



No. 19 March/April 99

Greg Pierce

1947 - 1999

From the editor:

Someone wrote, "The light of recovery dimmed for a moment". That simple line pretty well expressed my feelings when I found out that Greg had died. At first I cried, then as I meditated about the value of what is really important versus what I get caught up in from day to day, I found some peace that somehow seemed to be lacking lately.

In the history N.A. we are sometimes as a loss over where to place our finger and say, "This is where NA as we know it started." The argument can be made that it started with Greg. Greg was the first person that dedicated his life to NA and only NA as a twelve step program of recovery.

Greg's commitment to NA still touches our lives daily. Our service structure, our understanding of the Traditions, and even our Basic Text may not have been born without Greg. When you read out of our literature at a meeting, there is a good chance you are reading something Greg wrote.

He will surely be missed, yet he leaves a legacy of service and commitment to NA that we have been given to grow with - where do we go from here?

This issue of New Attitudes is dedicated to Greg's memory.



With

Great Respect

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.

Dear Friends, I am a grateful recovering addict named

In February my Dad passed away after a six-month ordeal with both pancreatic and liver cancers. I was sad, but in a way I was also relieved for him, that his long suffering was over.

Only a matter of weeks later, I heard that my sponsor, Greg Pierce, had also been diagnosed with liver cancer. Once I got over the initial shock, I called him, offered my love and support, and prepared a package of alternate healing information and nutrients for him, which he promised to look

into.

Last Thursday morning, I got a phone call from my friend Jack.

He said that sadly, Greg had died suddenly that morning. The disease had progressed with incredible swiftness, causing his internal organs to fail. I was stunned, though in an odd way, not surprised. And having been through my father's painful last six months, I was once again, in a way, relieved that Greg had not had to endure that long ordeal of suffering.

I found myself feeling a mixture of sadness, appreciation, love and regret. I regretted not having called Greg more frequently; but of course how could I know that he would be gone so soon and so suddenly? I regretted not having expressed my love, admiration and gratitude to him more often and more directly. But I think he knew; and I also realized that he didn't sponsor me for gratification or recognition, but rather out of love. I have made peace with the loss of a wonderful man, and I wish to share a few words about him:

Greg had about 28 years clean; that's about twice my clean time.

It is hard to find many people to say that about in NA. Yet. Greg got clean in LA when there was hardly any NA outside Southern California. He found a tiny fellowship; and as he always said, he "bet his life" on NA. Greg quickly got involved in service; he wrote the NA Tree, our first service manual; he wrote virtually the entire Traditions chapter in the Basic Text; and he chaired the first World Service Conference. Greg was also, for a time, the chairman of the World Board of Trustees.

Maybe the most significant contribution Greg made was to encourage, shepherd, and perhaps serve as "godfather" to the effort for the writing and development of our Basic Text. Had Greg not been there to champion the project, it could not have borne fruit at that time. (Greg's story appears both in the Little White Book and in the Basic Text book 2, Chapter 35: "I Was Different." If you've heard him speak, you'll recognize his story of showing up for his first meeting in a 3-piece black suit and tie!) The modesty of the story doesn't hint at the greater contribution he was making to the Basic Text.

Circumstances brought Greg first to Georgia, then to Tennessee.

For some years he was the director of treatment for a juvenile facility for the state of Tennessee, and was much loved and respected for his work. He expressed his love and gratitude for his loyal and loving wife and kids.

Through all his journeys and trials, Greg never stopped loving and serving Narcotics Anonymous, and caring deeply about his fellow addicts. In a fellowship of bright people, he was outstandingly intelligent, yet always down to earth and approachable. He traveled internationally as one of NA's finest speakers; sponsored 20 addicts; collected an archive of NA material that may only be rivaled by WSO's collection; and in spite of all these accomplishments and the love and admiration of thousands, he remained humble, kindly, God-centered and gentle-natured.

