

THE  
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MAGAZINE

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Feature: Board of  
Trustees, part 1

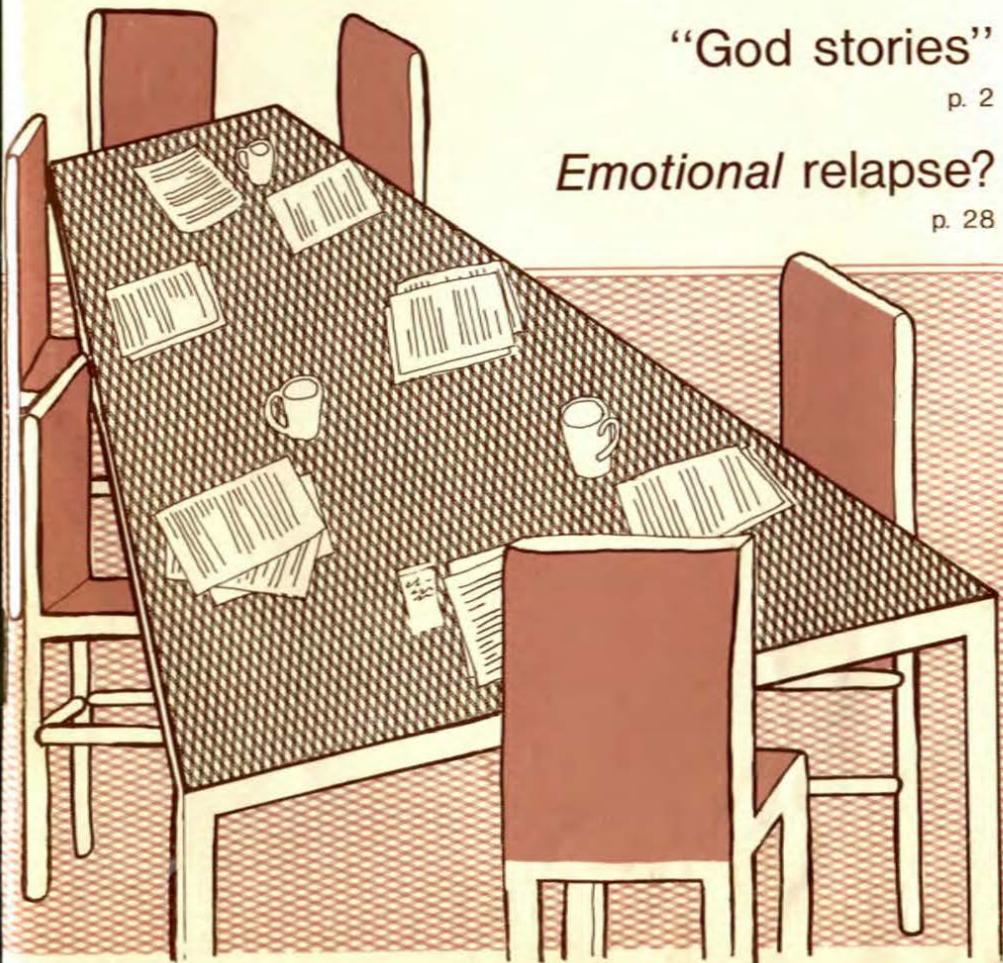
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*Emotional relapse?*

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## The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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## THE N.A. Way<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

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## “God stories”

I recently came to the decision to change sponsors. I knew it was what I had to do, for me. I felt I deserved more attention than she was giving. But rather than hurt her feelings or (heaven forbid) have her mad at me, I kept putting off telling her. Finally I talked to my grandsponsor who said yes, she would sponsor me, but first I had to talk to my sponsor and share what my decision was and why. She said, “Pray before you dial the number, and God will take care of it.”

I dialed the number, praying hard, “God, you say what has to be said—I don’t know how to do this.” My sponsor answered, and after we exchanged “Hi, how are you,” she said, “I’ve been meaning to call you—we need to talk.”

I said, “Yeah, I agree—but you first. What’s on your mind?”

She said, “I just can’t sponsor you anymore. I love you and will continue to be here for you, but I’ve got so much going in my life that I’m not serving my sponsees as I’d like to. So please forgive me, and until you find a new sponsor don’t forget you have a grandsponsor.”

*Who did that?*

**A couple of months** after I got clean (and before the urge to use had been lifted) I gave in to the disease-voice one night and prepared to use. Not having a sponsor (I knew all the answers, and didn’t need any help) and not wanting to disturb anyone in the middle of the night (it was three a.m.), I tried to handle it alone. I sat in bed preparing my fix, crying, not wanting to use and not able not to, damning life, hating myself, and not believing in anything, hysterically telling myself that not only was God not there but N.A. couldn’t work—I was about to use to prove it!

The phone rang, and it was an addict I’d never talked to before—said he had been thinking about me—had gotten my number from a phone list and was coming over—would be there in five minutes. *He* said *he* needed someone to talk to! I stayed clean that night.

*Who did that?*



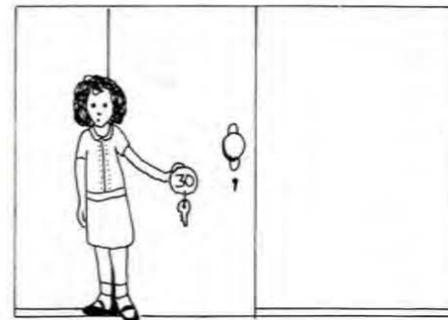
**At six months clean** I truly came to the end of the road, unable to function as a human being. Maybe a sponsor would have helped, or working the steps, or going to more meetings, or establishing a program in my life—but I didn’t think of those things. Abstinence equalled recovery as far as

I could comprehend. And it *was* making my life better.

In disgust and frustration with me, my teenage daughter ran away to the other side of the country and plunged deep onto her own disease. After a few months I had finally begun to do some of the things I needed to do and was beginning to get better. But my heart ached from missing my daughter and because I didn’t have a God in my life.

Like a true addict I decided to game God, and I threw out a challenge. I was in the shower, and I said, “Hey, God, if you’re there, you’re going to have to show me, and nothing short of a miracle will do!” Five minutes later I stepped out of the shower and there was my daughter with a big ole grin on her face and with a newcomer keychain in her pocket. I came to believe real quick.

*Who did that?*



**During the first** three years of my recovery, my son was in maximum security prison. He was cold and hard, using as much in prison as he had on the street, and was determined to parole back to his old stomping grounds and his old friends. Through the years I sent him N.A. literature and Basic Texts, and I shared with him all the changes going on in my life. I tried to do his time for him, to

absorb his pain, to get him clean; I was obsessed with saving him.

