



No. 5 Oct./Nov. 1996

Autonomy My Ass

How would you feel if your new group after starting up, meeting for a while, discussing recovery, steps, and traditions, decided to fill out and send in a Group Registration to the WSO. No big deal so far, right, happens every day. Now how would you feel if the WSO called you back and told you NO!, your Group won't be registered. Well guess what, that just happened. A Group registration was sent in through normal channels, and the group's trusted servant received a phone call from the WSO and a lengthy conversation about refusing to register the Group. This was not a slip of the postage stamp, or a mistake.

The NA HOW Group is an e-mail group on the Internet, it fits every definition of what is a Group in our approved literature, it has 2 or more addicts (280+), meets regularly at a specific place and time (Wed. and Sun.) and follows the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous. This Group has members all over the world and for some of these addicts, it is the only NA available to them.

Granted this is a new media, but shouldn't the first reaction of our primary service center be to serve and register the Group, to include not exclude, then if there are problems ask the BOT or WSC for clarification?

Since this affects NA as a whole, it is time for loyal devoted NA members to ask a few questions.

Our structure is designed to receive guidance from members and Groups. Is the WSO acting by policy established by the fellowship through the WSC, or is this visible evidence of far reaching decisions being made by a group of people not directly responsible to the fellowship? Obviously a decision has been made by the WSO to not recognize certain Groups under certain circumstances, without asking the fellowship. This is a first in this area, never in the history of Narcotics Anonymous has the WSO turned down a Group registration. THEY DON'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO DO SO. How do you feel about a judgement call being made that affects NA as a whole, without asking anyone!!!! Do you want the WSO to be able to decide, on their own, who is and who is not a Group, that scares the hell out of me, will your Home Group get a call next saying you are not a Group anymore because you don't meet the new standards set without your knowledge. If a Group doesn't even have the autonomy to decide if it's a Group then we might as well strike the 4th Tradition altogether.

LET'S TELL IT LIKE IT IS

I am writing in response to an article that ran in your last issue entitled: "Keep your eye on the Black Jack." While I respect the right that everyone is entitled to their opinion, I believe we all have a responsibility to disseminate accurate information.

I am disturbed by the author's allegations toward the NA WAY OF LIFE literature project regarding the cost of the "work in progress" manuscripts. I have been active in the NA WAY OF LIFE book project since November, 1993 and the primary (possibly the sole) distributor of the manuscripts since March of 1994. The cost of the spiral bound books has ranged between \$10-12 for the past 3 years. The costs have varied depending on the number of pages which have ranged between 350-405 pages. The copy rates recently went up, but we were able to offset the increase by changing the font style and reducing the number of pages. When we have to ship the books, the cost is passed on to the buyer, as it should be. First class rate for one book is \$4.00 - book rate is \$2.50. The people who place their order decide how they want it shipped to them.

The author's insistence that people have paid \$30 for "70 ragged tractor-feed pages" is simply not true. It disturbs me more that NEW ATTITUDES would willingly print an article that its editorial board knew contained such erroneous information. You have a responsibility to your readership to publish the truth. Unless you make it clear that the opinions reflected within your newsletter's pages are strictly those of the author and do not represent the views of NEW ATTITUDES you are misleading members who read your paper. I would also suggest that personal attacks on individuals have no place in NA literature - whether fellowship approved or not.

Other subjects covered in the article (e.g. selling out to WSO, endorsing It Works: How and Why, etc.) are more subjective topics and acceptable material for discussion and debate. I can tell you that a thorough discussion and vote took place at the first NA WAY OF LIFE planning conference in Louisville, KY in January, 1995 regarding the purpose of this work. It was the unanimous decision of that body to adopt the NA Foundation charter. Under the terms of the charter, the NA WAY OF LIFE book will become an approved piece of NA literature. Should the Fellowship decide it does not want this book when it is submitted, there is no provision to publish it any other way. It just sits there until the Fellowship decides it wants it. Efforts to tie this work to one or two individuals are ludicrous. Hundreds have already participated in the writing and editing and we are far from finished. One of the conditions of submitting input, whether it's a line or a whole chapter, is that the individual gives up all rights to personal financial gain or editorial privileges. We invite and encourage all NA members to participate in this worthwhile effort, including those who disagree with us.

Our purpose is to create a completed work through 100% volunteer effort involving as many NA members as possible while incurring the least amount of cost to the Fellowship. So far we have been successful in our efforts and true to our purpose. Our vision is to further broaden our base of support at the grass roots level of NA so we can ensure that our writing is truly representative of the experiences that make up Narcotics Anonymous recovery.