Even though NA so often departed from his vision of a fellowship fully guided by spiritual principles, Greg continually offered principle-based rather than personality-based suggestions and corrections to the problems he saw. He was one of the best listeners I ever met. He never sought to control, "rule, censor, decide or dictate." His level of acceptance, even in the face of a terminal illness, was cool, and sometimes uncanny.

Greg P. was one of those rare sponsors: living the program, still in love with NA after all these years, the kind of man you want to emulate as well as admire. It was an honor to know him. I will miss him. I am consoled by the knowledge that he is now on an even better journey. I wish him well "in his new edition, with a brand new binding, and a very encouraging Foreword by the Author!"

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P.S. We also deal in the barter system if you would like to send supplies instead of \$, we need stamps, paper (#20 8 ½ x11), ink cartridges for Lexmark WinWriter 150C.

Grizzly Bear

Tears do not come easily nor very often for me. Well, they are here now! The passing of Greg Pierce is a loss to both N.A. and myself personally. For over ten years Greg has been my Sponsor, Confidant, Guide and Spiritual Mentor. With few exceptions, every Monday night I would call and "check-in with Spons." This was my commitment to an active sponsor/sponsee relationship. With each call I made written notes and today I am looking at a pile of pads and journal books with entries dating back to October, 1988. Now he won't be there.

When I asked Greg to be my sponsor I was mostly unaware of Greg's extensive contributions to Narcotics Anonymous. What I knew is that Greg was like the proverbial Eskimo who was often at the events and places my recovery and service took me. Greg was able to answer my questions and explain things better than anyone else. I started calling once in a while and at a WSO workshop in Atlanta formally talked about sponsorship and made it "official". We built our relationship on trust and understanding of spiritual principals. As he showed me his originals of the N.A. Tree, The Triangle of Self Obsession, Living The Program and parts of the Basic Text; I then became familiar with the Greg Pierce others knew. Anytime Greg came within 200 miles, I would go see him.

When he was a Trustee, the BOT met every other month, mostly in Van Nuys. A favorite routine of ours was to have dinner at Hamburger Hamlet/Heaven and enjoy the Lobster Bisque. I remember the night Bob Stone was fired we had Sushi with Stretch (non-addict Trustee). Other visits included excursions to locations from Greg's childhood in L.A. and sites notable in the early N.A. Fellowship. Greg introduced me to Vedanta and took me to the Ashram in La Cresenta where Jimmy K's. memorial service was held. Other sites included Jimmy K's house, the 1953 Dad's Club property where the first stand alone meeting was established, the house where the original NA committee formed, the original Survivor's Club, the Moorpark meeting place, Greg's original homegroup on Gower in Hollywood and others. Copies of Greg's extensive NA archive material have graced mine and many others NA history workshops.

One time Greg visited my home when I lived in Oceanside and we visited the widow of his first sponsor, Don Z. Another time, Greg stayed at my place in San Diego and spoke at the Baja California Convention. My visits to Greg's abodes

included the apartment in Atlanta and the house in the cowfield in Greeneville, Tenn. One of my favorite photos of Greg was taken in Atlanta around 1990. Sitting in his Rover, smiling out the side window -- he looks just like a grizzly bear, and that became my nickname for him. In the near future I'll be seeing Acorn Hill where he was hoping to build a new chapter in his saga. Greg collected rocks and it always amazed me how he would pack-up and setup the many glass cabinets with his extensive collection. The last time I saw Greg in person was at WCNA-26 in Saint Louis. Greg and Lois shared a hotel suite with me and my (now) ex. I was glad for the private time with him then since it was the last time we hugged.

When I spoke with Greg four days ago (Monday 26 Apr. '99) he sounded like he believed he had weathered the storm and was past the worst of it. Last night when I spoke with Lois, his loving wife, things had changed dramatically. Part of me is grateful that Greg was not in a lot of physical pain, the other part of me insists that it was not Greg's time yet. Talk about bewildered, confused and not knowing what to do!

Yes I accept God's will, though understanding takes me a lot longer.