Finally, in desperation, I hit my knees and told my God I just couldn’t do it anymore. I had turned over so much of my life to him, but had held onto my son, and it wasn’t working for either of us. He was retreating further and further into his disease, and I was missing recovery in my life because I was obsessed with saving him.

A week later I got a letter from my son saying, “I’ve decided I’m not going to continue on this course of self-destruction—I want to try that N.A. stuff that’s working for you. Can I parole to your house if I stay clean?”

*Who did that?*



**With another year** of his sentence to complete, my son was getting real down as the holidays approached—another holiday season away from his family. He wrote and asked me when the miracles would start happening in his life, like the ones I’d told him about in mine. My heart was breaking; I was powerless over his situation. I wrote back, “Work the Third Step.” On Christmas eve I got a call from him: “Come get me, Mom. I’m clean and free and out early—just in time for Christmas! How about that Third Step!”

*Who did that?!*

*S.M., Indiana*

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## Pass it on

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Step Twelve covers a lot of ground. It speaks of: 1) awakening spiritually, 2) carrying the message, and 3) practicing principles. I think the word order is important—a spiritual awakening comes before carrying the message. In other words, we can't carry something we don't have.

I guess for some the spiritual awakening involved seeing blinding lights. My awakening was just a positive change that subtly came upon me. I have had many spiritual awakenings. Most were just a realization that somehow I was different, that I had changed for the better.

Once, when weeding a small bed of grape hyacinths, I became aware of the fact that my level of patience had increased. A year before, I could never have knelt in one place for over an hour plucking out tiny weeds from the equally tiny spring flowers. This appears to be a small thing, but it symbolized the change I was experiencing.

Previously, I had to rush through everything I did: I ate fast, talked fast, and drove fast. Later in my recovery, I noticed that stop lights and traffic did not bother me as it did most people. Again, my H.P. was fixing me. Recently, my times of spiritual aware-

ness have been more like warm feelings in which I am conscious of my Higher Power and that he is communicating to me. His messages are in feelings—soft and warm. They do not come in words; I have to put them to words.

I have come to understand that there are numerous ways of carrying the message. One of the main ones for me is speaking on panels in jails and hospitals. I've spoken probably fifty times in such places and have experienced some of my biggest highs

***My years of responsibility for a group transformed me. I felt like I really belonged.***

from doing that job—the one that no one around here wanted to do.

Sure, some of the guys are in that hospital just to get out of the weather or hold on to their jobs; nevertheless, every one of those institutions had at least one client with an ache to get

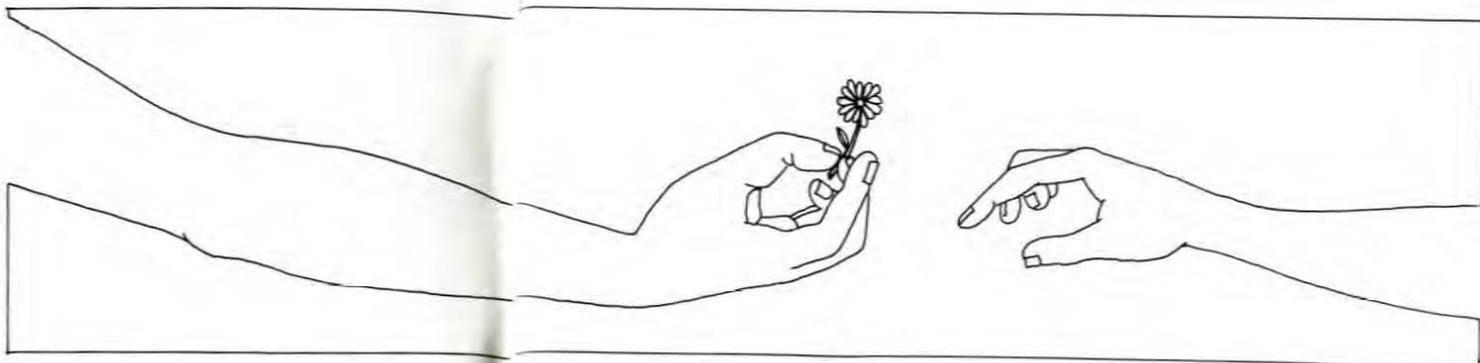
clean. My role is to carry the message, not to judge and classify the members of the audience. We go to share our messages of recovery; the rest is up to the other fellow.

I believe that all service work is a way of carrying the message. Making the coffee is perhaps one of the surest ways of staying clean. My years of being responsible for a group transformed me. For the first time in my life, I felt like I really belonged. I felt a purpose in my life. I felt love. What's more, staying clean was easy. If I was worried about someone else, I wasn't worried about me. (I tend to be a big one for self-pity.)

It has taken this addict years to understand how to practice these principles in all my affairs. First, I had to figure out what principles they were talking about. Finally, I saw that the Basic Text listed some: "hope, surrender, acceptance, honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, faith, tolerance, patience, humility, unconditional love, sharing and caring." I was not aware that we had so many principles.

Step Twelve is quite a step. However, what goes for all twelve goes also for the last, "...we can't do it all at once. We didn't become addicted in one day, so remember—*easy does it.*"

*Anonymous*



### Participate!

We who have been living the life of recovery from addiction through Narcotics Anonymous know that it is a path rich in the experiences of growth and change. It's painful at times, and sometimes it's lots of fun; it can be challenging and it can bring real and lasting joy. Whatever the immediate experience, the life of N.A. recovery is a life of hope and freedom.

We try to capture bits and pieces of that life here each month to enlighten, to entertain, to stimulate, and just generally to enhance the recovery of N.A. members and others who are interested in our recovery.

You're participating in our monthly meeting right now by reading—now it's time to participate by sharing. Write about that recent awareness you have gained, or about that topic that made your meeting come alive the other night. Be a fully participating member of your monthly home group. Add your voice to the sharing.

## Personal service

There are all kinds of good reasons for not doing service work: "It's all politics"; "I'm too new"; "I don't understand how service works"; "I've done my share"; "I'm too busy." And you know, I've said some of the same things. But too often I've been just

complacent or lazy. I hang out at the meetings and forget that one word in our First Tradition—*personal*.

I've heard many people say that service work is all politics. Well, I think they're partly right. We do have our "service politicians," and yes, we do get into an occasional heated argument. The misconception is that the "politics" is sinister or corrupt. That's not what I've seen. Love and tolerance always seem to win out, even over our monstrous egos.

Personal conflicts are common in N.A.—we're no different from the rest of the world on that point. Yet I've found two constructive things that I can do when I'm caught up in a conflict with others. I can make an effort to keep my mouth shut. This allows

me the time to listen and see where they're right instead of trying to prove them wrong. And I can remember that God is our ultimate authority—not me.

When personalities clash and there is infighting in a group, area or region, it really stifles our ability to carry the N.A. message. I have to remember the equation: N.A. Steps + N.A. Service = Twelfth Step Calls. And isn't that our primary purpose?

