicine, religion, and psychiatry don't work for us, and we have to seek a different answer.

The answer we have found in Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual one, and it has three aspects: 1) God, 2) The Principles (contained in the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions), and 3) The People (the Fellowship of N.A.). The third aspect of our spiritual answer, oddly enough, puts us right back into something which we weren't able to deal with before coming to NA, and that is a community. Therefore, it is no small wonder that most of us have a hard time adjusting to dealing with each other in our community of NA. We have found from our group experience that we can't stay clean alone. So, like it or not, we are stuck with one another. For a long time, we stay very close to the Fellowship, realizing we are sick people, and we are often very scared of the "outside world" and the "earth people." As we get into the program, the Fellowship becomes our community, and we begin to take part in it. We begin to participate and serve in our community because it feels good, making us feel "a part of" and

THIRTEEN

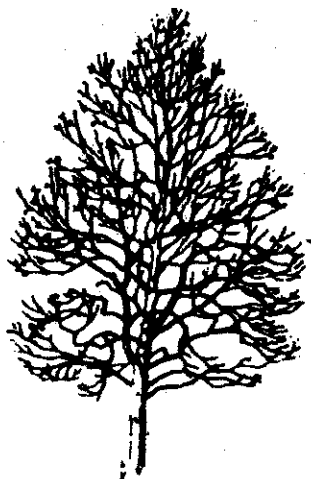
useful. We start by picking up ashtrays and coffee cups, and go into chairing meetings, sharing our stories, and taking various service positions and responsibilities. We become willing participants in a community. We feel "a part of" for the first time, and it feels good. The work of carrying the message to the still-suffering addict gets done, which keeps the wheel turning and members happy.

There are inevitable disagreements between individuals, however, and these too often lead to disruptions of community spirit and activities. The disease comes out in us, and we let our personal feelings and desires take precedence over the needs of the community. But how did we find ourselves in this spot of sacrificing our personal desires for a community anyway? That's the kind of stuff the nards do, and we never had to do it because we were cool, we were better, and so this is wierd for us. It just ain't us! So, realizing this, we are suddenly afraid to look foolish and have someone think we're a nurd or something, and so we drop our service commitments like hot rocks. We forget about a community idea, and we separate ourselves back out again, to stay cool. And as soon as we see one person quit, we go that much faster because we are good at quitting - much better than we are at staying. In the midst of all this, what we're forgetting is that being out on your own, terminally hip and fatally cool, got us pinned into the desperate corners from which we barely escaped with our lives. Just because we've stayed clean awhile, we still can't do it alone.

Do yourself a favor---stop and ask what kind of a world you want to live in. There is a lot of short-sightedness, and

FOURTEEN

a lot of reaching and grabbing towards selfish ends in the world. Caring and sharing with others is the NA way for me, and I can work through my petty selfishness to let the love of God happen in me and around me. It has to start here and now, with me, or it may never happen at all.



To the extent that I participated in my disease, let that be the extent to which I participate in my recovery.....



HAVE YOU HUGGED A NEWCOMER TODAY?

The opposite of surrender is delusion. . .



ANOTHER GRIM REAPER

Death just walked out my door. It was not the tattered, black-cloaked dude with the grizzly gray beard and the razor-sharp scythe. No scabbed and skeletal finger pointed in my direction and no ghoulish voice beckoned me to follow. But it was a grim reaper just the same and the effect was terrifying.

It was in the eyes, normally bright and filled with a mischievous twinkle, now dulled by remorse. It was in the slurred words and the absence of the laughter that had lifted me from despair so many times. Gone was the quick wit and mirror-image sarcasm that had cheered me on those gloomy days of self-will run riot.

Yet the unknown person of usual proud and erect posture slumping in the chair before me was no stranger, rather a fellow addict who for months had managed to help me grow in my recovery by reminding me of the importance of honesty; eased my own pain through empathy; re-emphasized that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel; and shared experience, strength, and hope as the old mental attitude of distrust was crushed by the growing bond of friendship based on recovery.

It's frustrating for me to attempt to relate to a normally sharp mind momentarily dulled by active addiction and accept my powerlessness. It hurts when I realize that I am not talking to the person I have grown to love and respect, but to a cunning and baffling alter-ego incapable of seeing past the fog of active addiction. It's hard not to start projecting and obsess over which of the three obvious paths of active addiction my friend will follow. Will it be jails? Institutions? Death?