This was neither a case of casualty nor random accident. To his credit, Greg had calmed earlier fears and was truly looking forward to a new era of creativity and fulfillment of dreams. This will take a while to sort out and in my heart, I know it should be Greg doing the sorting, not anyone else.

Very rarely has one person touched and inspired the lives of so many people. My recovery and my daily living owe much to Greg. For many of us, Greg is a true Hero of N.A. My guiding light has now become an angel. Best wishes. Farewell. I WILL MISS HIM.

Greg Pierce's Last Talk

April 17, 1999

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

"My name's Greg and I'm an addict. We all going around, around, around and around? <chuckles> " (talking about cassette recorders)

"Well alright. Umm, I'm real glad to be here to help you celebrate your anniversary, and I'm tickled to death that we have so many new members, Because I very strongly believe that the newcomer is the lifeblood of this institution, the lifeblood of this...thing we call Narcotics Anonymous. The lifeblood of this society, whatever you want to call it. Umm, for those of you who are new, you can probably discount about ninety percent of what you learn. I believe that recovery over a period of time is a process of simplification. We learn a lot of stuff about recovery, you'll come in here, and you'll do worksheets, you'll read books, you'll talk to this person, you'll talk to that person, you'll get sponsors, if you can stick with the basics you have a chance. It's real easy to get lost in all the.. the gimmicks. We have a brand new set of wonderful step writing guides- but you can work them diligently, and they won't help you stay clean. We have a Basic Text-you can read it every day, and it won't help you stay clean. We have a book called It Works How and Why that gives you lots of information about the steps, and the traditions. You can learn it perfect, and it won't help you stay clean. It's what you do with that information. It's the way you take that information from all sources and apply it to your daily living and use it to find this thing called recovery. And recovery's a very precious gift.

Umm, this is liable to be an interesting talk tonight. Umm, because in the last couple of months I found out that I have cancer of the liver and uh, I don't feel real good, but you see I'm an NA member and the day I found out I had cancer of the liver, I called my sponsor and went to a meeting. That's what NA members do! That's part of how this program works. We don't isolate. We don't hide. We don't disappear into the woodwork when things get tough. We reach out to the fellowship. We reach out to our sponsors, we reach out to our meetings, we reach out to those around us that we've come to learn to love and depend on. Umm, that's a big part about how this works. This is a place where we take turns saving each other's lives. And you know, the people that come after you that you meet in recovery-treat them real well, cause you never know when your life's gonna depend on 'em. And you'll meet people that come after you-even though there were... it seems like a whole bunch of brand new people here-stay clean.... hang around-give this thing a chance-keep the faith. There's something very special happening here.

You know some of you who introduced themselves as being new have probably been here before. Some of you have probably never been here before. Ah.. give yourself a break. Try this way of living- what have you got to lose? If you're like me-you don't have much to lose. If you're like me-you didn't get here 'cause things were going good in your life. Those of you who are here for your first meetings-you know-I know where you lived-it's called Hell. 'Cause that's where NA is-go to Hell, and turn left. That's NA. You're not here because you're good at holdin' down a job. You're not here because you're good at stayin' out of trouble, you're not here because you have successful relationships. You're not here uh, because you're uh, you know the candidate for poster child of mental health. You're here for the same reason that I'm here. You're here because you're none of those things. You're here because you're in a trap... that you can't get out of by yourself. And despite all the things you've tried, you're still in that trap. In other words, In desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous. In desperation we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous. And it doesn't make any sense. Doesn't make sense that we can get together, a bunch of losers, and anybody'd stay clean. But we do.

You know I've seen NA grow from 20 meetings to 40,000 meetings. I don't even know how many there are now-that's a guess-maybe more than that. I've seen NA meetings grow from perhaps uh 150-200 people attending, and maybe a quarter that many involved, uh, to look around the room-there's as many people here tonight as were in NA when I got clean. And here we're in Winston Salem, North Carolina of all places. The birthday of a group-all together. You know what-there's another meeting in Bombay isn't there. And there's one in Denmark-I had the opportunity to speak not too long ago in Denmark. There were 900 NA members from Denmark there. 900! Members from Denmark!! You know I didn't know when we had one from Arizona, or one from Carolina, or one from New Jersey. There were times when there weren't any anywhere. Umm, we got people staying clean living this way of life all over the country. And there's power here-there's

miracles here-there's magic here, if you will. But it isn't going to work unless you let go, and let it work.