I'd like to say this to those who say they're "too new." *This is your fellowship, too. We need you!* When I first

***I have to stay busy in the steps if I'm going to do service work.***

came into the program, it was suggested that I get involved in service. Now, I wasn't asked to be a GSR right off the bat. I was given jobs I could handle, jobs that didn't take a great deal of time or effort, like emptying ashtrays, making coffee (I had to be carefully trained and re-trained in that task), and putting chairs away. I was told to concentrate on recovery first. But I learned that even those small jobs were service work.

Then I was told I should attend the group's business meeting for an even better understanding of N.A. service. During that first business meeting, I was bored stiff. I had no idea in the world what was going on. They told me to go to more business meetings and attend a few ASC meetings. I wanted what those folks had, so I did.

Since that time, I've served as GSR and worked on various subcommittees at both the area and regional level. I've served as area P.I. chair, area policy chair, and two terms as ASC chair. Presently, I'm serving as our RSC P.I. chair.

That's a lot of service for someone who was bored silly at his first business meeting. I've learned a lot for someone who was so completely confused. I've learned that I still have to work on pushing out the idea that I can't help out because I don't understand. And even more importantly, have to remember that I can't learn a thing when I think that I already know it all.

Then there are those "oldtimers" who, after a few years of experience, will back out of service work saying things like, "I've done my share," or "I'm giving the newcomers a chance." Please, let's not confuse our practice of rotation with quitting altogether. I know that I need their experience. Our fellowship as a whole needs it. And we need their hands, too. If everyone before me had cycled themselves out of service, N.A. might not have been there for me.

I know of an N.A. member who, after years of service at all levels, is quite willing to make coffee for his group or participate in a subcommittee meeting. He stays involved, and I never get the impression that he wants to run the show or that he has "too much" experience.

Being too busy for service can, however, be all too real at times. I find that there are periods when I seem to have little time for service. The responsibilities of family and job, or



just giving myself time to rest and recreate, mean that sometimes I need to say no. In the past, I've taken on too much. And I've seen others do the same. It's not a pretty sight! Looking back on those times, I've been either

*In the past, I've taken on too much. And I've seen others do the same. It's not a pretty sight!*

full of misplaced spiritual fervor or I've been having a giant-sized ego attack.

There were some things that I didn't see at the time:

1. I was dividing my efforts between more than one service responsibility and very little got done as well as it could have.
2. Nobody else can help me if I hog all the work.
3. My ego is capable of creating huge problems for me by setting in motion the dreaded "circle of pain": make commitments so I'll be accepted, fail to meet those commitments, hate myself for it, make more commitments so I'll be accepted...

I've learned that's why I have to stay busy in the steps if I'm going to do service work.

I've learned two other things as well. I am only one addict, and I can effectively handle only one service responsibility at a time. The goals that I set

in my head are never very realistic without applying the steps and traditions.

Not everyone can be a GSR or a committee chair. But we all can do something somewhere to help carry the N.A. message to the addict still beating his brains out with drugs because he doesn't know there's a way out.

I've written a lot here about these issues, and I may or may not be on the right track. It's my opinion, and I reserve the right to change my mind two minutes after this article hits the bottom of the mailbox. The main reason that I wrote is to erase some confusion in my own mind. In going through all the mental gyrations with issues like these, I learn a tremendous amount about me, personally. This is where the rubber hits the road—the rubber of my personal recovery, and the road of N.A. service.

What do I get in return for my personal effort? Well, I get to learn more about our fellowship. I get to be around clean addicts. I get to see that people do value my opinion and don't mind having me around (this acceptance still amazes me). I get a lot more Twelfth Step opportunities. I get a lot more opportunities to look at myself. And, you know, there's probably a lot about me that I don't know yet. But there is one last all-important thing. It's an addition to the equation: *N.A. Steps + N.A. Service = Twelfth Step Calls = Recovery.*

I don't know about you, but I'm going to continue in service. I'm clean. It works for me—personally.

G.M., Iowa

## Basic Text quiz

Every now and then I'll ask someone I sponsor a question from the Basic Text just to see if they are reading it—keeps us on our toes! It's kind of like a quiz or a puzzle—it gets you thinking, puts your mind to work, etc.

I thought that other N.A. Way readers might enjoy this, so I'm sending along this little quiz. My sponsor is always telling me to have fun, relax and enjoy my recovery—and I try.

### QUESTIONS:

1. To whom is the N.A. Basic Text dedicated?
2. What is the way to become a responsible, productive member of society?
3. The base of our unity symbol signifies what?



4. "The ultimate weapon for recovery is the \_\_\_\_\_."
5. What is the spiritual foundation of our Twelve Traditions?
6. What three spiritual principles are indispensable?
7. What does our text say is the principle of the Twelfth Step?
8. What does it tell us are the keys to the Third Step?
9. Where does group conscience come from?
10. What is the main ingredient of Step Seven?
11. Recovery begins with what?
12. "The heart of N.A. beats when \_\_\_\_\_."

B.M. Pennsylvania

### ANSWERS:

1. Pg. xiii—our Higher Power; 2. Pg. 102—put our recovery first; 3. Pg. ix—universal program; 4. Pg. 15—the recovering addict; 5. Pg. 72—anonymous; 6. Pg. 18—honesty, open-mindedness and willingness; 7. Pg. 49—selfless service—carrying the message; 8. Pg. 26—open-mindedness, willingness and surrender; 9. Pg. 61—a loving God as (he may express himself); 10. Pg. 35—humility; 11. Pg. 86—surrender; 12. Pg. 11—when two addicts share their recovery.

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## Reflections after five years

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The date is November 27, 1985; it's a Wednesday. Life began for me five years ago.

Today is no different than any other weekday. My alarm clock goes off at 6:30 a.m.; I want to ignore it. Since I don't like receiving "pink envelopes" in the mail (from collection agencies), I get up and get ready for work. The day is spent performing the usual mundane tasks.

At various times during the day, my mind reflects back on what life was like before I began the journey of recovery from addiction:

I remember my adrenalin soaring above a drug induced stupor as a junkie who owed me \$100 fired a pistol and fled. Or the time I awakened from a "nod," turned my head and saw half the pillow burned away. And how can I forget "coming to" with a syringe dangling from my arm and thinking, "Damn, that's good dope."

I did anything and everything to try and fill the emptiness I felt. My existence was a void of hopeless desperation. I'd look in the mirror and see a creature one step below the amoeba on the evolutionary scale. My self-

image was one of total worthlessness. Thank God those "fun times," those "good old days" are no more.

With the workday ending, I return home for dinner. I eat a hurried meal; the N.A. meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and I want to be early. It's customary for people to chair the meeting on their birthdays.