New Attitudes...

We shall attempt to print all articles promoting a change in our intolerance and indifference towards spiritual principles. We seek any and all ideas for this publication to become a venue for change. All materials shall be printed in a spirit of anonymity.

We encourage the use of humor and lampoon to stimulate thought and levity. Our hope is to find ways to transgress the perceived separation that exists amongst members of our society.

ADDICTS ARE...

Much is written decrying active addiction as if it were some immoral, hateful state where nothing good ever happens and no human kindness is possible. The truth is not that cut and dried. Our very desire for recovery usually begins in the depths of despair, so the despairing state must allow for human goodness in some form. I'm glad you lived through to get clean at this point in your life. If you are reading this, that is proof off your desire

to help make the life we share better. Survival at our worst can be used to advance us at our best. This is a simple play on the often quoted program saying, "If I put half as much into my recovery as I did into my using, I have a good chance of staying clean." Addicts are not bad people, they suffer from a disease that takes control of their lives. Recovery is regaining that control with the help of a higher power.

CONSENSUS?

What a concept! Boy, are we in for a change in our services or what? Well we asked for it. New levels of surrender are just around the corner (maybe). Or is this something we will just talk about? Will we just seek levels of consensus, or will we seek total agreement before making decisions? Whole bunch of questions, who's got the answers? Hang on it's going to be an interesting ride.

As I look at the word consensus my mind took one of its usual twists.

CON-census, where we check to see how much con we have to a motion.

I have seen unanimity work at the Area level. Before a motion was brought to the floor a discussion period took place. This began with a straw-poll of votes to see what our level of agreement was. We then knew who was in favor and who opposed. We used the method that we needed to hear mainly from those opposed to the idea. By listening and finding out their objections we could always find a way to change the wording of the motion so that all could agree.

You're right, it took more time to do this. The best thing about it is that there were then no winners or losers. We made decisions that everyone could support. There was a feeling of togetherness that I haven't felt in other places in service. It seems that there are few decision that we make that would require an immediate solution. Taking the time has its advantages.

When everyone is right we have come closer to something we strive for. We will still reach conclusions based on wrong information and strong personalities. The longer time frame used to reach total agreement allows for us to ask God into the process more than we do. Time well spent IF you can agree to try it.

11th Tradition?

(Excerpt from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Aug 31.1996 Article titled "Narcotics Anonymous World Conventioneers Find 'Life After Drugs'")

This is the one time that the fellowship really gets together to celebrate what we've found individually through our own recoveries," said George Hollahan, co-executive director of the group.

There are several very large groups that use consensus. There are also several that use level of consensus. It would seem that this would depend on the need for expediency. It also may be needed when those gathering do not have the surrender to find total agreement. Levels of consensus can be used to put levels of demand on the working body.

75% do it now

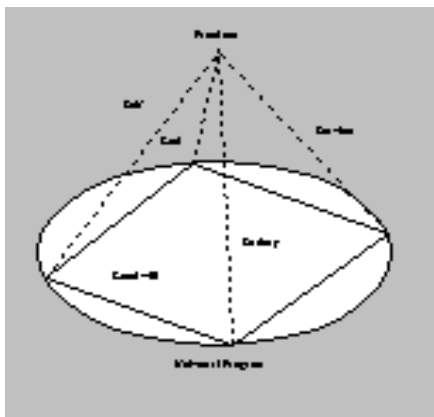
66% needs help, but lets get to it soon

51% something missing, we need to look at this closer

Have we reached a point spiritually that we can strive for unanimity at the expense of getting what we want when we want it? At all levels consensus would seem to be the thing we strive for. Seems that it will take the best of our spirits to find the peace needed to not always to have to be right.

Good idea, lets get on with it. All those not in favor...

Special Interests?



As a gay man I was doubtful that I would find acceptance in the program. My fears were fueled by the apparent abundance of "Red Necked" addicts that I encountered. Today I found that my initial perceptions were truly a fallacy. There is no place I have found such love as I have found in NA.

Now I hear that others of my lifestyle have had to create special interest meetings and go outside of our fellowship to find identification with a group. To me that is the most unrealistic line of separatist B.S. I have ever heard This is a program that works if you want it

too!

Now if an ex-go-go boy-cum-hooker, cum drag queen, can find acceptance and love in BFE, why can't the rest of the "sisters" out there. Recovery is not about social acceptability, relationships, or one night stands, but about changing our lives from the insanity of addiction.