One of the things I've learned over the last Twenty- eight years is there is no substitute for surrender. If you want this thing to work-you're going to have to give up. You're going to have to give up being a dope fiend, you're going to have to let.. give up you know being hip slick and cool. You're going to have to give up standing on the corner. You're going to have to give up all those things that sometimes seem so attractive when you're not hurtin' too bad. And reach out for help. First of all to an NA member, second of all to a loving God. There is no substitute for surrender. There is no therapist that you can go to that's gonna make everything OK. There is no church you can go to that's going to fix your addiction. There is no book with all the magic answers in it. There is no medicine that'll take care of your addiction.

When I say my names Greg and I'm an addict it means three things and they're very simple. Number one when I put drugs in my body, I lose the ability to control how they react in my body. I lose the ability to predict where they're going to

take me. Number two I have a tendency to get strung out on anything. I'll take wonderful things and make them self-destructive. You know-its reading-I got a book- I didn't read it much on the way down-'Cause I wasn't feeling all that well I was catnapping in the car most of the way. I love to read! I didn't read before I got clean. But I've learned it's a great escape. But you know what? If I pick up a book and get into it, I may.. might have to finish it before I set it down. Now I might be able to set it down, in the meantime, but I have no way to determine that. I'll get strung out on all kinds of weird stuff. And thirdly, when I say that I'm an addict it means that I carry this spiritual illness that separates me from you. Separates me from every other human being. It separates me from God, it separates me from life and reality.And uh, that's difficult. You know we know what it's like to be alone. One of the things I remember before coming to NA was the loneliness of addiction. The loneliness-even when you're in a room full of people. And some of you sitting here tonight, in a room full of people, are about as lonely as you can stand. Nobody knows it, cause you haven't let anybody in- cause you're afraid. Cause of all these things.

I came around the program-Now I did what pretty much what we do-I mean there aren't a lot of different ways, we think we got some unique handle on how we do this program, but there's not. And I come around here and the first thing that happens is I start going to meetings and I stop using and you know it's kinda like I start getting high offa not being high. It's almost like not using nothing's a new drug. And then after a while I'm going to these meetings, and I'm listening to what people are reading and all this stuff-You know I kinda memorized that stuff. Couldn't read very well. And I know people who've come around to NA without being able to read at all, who learn to read by listening to the readings in the meetings. Again and again and again and again and hearing them, and seeing them at the same time. If you have a problem with reading, get yourself a little white booklet, and as the readings are being read, follow along with it. And that can teach you how to read. It's taught a many, many people how to read. Um, you don't have to talk to anybody about having a reading problem-lot of us have reading problems. But read along-learn the words.

And at ninety days, I had all the answers. I had 'em all! I had this shit down. I'd tell ya-ask me any questions-ask me a question-just go ahead.. I'll tell ya. And I'd spout this stuff about the "Therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. I didn't have any idea about what I was talking about. Or I'd say something like, "there's one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles." Do you think at ninety days I had any idea what that meant? It sounded good-you know-it made me feel like part of-and people would accept me-they'd pat me on the back saying Oh you're doing good-but the reality is I didn't know-I didn't have a clue-I just memorized the words! And I thought I had all the answers-you know the funny part about it is I did have all the

answers-I just didn't know which were which-and which went with the which questions. You know or what they meant or how I could use them in my daily living- that's the biggie.