While driving to the meeting, my musings turn to past N.A. birthdays. My first year birthday was a milestone. That one year clean had seemed like an impossible dream after eleven years of using and abusing. Birthdays two, three and four I discounted as "just another day clean." I hadn't really begun feeling I deserved this new way of life.

A little after 7:00 I arrive at the meeting hall. I help the secretary make coffee, set up chairs, and lay out literature; 7:30 is fast approaching.

I open the meeting in our usual manner, with a moment of silence to reflect on the still-suffering addict,

***They listen to  
what I say, watch  
what I do from a  
distance, and  
see me 'walking  
my talk.'***

followed by the Serenity Prayer. While the literature is being read, I survey the dozens of recovering addicts in the room. My gaze falls on quite a few newcomers, many acquaintances and a handful I've grown to know as friends. Though we come



from diverse backgrounds, we are tied together by a common bond: the desire to recover from the disease of addiction.

As is customary for the meeting chairperson in our area, I share for ten or fifteen minutes. I relate what it was like before finding N.A., what happened, and what it's like now. While sharing I realize that somehow this birthday is different. I'm not discounting my clean time, but taking pride in my recovery. It feels okay to be clean. Good feelings and emotions are finding a home at the "gut" level. Negativity, anger, resentment and low self-esteem can still rear their ugly heads, but they no longer control my life! I seem to be finding a balance, no longer on an emotional roller coaster.

After I finish sharing, I open the meeting for others to share their experience, strength and hope. As with all our local birthday meetings, the meeting turns into a "celebrity roast"

of sorts. As I expect, I hear all kinds of crazy anecdotes from those I've worked with on service committees. What comes as somewhat of a surprise, though, is what I hear from some of the newer members.

I hear some of them speak of how they listen to what I say, watch what I do from a distance, and see me "walking my talk." They say I've helped them learn how to do this thing called recovery. The saying, "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel," comes to my mind. With tears in my eyes, I know it is true.

At home that night, after the meeting, I thank my Higher Power for another day clean. I thank God for five years: 1,826 consecutive twenty-four hour periods of freedom from the bondage of addiction. I thank Him for letting me know, in my heart and soul, that I deserve this better way of life.

*M.M., Washington*

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## Check your baggage at the door

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Many meetings in our area close with a group hug and all of us reciting the Twelfth Tradition; then one addict shares what that means to him. Usually we say something cute and catchy like, "Listen to the message in spite of the messenger," or something more serious like, "You may not like me but you have to love me because I'm just like you." Always it's something short, and I come away thinking about what anonymity and the Twelfth Tradition mean to me.

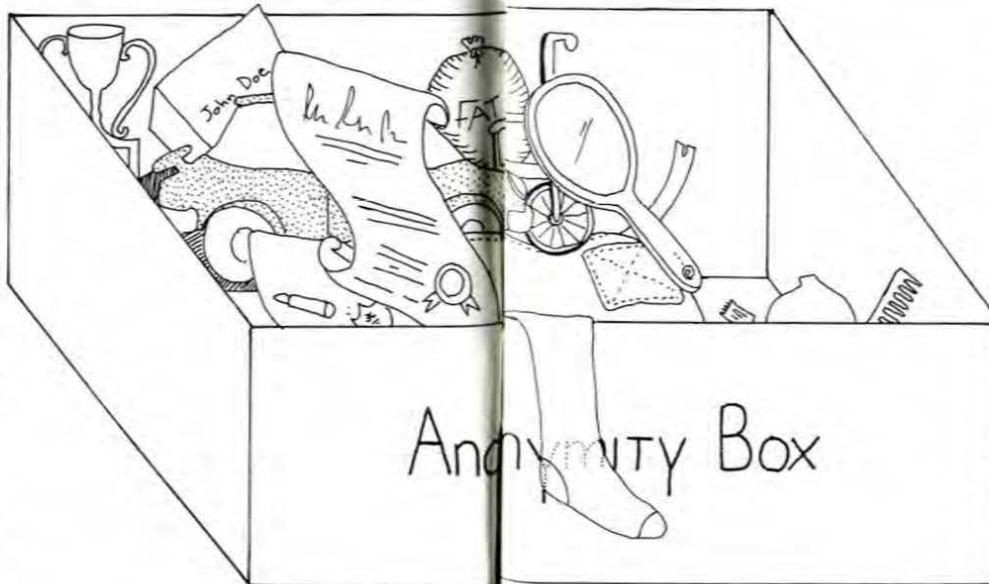
**A**m I the only addict who used to think the Twelfth Tradition meant, "Who you see here, what is said here, stays here"? That's where I started, some four years ago. It astounds me how our steps and traditions change the longer I stay clean. The more open-minded I allow myself to become, the more these concepts take on new meaning. Thank God!!

Today I understand anonymity as freedom. Freedom to be, to let others see me, and to deal with who I am on the inside. I think of it as stepping out of my skin, out of the material world,

and becoming real. Anonymity, for me, truly is a spiritual state of being humble, vulnerable, and open.

I try, as I step into a meeting, to become anonymous. More than that, and harder for me, is that I also try to allow you to become anonymous. What an undertaking, and what a transition this is for both of us! *What* we think we are is left behind, and we enter the meeting place simply as *who* we are: spirits with a common disease and a common goal: a new way of life. We have fear and pain that we need to share, and we have hope and strength to give away. As long as we remain anonymous, we can allow healing and recovery to flow between us freely.

I've often thought that every N.A. meeting or gathering should have an anonymity box sitting outside the door so that as each addict walked in he could leave off his outsides and humbly take his diseased spirit in for



recovery. What an assortment of garbage we would collect at the door! Let's take a look...

**C**an you imagine? There's a \$50,000 a year pay stub, a food stamp voucher, one pair of new designer jeans and another of dingy ole plain-pockets. There's a Porsche, and a beat up bicycle. The bottom of the box is oozing with pancake make-up. There's a wheelchair, a sheriff's badge, and a clergyman's collar. Someone left several pounds of fat, a bag of ugly, and boxes and boxes of glamor and sexiness. There is a Harley headband and "Deadhead" bracelet. There are college diplomas and prison envelopes. And much, much more. What a collection of superficial identification and uniqueness we leave behind to become anonymous.

Holding on to all I *thought* I was stood in the way of becoming *who* I was for a long time. I became free to recover. No longer am I an older lady,

or anyone's mom or grandma. I'm not a veteran psychiatric patient, nor am I the ASR when I go to meetings. I'm not Caucasian, nor do I have curly hair or a college education.

Those are a few of the things that I carried into meetings with me—my identity. And all the while I had this special problem of establishing my differences and voicing my special needs.