Price Increase !!!!!

Hi all, I got some bad news, my copy machine puked, and I now have to go to the printer to have the newsletter done :(

So that means that the newsletter costs just went up 1 cent a page x 4 pages = 4 cents a paper x 6 issues = 24 cents a year, so the new subscription rate is \$3.84 a year. All current subscriptions are OK, but all new ones will be at the new rate. Sorry.

Please understand that I have nothing against special interest meetings or social activity amongst peers, in fact I think it's important. But recovery is like a blow-job, if you're gonna take the time to suck you might as well swallow. Remember NA has no divas or prom queen wanna be princess contests. We're here to save our collective asses from jails, institutions, and death. So if your program leads you solely to selected meetings and other sources, it's because you're not serious about change. It also means that your bitch about feeling separate from or unaccepted is your own fault. Get with it girlfriends a gay martyr is not a pretty thing. Think about it, pray about it, and hug a red neck. Who knows when, where, or why acceptance comes. Besides somebody has to show them how to dress.

This Newsletter is being provided to any and all interested members of N.A. at COST please feel free to copy and give out as many of these as you like. We will be printing bi-monthly. Our cost is \$0.64 (includes postage) each so 1 yr, subscription would be \$3.84 (.64x6) Please send articles and newsletter money to:

New Attitudes
P O Box 447
Vestaburg MI 48891

please make checks payable to: "New Attitudes/I Can't We Can"

[e-mail: frbeetz@nethawk.com](mailto:frbeetz@nethawk.com)

P.S. We also deal in the barter system if you would like to send supplies instead of \$, we need stamps, paper (#20 8 1/2 x 11), ink cartridges for Lexmark WinWriter 150C.

BACK TO BASICS

- *Beaver Valley ASC Newsletter article kit: a pen, a higher power and blank piece of paper!* -

Please pray to be used as an instrument and share in writing what you might otherwise say in a meeting. That's all there is to it.

NA History

The truth is that N.A. was not created by an single person or single group of persons.

NA evolved from many people over time from many places. While NA started many times and many ways, each attempt added something to the whole and we grew painfully, step by step. We need to remember this pain lest we have to repeat it!

When confronted with the clean life for the first time, everything is bright, shining and clear - the "new" effect is upon us. Touchy, feeley stuff may seem unreliable and may remind us of our disease. We are doing mental and spiritual push-ups - going to meetings, reading the literature and beginning our journey with the 12 Steps. We still don't know quite how far to feel before we think, or to think before we feel. They are *both* valid and important ways of perceiving our environment.

Lots of times, on the mental plane, we want neat packages of information. Anything not finished and certain is subject to later revision that may contravene what we learned the first time. So, we are sometimes reasonably willing to wait to avoid the confusion. As far as NA history goes, the one thing we probably all agree on is we don't want to wait until there are no more meetings until we study the overview. the second thing that almost any informed member will agree to is that we are still grappling with the basics of our recovery program. The hugeness of the fact that taking away the drugs doesn't take away the addiction is a scary fact. Taking away the drugs interrupts our addiction and may force it to take new forms if we don't go back to using, but the addiction is there, complete and whole, waiting to be satisfied or plugged into another socket. We don't direct our newcomer to this scary reality, it is more important to concentrate on working our steps. In the end, spiritual growth and personality change is our answer. We engage both when we stop using and start meetings. We continue the recovery process by stopping things that make us feel bad while starting things that make us feel happy and alive.

To satisfy the human need to know, certain names will come up more than once. These people worked their steps and got to know others until they began to exhibit certain principles and this is why they are remembered. There is a list of nevers to avoid:

1. It has never helped us to have a vote rigged to get a motion carried. There is a point of logic here that may need to be pointed up. In an awakened community, an illogical motion would have no force because it would immediately be challenged and unless there was a good reason, it would be discounted. In a community that has been put to sleep, there is no challenge no matter how onerous or non-sensical the rule or policy.
2. It has never helped us to have limited, selected or incomplete information presented to members who will be voting on an issue of importance. Several things go wrong at once. The vote will not usually enjoy the full support of informed members, by definition. Also, the voting members may have some or all of their confidence in themselves and in their system shaken when they did nothing wrong and there was nothing wrong with the

system except for the person or group who knowingly withheld information. Actually, this is only a form of manipulation. If there is any advantage to the person or persons abusing their positions of trust, surely this gain is offset by the personal price paid for being dishonest.