Our twelfth step says, "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and practice these principles in all our affairs." And I'm big into practice these principles in all our affairs. You know once you find out about how this program works, start using it in your life! In every area of your life. You know, don't withhold anything. Don't reserve anything. You know reservations are the kind of the things I told God "Hey God I'll handle this one, you just leave me alone. I can take care of it, I can handle it." And I'm in trouble. Cause I can no more handle my life than the man in the moon. You know, if I could handle my life, I sure wouldn't end up sitting up here in front of you guys with cancer-I'd be bouncing around the room you know-finger poppin' talking long shit. But I'm here tonight because I'm an NA member. I'm here tonight because this is part of how I live. This is as much about a part of the way I live as uh, turning my will and my life over to the care of God. Or writing an inventory, or making amends or any of the other things the program teaches me to work.

Over the years, Our programs change, you know I got to that point where I was talking about knowing all the answers-and that only lasted about a month before the roof caved in. You know the big blue bird of feelings flew over and took a healthy dump and I figured out oh this is why I used. And I had no way to cope with those feelings-I had no way to cope. And what'd I do? I turned to the program. And I can remember at six months going Oh my God it's not the drugs. Cause I thought drugs were the problem. I really thought the drugs were the problem. And had you asked me I would've told you I was powerless over heroin and it had fucked up my life. And that's what the first step said. But that's not what the first step says. The first step says we're powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

And again addiction is a three fold disease-it's physical, and that has to do with the drugs that we used, but its also mental and spiritual. And my experience is the mental part and the spiritual part are much more devastating and much more far reaching than the physical part of our disease. Now once we clean up and kick a habit, the physical has pretty much taken care of itself. The mental and spiritual aspects of our disease continue throughout our recovery. The potential for the physical continues on for our recovery. But in reality the mental and spiritual aspects are things that you'll have to deal with all your life. And again the tendency we have to get strung out on anything, take wonderful things and make them self-destructive.

And number two, lack of faith, lack of hope, lack of trust, inability to <not sure>, self obsession, low self-esteem. Those things are things that we have to cope with on through time, and things that I have to struggle with today. The most difficult thing in my life today is the third step. The most difficult thing in my life today is the third step. To really make that decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand him.

As I continued, and approached a year I got into the what they call the birthday crazies, where just before a year where, where, you're into sabotage, you know? Oh my God I'm a sick man another three weeks I'll have a year and I'll have made it, what'll I do now? How can I, how can I wreck this? Or just after a year when you're going, <whew> boy I'm glad I

made that, now I can get back to looking like a real person. The reality is that I've been looking like a real person. You know, or the step that happens at eighteen months, when we find ourselves bored with the program and it says it in the white booklet we get tired of repeating our new practices or that, uh, that sometimes in those times are when the greatest changes take place within.

Um, I'd get tired of this. I you know, I'd discovered that there were other things to do other than go to meetings. I mean, I found Star Trek on the TV, I found books, I found hobbies, I found things I

enjoyed doing, I thought, I found things that were fun. Certainly not a whole lot more, certainly a whole lot more fun than listening to you guys. You know we come in here, you know meetings don't change too much, from day to day, year to year, you know every once in a while there's something spectacular that happens, but basically year in year out, people say pretty much the same things. Newcomers ask the same questions, people's responses to those questions are pretty much the same, you know, uh, and it's not a thrilling existence, it's not, you know the thrilling part comes in watching someone's eyes, the thrilling part comes when you're talking with someone after a meeting, and you can see a change take place. See someone begin to live, where once they were dying. That's the thrilling part. The thrilling part's at a convention, uh when you finally, something clicks. You're going Oh WOW now I understand that! Or at someone's house, becoming a part of someone's life. Those are the thrills of Narcotics Anonymous.

You know, NA to me is not about an hour, an hour and a half in the evening. An hour, an hour and a half in the evening are fine, but NA's so much more than that. It's a way of living. You either live this way or you don't live this way-it's ok if you don't. It's ok if you don't. Ah, I've had to give people permission to reject this way of life. Because, uh, you know the reality is that some do, and it hurts when you care a lot about 'em.

We're not in recovery in isolation, we affect each other's lives. And when someone you've cared about, and you've spent time with, and you've invested your spirit with, goes out, it hurts. I can remember saying um, God, -please don't let me love another addict, cause it hurts too bad when they leave. And you know what-that isn't the answer either. That was too much like the death I had using, not being able to care about anybody.