What a lot of time it seems I wasted. But then, maybe *all* this was normal, natural and necessary. Maybe all addicts come in hiding behind their outsides and, in time, as more is revealed, they have the understanding and courage to become anonymous.

### Every N.A. meeting should have an anonymity box.

Maybe that little smirk on the old-timer's face when they hear, "Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a grandma addict, or a biker addict, or a gay addict, or a teenage addict," is a smile of contentment and patience. Maybe when they hear that, they remember what they used to think *they* were. They smile as they silently make conscious contact with their God and say, "Thanks, God, for bringing me beyond that point, and thanks for allowing me to watch as you reveal to this new guy the miracle of becoming who he is, of becoming anonymous. Thanks, God, in showing me that we all progress, that all is right in the world of recovery."

S.M., Indiana

## My recovery through relationships

I came into an N.A. meeting room, raised my hand and said, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an addict." I finally admitted that I needed help, in a group of people I didn't know, and the feeling was overwhelming. I had admitted that I had been whipped by drugs, but I couldn't see the full extent of my addiction. After the obsession for drugs left me, my other obsession took over: my obsession with relationships.

My experiences with relationships have not been happy. I had been subjected to sexual abuse over a number of years. I had become dependent upon the closeness and touching I got from that, even though it felt wrong. My father had been an addict and a drug dealer, and had been absent most of the time while I was growing up. My mother had a job, so I spent a lot of time alone at home with my fantasies. I became obsessed with the sexual contact I got from a babysitter, and even as a child, sex was the only "fix" I knew.

When drugs entered my life, at first in the form of alcohol and later



through the whole gamut of drugs, they complemented the madness. Eventually they took priority over everything else in my life. That ran its course, and I ended up in N.A.

I got involved in many relationships in early recovery. I kept hearing that I should not get involved with any relationships for the first year, but relationships were my life. They were still my fix. This was one suggestion that I could not follow.

It wasn't about me having a bad relationship and then going out to pick up, because the obsession for drugs had left me early in recovery. I had done a Fourth Step after my second year and accepted my defects, hard as it may have been. But the is-

sue of relationships was a serious one in my inventory. I had accepted the fact that I needed people in my life—and if someone said they loved me, that was all that I needed to open up my emotional floodgates and become vulnerable.

I had given so much of myself to the relationships I had formed in recovery. I had even left my wife and family to carry on in a relationship. Eventually I learned that people-pleasing was also an obsession. As I tried at all costs to make others happy, I died inside. At times I would treat my lovers so well that I thought that I would have some of that goodness returned to me. My people-pleasing was conditional, and that left me very vulnerable.

Even the relationship that I had for years turned out to be just another learning experience, although she came into N.A. not long after I did. That relationship ended with me feeling my vulnerability had been taken advantage of once again, and feeling betrayed.

Only through the grace of this program was I finally able to make a decision to be with someone who is learning to accept me just as I am—and that is me. It has always been hard for me not to think of myself as a bad, disreputable lowlife. There were many times when I accepted what I thought other peoples' opinions of me were, and for a time I almost believed them.

Now things are different. I don't live for others' acceptance or just to have people look on me with favor. I am now following my inner feelings, which is something that makes me happy, and that's different for me.

Looking back at the experiences I had in my life, I could become overwhelmed with a negative opinion of myself. I thank my Higher Power that I am able to say that there is good in me, and that my life was not bad. It just was.

Living in the program of N.A., I've learned that when things go wrong I have to look at the role that I play in the situations. I am able to learn about the feelings of another human being. I've been able to see that there can be beauty in people coming together and sharing life. Also I have learned that sometimes this sharing may not last forever.

I have not allowed my expectations to be unrealistic. Now that the fog is starting to lift, I find that what I have

**After the  
obsession for  
drugs left me,  
my other  
obsession  
took over:  
relationships.**

been offering people is all that I know. That isn't all bad, but there is a lot more to me. One of the blessings of this program is that I am able to be open-minded to the unlimited potential I have, which will ultimately make way for me to have a better relationship with a Higher Power, and a better relationship with myself.

*M.M., New York*

## Monsters in the field

Four years ago I found myself in a car wash bay at 9:00 one winter morning. With a bottle of Wild Turkey between my knees and a joint burning between my fingers, a cold hopelessness penetrated my spirit. Never before had I experienced such inner pain.

I had been in and out of the N.A. program for three and a half years at that time. I entered the rooms with my head hung low two or three times a week in total embarrassment at having used once again. Always welcome, I still considered myself an outcast. My foolish games included two treatment centers, several car accidents, run-ins with the law and constant trouble.

I had been raised in a religious home, and I believed that God had allowed me to live. I had continually made agreements with Him that I was going to cop and go to the bar that evening for one last blow-out. When I would "come to" the next morning, I would be so ravaged by the previous evening's escapade that a quick fix

was the only solution for the morning's pain. That total insanity went on for three years.

As I sat, stoned, hidden off in that car wash bay, the painful realities of the past flashed across the circuits of my mind. Suddenly, I found myself rolling down the window with open bottle in hand and joint still burning. In three quick motions, I threw my papers, the joint and the half-consumed bottle into the trash can beside my door. Just as quickly, I rolled my car window back up.

Suddenly, a very astounding and real presence replaced that cold hopelessness. I felt a warm sensation throughout my being. An inner surrender had made way for a power much greater than myself. As I drove away, a new freedom was born.

The first two years of recovery afforded more meetings, travel and spiritual growth than I could ever have hoped for or dreamed of. But danger began to creep in. Gradually I was

finding myself thinking I was "immune" to my addiction. I had allowed that great lie to separate me once again from recovery.