But the biggest pain comes from the realization that active addiction can destroy the feelings of love, trust, empathy, happiness, and all those other previously unknown qualities, and as the feelings go, friendships end. The ties of recovery, caring, and sharing that bind us together no longer remain stronger than the active addiction that will tear us apart, leaving nothing behind but the memories of good times shared in recovery one day at a time the NA way.

I am fortunate that the past few 24 hours have left me with a lot of good memories, totally unlike those I can conjure up of the years of my active addiction---these old images gradually fade into oblivion. But the image of the walking death that carried my friend away last night will haunt me for a long, long time.



When you are on your knees...

Your back can't be up aganst

the wall.....



STEP-----PRINCIPLE

- 1-----HONESTY
- 2-----HOPE
- 3-----FAITH
- 4-----COURAGE
- 5-----INTEGRITY
- 6-----WILLINGNESS
- 7-----HUMILITY
- 8-----BROTHERLY LOVE
- 9-----DISCIPLINE
- 10-----PERSERVERANCE
- 11-----AWARENESS OF GOD
- 12-----SERVICE

"LUCKY TO BE ALIVE"

Look at me
 I habe been jailed
 I think about life
 Have I failed?

Look at this place
 You'd think Id be mad
 Well I'm alive today
 And for that I am glad.

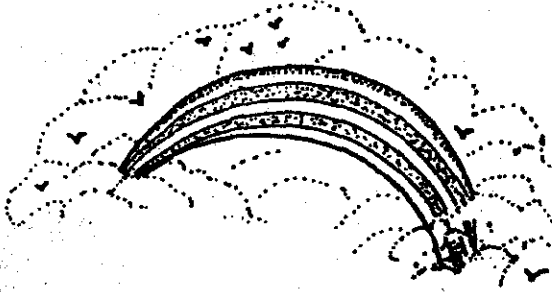
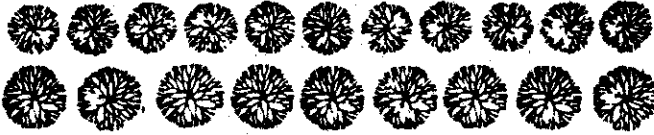
Hey, this isn't fun
 But it could've been much worse
 The next trup I took
 Might've been in a hearse!

Sure this is bad
 But I'm more fortunate than others
 I'm clean and serene today
 Thanks to my N.A. brothers!

They helped me get honest
 And gave me much hope
 But most important of all
 They helped me quit DOPE!"



ATTITUDES are CONTAGIOUS,
Is YOURS worth CATCHING?



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USE THIS FORM FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

NINETEEN

Here we go again. Try to do better this year. Thanks to Rick, Sheryl, Bo, John Karin, and our subscribers. This would not be possible without the help from H.P. and the staff of the RAINBOW CONNECTION.

"THANKS AGAIN"

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALENDAR

4TH GEORGIA REGIONAL CONVENTION
"A Decade of Miracles"
Macon Hilton 108 1st Street
February 14-17th 1985
Registration:\$15 Banquet:\$20
Call:(912)741-7645 (912)746-4213
Mail to:GRCNA IV
P.O. Box 4362
Macon, GA 31201

CAROLINAS REGIONAL SERVICE
Committee Meeting
"Clean and Alive in '85"
Quality Inn in Charlotte, NC
January 25-27 1985
Registration:\$15 (Check To:
Greater Charlotte ASC)
Call: (704)537-9017
Mail: NA CONVENTION
5638 Amity Place
Charlotte, NC 28212

TWENTY

3RD LOUISIANA REGIONAL CONVENTION

Oak Manor Hotel - Baton Rouge LA
March 8-10th 1985

Registration:\$10 Package:\$35

Call:(504)675-8118 (504)275-2310

Mail: L.R.C.N.A. 111

P.O. Box 3713

Baton Rouge, LA 70821

3RD MID-AMERICA CONVENTION

"Growing Together"

Sheraton Inn - Skyland East

Tulsa Oklahoma

Registration:\$15 Banquet:\$11

Call:(417)781-6770 (918)835-6974

Mail: M.A.C.

P.O. BOX 2034

Tulsa, OK 74101

7TH ANNUAL NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

"A New Beginning"

Red Lion Motor Inn

Sacramento, CA

March 22-24, 1985

1ST ANNUAL ALASKAN CONVENTION

"Together it works"

Anchorage International Airport Inn

Registration:\$15 Banquet:\$25

Call:(907)346-3767 (907)562-5906

Mail: NA Regional Convention

423 Lynnwood Drive

Anchorage, AK 99502