At three years I found myself in a situation where uh it seemed like all the things I'd used to try to fix myself quit working, substitution quit working. And uh, I was in trouble, and I had to dive into the program on a new level. At four and a half years it seemed like the program quit working. The things you taught me about NA, um the gimmicks; the write the inventory, the call your sponsors, the work with your newcomer, all those things seemed to quit working. And I had to get right with my Higher Power, I had to come out with a new relationship with God. I had to turn my recovery over to the care of God as I understood him. I couldn't just turn the symptoms over. I had to turn the real deal over. I had to work the third step for the first time. For real. My understanding of the steps has changed over time. You know like I told you about the first step, I originally thought that meant, that that you know that I admit that I am powerless over heroin, that it had screwed up my life- that was obvious. But um I've come to believe in this three fold disease.

Perhaps the most change has come in the second step. Particularly in the last few years. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. And I thought originally that meant I'd come to believe that God could fix me. You know maybe God can fix me. But I don't think that's what the step says. I had to look at this idea sanity and what did that really mean. And I went back to the simple stuff-a person who is sane is a person who is in touch with reality. A person who is insane is someone who is out of touch with reality. And what's reality, ultimately reality is God-the universe, all things. So, my second step changed to where I come to believe that a process-these twelve steps-can put me back in touch with reality, can restore my spirituality, and restore my relationship with God. And that's really changed all the rest of the steps.

I used to think the third step was about making a commitment, and saying the words-they had a third step prayer I used to repeat. It was a really good prayer. Um today, my third step is about trying to live life, as if I really believed there was a loving God trying to take care of me. I mean, what if there really was!? What if there really is someone taking care of you? And it's ok to risk living. What if there really is a loving god out there working for you and you don't have to try to control all this shit? And you don't have to try to make the unmanageable turn out the way you want it. What if?? It'd be a different world, wouldn't it? I know it's been a different world for me when I can believe that.

The fourth step instead of being show and tell you know has been a matter of really taking a look at who I am, and seeing the ways that I've separated myself from God. You see and those things that I've done throughout my recovery that keep me from growing spiritually-the patterns I've fallen into, the mistakes I've made, and even some of the successes, which have kept me from surrendering. You see if you give me a quarter inch of success, I'll ride it for a mile and a half. I try one thing, and it turns out OK, I'm going to try it a hundred times, just to try to make it come out OK again. Except I forget the first time it turned out OK it wasn't because of my doing, it was God's doing. I forget that. So my fourth step has become an exploration of me, and how I relate to God. It's become a lot about humility. You know we talk a lot about humility in the later steps, but there's a lot of humility in the fourth step, knowing who and what you really are. Only by knowing my patterns can I avoid them.

In the fifth step, to me it's become a time when I can gain some clarity about that. Get someone sitting down with me who doesn't have a big interest in who I am. You see, I am incapable of being objective about myself. Everything I think about me is tied up in my hopes, my prayers, my fears, my shit, my issues, my past, my present, my dreams, and you know, I'll tweak anything. Lois brought home a thing one time from a meeting saying "we're the kind of people who from a single

tree can create a mighty forest in which we immediately get lost." It's True! That's the kind of stuff I need a sponsor for. He can say "hey dummy this is just a tree!" This ain't the world!

Who is not prejudiced about Greg. Who can see me objectively and say "hey-this pattern here-don't you see this?" and I go "no.." And uh, that's what my fifth step has turned into. Getting some perspective on what I learned in the fourth step. Getting some unprejudiced, outside opinion about what's going on.. what's really going on in my life.