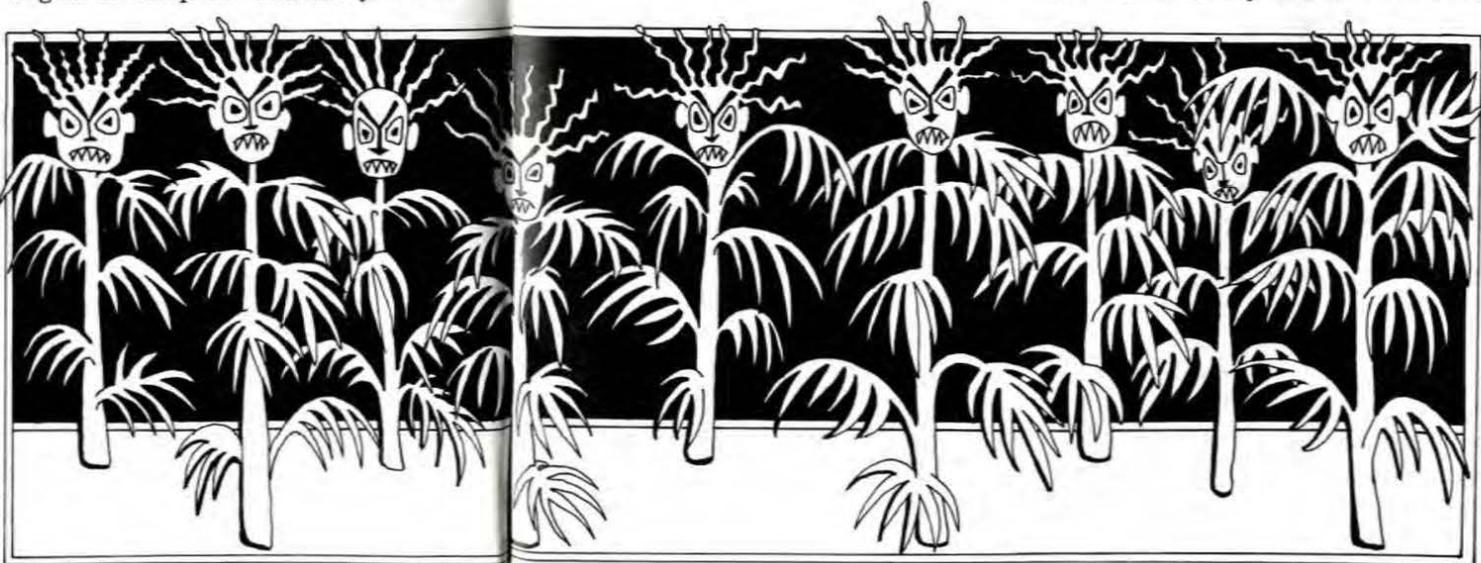
I found myself working last summer as a missionary up on the Tibetan Plateau. After a day's hike at elevations reaching fifteen thousand feet, I realized I had become lost. By the end of the day, with no food or water left, physically spent, I thought that my life was coming to an end. In desperation I cried aloud in prayer.

*I couldn't stand it any longer. Those insidious monsters were subtly wooing me to the jaws of destruction.*

Moving on again through the woods, I found myself face to face with an encampment of Buddhist monks. I was led to a monastery, fed and treated like a king arriving lost from a distant land. I was given a tour of the monastery, and some chants were offered on my behalf. A strange feeling overtook me, but at least I was found.

After my stay, I was led down the mountain another five miles to where I would find the road back out. I was able to hitch a ride on an old Chinese truck, and it seemed as if my troubles had come to an end.

In a flash I glimpsed a strange and familiar sight to my right, way off in a field. My subconscious knew it was real, but I didn't want it to be, so I looked straight ahead. A few more seconds passed, and then I saw it again. My stomach became a churning battlefield. In this valley, as far as I could see, were cornfields laced with massive stalks of my old favorite buds



reaching ten feet high.

I couldn't stand it any longer. I stopped the truck and got out to investigate. Those insidiously beautiful monsters were subtly wooing me to the jaws of destruction. Soon, my pockets were full.

Getting a ride once again, I returned to share what had happened, and with an honest yearning for help, told them what was in my pockets. With the help of my compan-

**Suddenly, an  
astounding  
presence  
replaced that  
cold  
hopelessness.**

ions, I was able to throw my buds down the toilet.

In the coming three weeks we traveled a lot by foot. What I seemed to have been blinded to previously proved to be everywhere. Ten and fifteen foot tall marijuana plants towered in massive formation everywhere I turned. I could not in my own power and strength keep my eyes off of them. Even the inner oasis of prayer was being blocked out by my addiction.

I had to apply this program. Even though I couldn't *mail* a letter to my sponsor in such primitive surroundings, I could at least *write* to him!

One day I found myself as sick as I could ever hope not to be. Wracked by bacterial flu, I saw a bottle of wine on a table. With all strength gone, I

reached for a sip. Before I knew it, I found myself with a beer in my hand at a Chinese cafe. In frustration I rolled some half-wet leaves from a plant growing outside my window, and downed two more beers.

Four years of recovery flashed through my mind. I could see my whole being ready to be consumed by the jaws of the monster.

In that moment, a surprising force that I can not reckon had me on my feet. Two hours of using had left me in a state of desperation, almost as if my four years of recovery had never been, leaving me in the same familiar state of powerlessness. But somehow that four years of a spiritual program of recovery had glued itself to my being. I could not throw it all away.

I found myself two days later on the banks of a fast-moving river in central China. I was surrendering once again. I took the bag and flung it into the waters in front of me. For a few short seconds I watched it disappear into the flood.

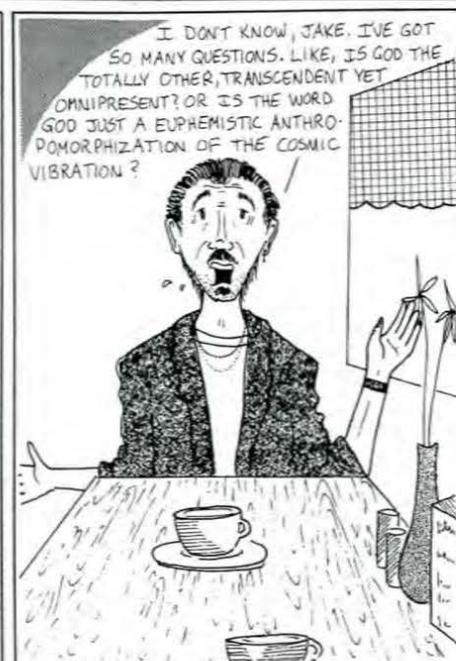
Today, five months later, I am back in the States pursuing my program as a free person who can respond to this spirit of recovery. Today I choose to attend my home group, work this spiritual program for living, and remember just who I am. I am an addict, a lot lower than my Higher Power, but stronger in my newfound daily humility.

The monster had me in his jaws for two hours in China, but active addiction is now silenced once again. We and H.P. can do what I could not. To me, freedom is choice, empowered by a still small voice.

*E.O., Montana*

# Home Group

Robert's  
Third Step



The first of two features on the Board of Trustees: a look at the roles they've played in our past may tell us what they'll do in the future

## Trustees, Part 1

N.A.'s World Service Board of Trustees is our fellowship's longest-standing service body. Founded in 1963, the WSB has seen Narcotics Anonymous grow from a half dozen groups in Los Angeles to become a worldwide movement of sixteen thousand meetings in more than forty countries. At different times the board has served widely varying roles in the life of our fellowship, from being N.A.'s sole service body, to N.A. publisher and office management board, to settler of disputes, to... what? In this two-part series, we will take a look at the various roles our trustees have played over the years, and look ahead to what may lie in the future.

Reviewing that history is not as simple as reading a single book or looking through trustee minutes. There is no N.A. history book, and records from the early days—old guidelines, notes from meetings, papers—no longer exist, except for a scrap here and there. For these reasons, the story we have to tell begins in the early Seventies.