3. It has never helped for a few members to decide in advance what members need to know and what could be left out of a report. While common in business and corporate work, this fails in organizations of a religious or spiritual nature. We need to have the full support of our membership for NA to be alive and working. We can't say we are free on one hand and have bosses on the other. Where there is a high information level, we have seen each member playing different roles together to help cover all the bases. Without this high information level, the system becomes dependent on doing what informed or skilled persons tell us to do and this lessens the spirituality.

4. It has always hurt us to hold up, adulterate or minimize distribution of minutes and other important reports. It is generally better to get as much out as soon as possible so that more members will read it, become more informed by it and find ways to help more often. Remember, we are not rewarded when we know more than our fellows in a spiritual program. We do what we can to create the clean crowd of informed, healthy, non-competitive people we safely become anonymous within our associations.

Gordy

He was the kind of man that you might get to know once in a lifetime - if you're lucky. I met him fourteen years ago and something in Gordy attracted me. When I met him, he had almost 34 years of continuous sobriety and I, less than 60 days. From the moment I met him until a couple days before his passing, he always made me feel that I was a special part of his life. He made everyone feel that way.

While Gordy was a dedicated member of AA and I was destined to follow another path of recovery, it never hindered our relationship. When I got clean, there were two Narcotics Anonymous meetings a week in my home town. We were working very hard to carry the message to make the local fellowship grow. I used to think that Gordy could often relate to our struggles better because when he got clean in 1948, the local AA fellowship was also small and struggling. When I became discouraged or impatient, Gordy would remind me that I was responsible for the footwork and NA would grow in God's time. Always the visionary, Gordy would tell those of us in Narcotics Anonymous and his fellow AA members, "You know, great things are happening in NA and I think one day it will be bigger than AA."



We are not bigger than AA today, but in part due to Gordy's encouragement and support, NA has grown to over 80 meetings a week in this town of 140,000 people. To the best of our knowledge, that is the most Narcotics Anonymous

meetings per week, per capita, of any city in the world. While Gordy was one of our biggest cheerleaders, he only attended two NA meetings - to hear me tell my story. In the past 13 years I have attended only two AA meetings - his 40th anniversary and once to hear him speak. The lesson I learned from him was that we can continue to follow our own path of Truth, while enthusiastically encouraging someone else to find their own path, even if it is different from our own.

He was not as comfortable making bureaucratic decisions to help an organization (structured service) as he was making personal contacts with people. He would later say in his own humble way, that he left that work to people smarter and more talented than himself. I think God had a higher calling for him. Whether going through the crowd at church hugging and shaking hands with other members or standing near the door of an AA meeting with one hand outstretched and a cup of coffee in the other to welcome everyone who came through the door, Gordy was the smiling ambassador of God's love.

When talking about his long term active membership in AA, Gordy was often heard to say, "What nobler purpose in life could we have than to alleviate human suffering."

One of his most memorable quotes was explaining how he judged a person's merit: He said, "In AA and NA we don't measure success by all that we've achieved or acquired, but by how much we've overcome."

While Gordy's physical presence is gone, his spiritual presence remains. Whenever I think about how much of my ego can be overcome I will think of Gordy. When I think of those virtues: Kindness, patience, humility, and gentleness of spirit - I picture him.

When faced with life's decisions for these past fourteen years I have and I will continue to use him as my benchmark. I ask myself, "What would Gordy do in this situation?"

In Narcotics Anonymous we have a third step prayer that says:

"God, take my will and my life.

Show me how to live."

I would add to that a prayer of thanks:

"God, thank you for giving us Gordy C.

He has been your servant and our guide for many years.

You have shown us, through his example, how to live."

WE'RE ALL HERE BECAUSE OF SERVICE

Whether it is group service, personal service or some other form of service, we all heard about NA somewhere, were given a meeting schedule and directed to a meeting of NA somewhere. The actions undertaken by other people that resulted in our making it to a meeting are what we call service. This is done selflessly and can in time become something approximating a meaningless ritual. As new people get clean and learn to avoid some of the aspects of NA that place demands on individuals that may feel like burdens in our 'ordinary' addict state of mind. Once we do them, we often say, "Gosh, that was fun. I didn't know I could do that. It helped me become a better person. Is that what you people were talking about? Changing from a self-centered, troubled person into an open giving person who can live life on life's terms?"