The sixth step; becoming entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character, to me is about getting ready. It's about learning about those defects, and taking the step I learned about in the fourth and fifth step, and really taking a look at it. Why is this a defect? What does this mean? What is it all about? It's about learning more about humility and it's also about preparing to do the seventh step. One of the things that has been very.. become a big favorite of mine in the sixth step when I'm working with someone is asking the person I'm working with is to write their own personal individual unique seventh step prayer. And something that means what they really want it to mean. And in the seventh step going and following it through, and taking a look at the effect of it on their lives. Writing a journal. I'm a big believer in writing, although I don't think writing's the only way. Writing a journal about how this step is working in your life; how this prayer, this seventh step prayer, that you've begun to use daily, is working in your life.

The amends have changed dramatically for me. Um, but before I talk about those, you know, our defects and shortcomings, I used to think of those things as like symptoms and things like that, but I think back to that, what I found in my fourth step. Those have to do more with the things that separate me from God. My defects and shortcomings are those things, which separate me from God, which separate me from sanity, which keep me sick. And the eight and ninth step are the primary way, other than humbly asking God to remove those things that I can contribute to change. I make a list of how I have separated myself from God. All those things I used to stay off track, 'cause I was afraid of me. All the things I've used that have kept me from growing spiritually. And I take a look at 'em. And I plan how I can amend that. What can I do about this? You know the ninth step says "we made direct amends whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." There's a couple things off the top that for me, I've learned about that step.

Number one is I'm not others. I'm not one of these members that says, "well you don't do nothing that could place you in jeopardy as part of your ninth step. That's not what the ninth step is about to me. It's not about placing anyone in jeopardy. It's about trying to amend and restore where I've

gone off track spiritually. And um, the second thing I've learned about the ninth step, I feel real strongly about is uh, you make amends. If possible you make direct amends. If not possible, you still make amends. You just can't do it directly. I myself have used this idea well I haven't had the opportunity to make direct amends so I must not need to do anything about it this year or next to avoid some of the things I had to do. You know I think we make amends, and to me, the process of making amends is to take positive action to put myself back in spiritual balance. Take positive action to restore my spirituality. Taking positive action to try to see how I've gotten off track, and bring myself back on track.

Uh, the tenth step is really neat step. And the tenth step has to do with um, for me, has to do with balance in our lives. Staying on track, here in the eighth and ninth step we kinda, seven eight and nine- we've kinda gotten back on track. Some. Uh, through our amends, through humbly asking God to remove our shortcomings, We've gotten kind of back on track, and one of the ways we stay on track is through the tenth step, and that's by keeping track of how we're doing on those things. And I've learned for me, you know, checking out the day at the end of the day don't cut it. But I have to do almost a constant monitoring to see how I'm doing throughout the day, and make adjustments. And when I head off, you know the tenth step says when we were wrong, promptly admitted it. And I, for years I thought that meant well when I do something to somebody I apologize for it. I read it in my head, and when we were wrong, promptly apologized for it. You know, today that's so much broader. When I start heading the wrong direction, I need to come back on track. I have to admit that I'm heading off in the wrong direction, and bring my, and do what I can do to come back on track. When I fall into one of my patterns, self- destructive patterns, whether I involve someone else or not, I have to recognize that I'm headed the wrong direction. And take action to come back on track, to maintain that spiritual balance. So, for me today the tenth step is, uh, about maintaining spiritual balance.

Eleventh step, we sought through prayer and meditation to improve or conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for the knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out. To me, that has to do about growing spiritually, has to do about keeping oneself on track in the future. It's about discovering what God has in store for me. Being open to God's plan, not just my plan, and having the courage, and the power to follow that plan, not my plan. Follow up, and work the program! Work God's program. You know, prayer and meditation are two of the important ways we do that. I'm telling you that life is all about prayer and meditation! What if everything you do is a prayer? What if every sleazy thing we did was a prayer? What if every generous thing we did was a prayer? What if every negative thing we do is a prayer? What if every positive thing we do is a prayer? That scared the shit out of me at one time. 'cause I started looking at my life, and I wasn't real thrilled about some of the stuff I was doing. And my prayer was not a very positive prayer. So I believe the eleventh step is about making our lives a prayer. Is your life a prayer? That you're proud to give to God? Or is your life something you're embarrassed about, or feel guilty.. I suspect that if you're embarrassed about your life or feel guilty about the way you act, you need to do some changing. And that's part of the eleventh step. We need to change the way we live, and make our lives a positive prayer. And if everything I do is a prayer, then maybe everything I think is a meditation. And I honestly believe that if I can come into a room looking for the presence of a loving God, aware that God will be speaking