### The trustees open the World Service Office

After N.A. had been in existence nearly twenty years, and a board of trustees had existed for about half of that, the board began making plans to form a world service office. The fellowship consisted of less than two hundred groups, almost all of them in the U.S.

and better than a third in California. We had no recovery text; our only literature was our "Little White Booklet." There was as yet no World Service Conference.

To raise the money necessary to start an office, the trustees hosted N.A.'s first "world" convention in 1971 (or, as one trustee put it, "world as *we* knew it!"). At that convention they received pledges of support from members for monthly operating expenses, and \$200 from the convention itself. They went ahead with the office.

But *none* of that pledge money actually came through after the office opened in 1972. Administered directly by the board, the office moved around Los Angeles four times in as many years, and finally came to rest in a member's home.

### The N.A. Tree

The first N.A. service handbook was called *The N.A. Tree*, published in 1975. "We are at a very critical stage of the 'coming of age' process," the introduction states. "...Right now, we don't seem to have any unifying structure or clear-cut lines of communication for N.A. as a whole. What structure there is only functions on a local level, and our vital lines of communication have often been both hard to locate and as changeable as the weather."

*The Tree* described the way N.A.'s local committees were developing in several population centers at the time, and they put forth a plan for a conference of delegates from these local N.A. communities—a World Service Conference. Those delegates were to meet with members of the World Service Board of Trustees, break up into committees to review the state of each area of service administered by the trustees, and come back to give the board direction for the following year's work.

*The Tree* was specific about the role of the trustees at the time: "The WSB is responsible for the administration of our World Service Office," it said. "In this capacity, [the

## WSB chronology

- 1963 World Service Board of Trustees founded in Los Angeles
- 1971 Trustees organize first N.A. world convention; from proceeds they open the World Service Office, which is managed by a WSB standing committee
- 1975 *The N.A. Tree*, our first service manual, is published
- 1976 Trustees meet with fellowship delegates for the first World Service Conference, an afternoon business session at the world convention in Ventura, California
- 1977 WSO board incorporates separately from Board of Trustees
- 1978 First independent WSC meeting; conference committees formed
- 1979 Board of Trustees guidelines adopted by WSC with new service manual
- 1982 Report of trustee panel on World Service Office operations; N.A.'s Basic Text approved by conference

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## WSB chronology continued

- 1983** Basic Text first published; controversy over changes in 4th, 9th Tradition essays; *Newsline* series begins
- 1985** On trustees' recommendation, professional writer hired for *It Works*; WSB included in standard literature development process; board granted authority to correct tradition conflicts in literature
- 1986** Trustee revision of *Little White Booklet*; *It Works* released for review; board presents five position papers
- 1987** Position papers repudiated; *It Works* not approved; board considers activation of standing committees
- 1988** WSB paper on conference voting (Motion 11); trustee standing committees activated

trustees] strive to increase the effectiveness of [the office's] many functions and coordinate its activities. In order to perform this function, the WSB [World Service Board of Trustees] utilizes a subcommittee system... The standing committees of the World Service Board indicate the major functions of the board and include: public relations, finance, literature, institutions, policy, planning, and nominations." So the initial working committees at the world level were trustee committees. Conference committees were to come later.

### The conference is born, and the trustees' role changes

The World Service Conference first met as an afternoon business meeting at the 1976 world convention in Ventura, California; its first independent meeting was held April 1-2, 1978, at Valley College in North Hollywood. "Even though attendance was somewhat small," wrote the editor of the *Voice*, a quarterly newsletter produced at that time by the World Service Office, "we had a good representation from many areas, including Canada, Minnesota, Georgia, Nebraska, Texas, Colorado, British Columbia, etc. An important achievement of this conference was the formation of conference committees for next year's conference."

The work of the trustee committees began to be shared by the conference committees. And it was not long before those conference committees began to be considered the primary vehicles for developing services for the fellowship. "Things had grown so fast during this period," a former trustee explained, "that we encouraged the conference committees to become active. It was just too much for us, and none of us were financially able to devote all our time to it." Though short on money, personnel and organization, early conference committees developed guides for public information and institutional work, and began gathering ideas for a process by which

an N.A. recovery text would be written.

During that same period, the trustees had relinquished their management role over the World Service Office. The office had been operating for some time without having been incorporated. The office manager, seeking to move that process along, completed the necessary work and got the office incorporated. That process involved the formation of a separate board of directors. There was no substantial challenge to that new arrangement on the part of the Board of Trustees, so the two bodies became separate, and remain separate to this day.

What happened to the trustees as the conference committees began to actually carry out the work and the office was managed by a separate board of directors? A revision of *The N.A. Tree*, developed by the WSC Literature Committee and adopted by the conference in 1979, described the trustees more as an advisory than managerial board. Detailed formats were developed for the board to use in responding to questions about service and the traditions from local committees, groups, and individuals.

In some ways, however, the role of the Board of Trustees in the new world service arrangement became less clear. One member of the board at that time described his personal frustration at what he felt was their apparent lack of purpose: "At my first meeting we sat around and listened to some letters being read. Then we listened to the chairman answer them. And then we went home. Outside of our individual efforts as members of N.A., I don't think the trustees really had a significant impact on the fellowship at that time."

### Growing pains, and more reorganization

It wasn't until the World Service Conference had been working another few years that the Board of Trustees found themselves again in the center of things. In February of 1982, the World Service Office had been receiving some

"Outside of our individual efforts as members of N.A., I don't think the trustees really had a significant impact on the fellowship at that time."

"I got a call one night; they wanted to see me at the WSO. They had the book there, and the office manager said, 'I will not publish it with *this* in it.' "

pretty sharp criticism from several different sources.

A trustee panel was formed to look into the matter. A request for input went out in the *Fellowship Report*, and the fellowship responded. The complaints ranged from the office's alleged failure to properly copyright the literature, to office staff arbitrarily refusing to provide services on the basis of personality conflicts.

The trustee panel submitted its report at the 1982 conference meeting, but no specific action was taken on it. The situation would come to a head later that year.

#### **Text, traditions**

The conference literature committee, after conducting workshops in a number of cities around the United States, had finally completed the manuscript of what would become N.A.'s Basic Text. Approved by the WSC at its 1982 meeting, the World Service Office was given the responsibility of publishing the book.

During a proofreading session in preparing the book for publication, the WSO manager became alarmed about some language in the section on the traditions. The chairperson of the Board of Trustees at that time described the situation: "I got a call one night; they wanted to see me at the World Service Office. So I go over there. There's me, and the chairman of the WSC, and the president of the WSO board, and the office manager. They had the book there, and the office manager said, 'I will not publish it with *this* in it.' " By "*this*," he meant a few lines in the descriptions of two of our traditions that made it appear that N.A.'s service structure was not a *part* of N.A. He was convinced that the language was in error, and needed to be changed to avoid serious problems in the future.