For me, personal service is the highest and most important form of service and none of the other forms of service make any sense without personal service. Personal service is the individual acts of caring and sharing we all do to make the new comer welcome and to uphold our NA way of doing things through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It reflects the acts of people who are able to surrender to the fact of their addiction, seek the care of a higher power, undertake to remove character defects that hold them back in their lives and expand their lives from the inside out through the rest of a set of spiritual principles. While there are rewards for service, it should never be undertaken for the sake of those rewards unless we are willing to run the risk of missing the point of the whole thing. We HAVE to get over our negative selfishness if we expect to gain the happiness and peace of mind we seek.

Our area service committee is in trouble. For years now members have accumulated periodic disappointments, lack of spirit and enthusiasm, mishaps in World Service, upsets in group dynamics onto the monthly ceremony of 'going to the area circus' committee meeting. For all the pains and joys of self-government, we all know life is what you make of it and our recovery tools will work in this part of our lives *if we apply them*. Now, this can be a big if. If we are not careful, we will let a trend to let the other guy do it for us get so out of hand that everybody is criticizing someone else for doing absolutely nothing. See? Somebody has to do it.

Personally, I know a lot of things that work in service and restructuring but first there has to be agreement that there is a problem and a call for help has to go out. This is that call for help, as far as most of you are concerned. WE have come a long way in Beaver Valley. NA is much more of a household name now than it used to be and without many exceptions, we have earned a good reputation. No one has ever thought we have a easy row to hoe.

Good advice has already been shared about mail pieces and phone calls so those of you who serve groups will be contacted. But this appeal is made to all members in good standing of NA who know the need and want to help. It can only get better if you set your minds and hearts to making it better. We can do together what none of us can do alone. Please don't miss your opportunity to support this important combined effort. We can make it better here.

WHERE DOES THE GOOD STUFF COME FROM?

For NA to exist as a program and withstand the constant assault new options in our rapidly expanding world, it must be pretty damn attractive. What is it that gives NA its bright spirit and ongoing resilience? What is attractive after the immediate pain and suffering is relieved?

One of the first great unifiers in NA is the death and funeral of a member who thinks they can use again. For whatever reason, and by whatever route, they get high and having gotten high, they think, "Well, if I'm gonna relapse, it might as well be a good one!" Too late, they find themselves in a life threatening situation moments before they die and then they can't go back. They can't go anywhere. They are going to die. Sometimes, somebody else dies and that may motivate them to practice living, not dying.

The second is when we get so out of line with the way others are walking the paths of life that we start crossing lines. Eventually, someone grabs us by the elbow and takes us to a series of little rooms where we are fed and asked to think about it. We have lots of time to think. Sometimes it may seem like we have too much time, but then time is a blessing, in its own way.

Third, is the periodic retirement centers that strangers set up for us when we can no longer take care of ourselves. Usually, with no more than a few casual chemical restraints, and mostly our exhaustion to keep us in the chair, again, we are given time to think about it. Usually, there is much discussion in these situations that are supposed to help "get us going, again." Usually, these discussions are led by someone who doesn't really understand that what happened was we wanted to use more than we wanted to stay clean. Which brings us back to our topic.

While some members are destined to walk the paths referenced in the paragraphs above, there are many others who are able to stay clean on a daily basis and who succeed in somehow growing spiritually. These people may not be as bright as we are and some are downright deficient but they all have one thing in common: *they bring the NA dream of hope and recovery alive*. Living testaments to the truth and reality of our growing way of life, these are the people who care about you and will sit at your funeral, along with

family members and any friends you haven't run off yet. Of they will come see you in jail, and perhaps bring a meeting to you. They will do something even the largest and best equipped hospital cannot do: they will set up a regular weekly NA meeting just for you. Because they care - and they are grateful. While others are busy at their self-prescribed necessities, they will call and visit, write and come see you...

Beyond this living, loving horizon, many addicts get creative and venture forth to see and do things they never allowed themselves in active addiction. They go to Niagra Falls with a friend or in a group. They check out Sea World and many of the other beautiful, fun places to go. They check out the library and museums and generally spend time with one another. They become regulars at different conventions around the country and all these things start putting good memories and positive interaction where before we had only desolation and pain. It takes a lot of love and caring to keep our NA world going and I think it is beautiful that we are each presented with opportunities to put in exactly what we value most in others. If we value patience, we are able to be patient. If we value courage, we are able to be courageous. If we value insight fullness, we are able to be insightful. We each put these things into NA and that is where the good things come from.

NEW ATTITUDES
P O BOX 447
VESTABURG MI 48891