through whoever's speaking, I'll hear God's will for me. I'll hear what I need to hear. A lot of you guys have experienced that-gone to a meeting in a blue funk, and some newcomer said something so outrageous that it just blows you away. And they have no idea what they're talking about, and it's so profound. It really is! They, in that one moment of time, become a vehicle of God. And are able to say something in a way that you're never ever been able to hear it before. And the light goes on inside you. That, you have a spiritual awakening. You know, you can experience that around here. Out of the mouths of babes.

Twelfth step. Having had a spiritual awakening, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and practice these principles in all our affairs. And uh, the bottom line of that is live this way. You want

to be an NA member? Be a fuckin' NA member. Do it right! You want to follow a spiritual path? Commit yourself with abandon. It's the only way it works. This is not a half-ass program. Having had a spiritual awakening, a rebirth, an enlightenment. And I believe in Narcotics Anonymous, this twelve step path we're on, is just as sure a road to enlightenment as any philosophy or religion. And does not exclude any philosophy or religion. But, having had that awakening, You know it's kinda like when someone turns on your light, let it shine babe! Don't cover it up! When you get en-light-ened, when you have that spiritual awakening, don't hide it! Let it shine forth! And share with others so it can grow! So it can be nurtured. So it can shine even brighter! Carry this message to addicts. What's the message? The message is hope. The message is spirituality. The message is all these things. And practice these principles in all our affairs. Um, that's a big part of the message-live this way. You know, I can say all kinds of stuff about the steps. I've learned a lot about the steps and traditions and Narcotics Anonymous in twenty-eight years. But the message I show you through the way I live... is the real one. Kinda like don't tell me how good you're doing show by the way you live. How am I living? How is my life today? How's my program today?

I'm coping with a very serious illness. Some days I do pretty good with it. Some days I don't do very well with it. Yesterday, I sat and told Lois, I'm so tired of being sick. I was struggling with being sick. Some days my relationship with my Higher Power is strong. I have not fallen into the trap of Why Me God, thank God. I'm pretty much convinced that this is an opportunity rather than a punishment or a curse. And God has got wonderful stuff in store for me. And I've experienced part of that. Last weekend there were three guys over to the house. All from different parts of the country. And they had an experience. They had a number of experiences, which may have changed their lives. NA members-one from the Midwest, One from New Jersey, one from Indiana, who didn't know each other. But were brought together for a common purpose. And they worked together, and they laughed together, and they told stories together and they shared together. And the barriers came down and they sat out in the woods, and uh, they experienced something. My dream for a lot of years was to have a place where that could happen. And it's happening. In spite of me.

Don't know what the future holds for me. I don't know whether, like anybody else, I don't know whether I'm gonna buy the farm tonight on the way home, have six months, two years, ten years, fifteen years, I don't know. What I do know is that I have had a good life beyond my wildest dreams in Narcotics Anonymous. I have been given the great gift of having had a chance to touch some spirits. Get to know people just like you. And contribute to their recovery, and have them contribute to my recovery. And that's what this is about. It's about touching spirits. It's about giving you a little bit of my glow in exchange for a little bit of your glow. And both coming out brighter in the process. It's about... it's about being there for each other when no ones ever been there before. It's about learning how to love when we never knew how to love. It's about learning how to give instead of take. It's about all those things. And it's a helluva trip! I have a good life. I have had a good life. I continue to have a good life. And uh, I ain't done yet. So I thank you for asking me down, I with you.

Transcriber's footnote: this was recorded in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in a small church, and about thirty people were present. 15 or so out of the thirty were newcomers.

NEW ATTITUDES

P O BOX 447

VESTABURG MI 48891