#### **"A fury"**

"We sat down and talked about it," the board's then-chairperson continues. "Well, I

looked at it and looked at it. We tried a few things, but nothing came up. Finally, I cut some words out of three different sentences. The conference chair and the office president said they could live with that. And I said, 'Publish it.' Boy, did that raise a fury!"

A fury, indeed. "We are very sorry that something as dear to all of us as Our Book has been turned into a political football, and that we have been chosen as home team," wrote the conference literature committee chairperson in a March 1983 letter to the fellowship. "But it has."

The WSC Literature Committee, which earlier had signed over the book's copyright to the WSO, threatened to withdraw those rights. A flurry of letters from the conference chair, the office, the trustees, and the literature committee flew out to the groups, explaining the situation from a variety of conflicting points of view.

The matter was eventually resolved. The majority of those objecting to the incident did not say that the changes should not have been made at all, but rather that they should not have been made in that manner. The original language was restored to the text by the next printing, which was called the Second Edition. Then the changes were made again, this time through the established channels. The fellowship approved them and printed the book again, calling it the Third Edition.

Justified or not, the World Service Office, as the book's publisher, took the brunt of that battle. Before the dust had settled, the office board of directors had been reorganized, and the office president and manager had been replaced. The trustee chair resigned.

#### **Correspondence**

In keeping with their new role as advisors rather than managers, the trustees focused for the next few years on corresponding with the fellowship. They received a constant stream of letters, and tried to reply to them all.

### **Our relationship to A.A.**

*The following is an excerpt from a trustee article published in the November 1985 issue of the WSO Newslines.*

As the founders of Narcotics Anonymous adapted our steps, rather than converting the First Step in the most natural, logical way ("We admitted that we were powerless over drugs...") they made a radical change in that step. They wrote, "We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction..."

Our First Step gives us one thing to focus on, so we can do that one thing supremely well. We carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As a bonus, this wording of Step One also takes the focus of our powerlessness off the symptom and places it on the disease itself.

As any given N.A. community matures in its understanding of its own principles (particularly Step One), an interesting fact emerges. The A.A. perspective, with its alcohol oriented language, and the N.A. approach, with its clear need to shift the focus off the specific drug, don't mix very well.

When our members identify as "addicts and

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CONTINUED FROM PREV. PG. alcoholics," or talk about "sobriety" and living "clean and sober," the clarity of the N.A. message is blurred. The implication in this language is that there are two diseases, that one drug is separate from the pack, so that a separate set of terms is needed when discussing it.

At first glance this seems minor, but our experience clearly shows that the full impact of the N.A. message is crippled by this subtle semantic confusion.

Does this mean that A.A.'s approach is inferior to ours, and based on denial or half measures? Of course not! Our members ought not embarrass us by adopting a "we're better than them" posture. That can only be counterproductive.

The simple fact is that both fellowships have a Sixth Tradition for a reason: to keep from being diverted from our primary purpose.

Our principles stand on their own. For the sake of our development as a fellowship and the personal recovery of our members, "our approach to the disease of addiction" must shine through clearly in what we say and do at meetings.

Their main aim at the time was to provide guidance to a fellowship that was experiencing explosive growth and expansion around the world.

By 1983, answering trustee correspondence was not the relatively simple task it had been in the late Seventies. In 1976, N.A. had, as near as we can determine, about 200 groups; in 1983 that number was closer to 2000. In the following year and a half that number would double again.

The range of questions being asked, too, was perplexing: everything from whether it was appropriate for an area committee to establish an N.A. blood bank, to whether the Bible could be read in N.A. meetings, to the continuing struggle with defining "N.A. language." Sometimes the reply came from an individual trustee, or from a small working group of trustees who lived in close proximity to one another; other times, the entire board spent long hours considering particularly troublesome issues raised by a letter.

### Newsline articles

A second means the Board of Trustees employed in providing guidance to the fellowship at large was a series of thirteen articles published in the *Newsline*, a newsletter newly established by the WSO.

Beginning in October of 1983, the series addressed a wide range of issues. Two took aim at a lingering sense of mistrust still evident in certain circles of our service structure, countering it with the Second Tradition's encouragement toward dependence on the guidance of a loving God in charting our course. One sought to describe various methods by which perceived violations of the traditions could be resolved at the local level. Another explored the many difficult issues related to our relationship with A.A. The articles were widely read and discussed, and provided a level of guidance previously unavailable to average N.A. members.

### Trustee liaisons to conference committees

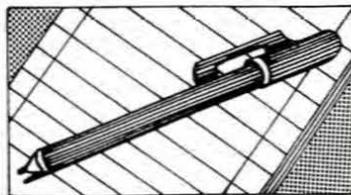
Another shift in the role of the trustees consisted of a stronger emphasis on their involvement with World Service Conference committees. Trustee liaisons were assigned to assist each conference committee in its work. One of the most fruitful of those relationships was between the Board of Trustees and the conference literature committee. Reviewing new literature to insure consistency with N.A.'s Twelve Traditions, the board directed the literature committee's attention to what it considered to be serious problems with a number of already-published pamphlets as well as one work in progress; all were either withdrawn from circulation and revised, or eliminated entirely from the fellowship's literature process.

The trustee literature connection became institutionalized with the 1985 conference approval of "Procedural Guidelines for the Creation and Development of New Literature." Under those new guidelines, the final stage before submission of a new piece of literature to the fellowship for approval became a traditions review by the Board of Trustees.

**I**n next month's conclusion of our two-part feature on the Board of Trustees we'll look at the board's more recent history and peek ahead to what may be in store. We'll look at a period in which the trustees were integrally involved in several world service projects, many of which were fraught with controversy as our fellowship continued to grow and change.

Our Little White Booklet was edited, our steps and traditions book failed to gain conference approval, and the trustees responded to a move to revoke their status as voting participants at the World Service Conference. We'll discuss all those issues in next month's *N.A. Way* magazine.

The range of questions was perplexing: everything from the propriety of an N.A. blood bank to the continuing struggle with defining 'N.A. language.'



## Viewpoint

### Remember our primary purpose

Lately I've been hearing a lot in meetings about "emotional relapse," eating disorders, sex addictions, co-dependency, gambling habits, etc., etc.

Like some others in this fellowship, when I got clean I found I was addicted to lots of things other than drugs, and I had to get honest about them, but I also had to remember when talking in N.A. meetings what our primary purpose is.

"Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for whom *drugs* had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay

clean." I know that "we are not interested in what or how much you used," but we are beginning to use that sentence out of context, applying it in the wrong places.

I heard an addict fresh off the streets and into a meeting talking about his pain over his heroin addiction, and his confusion over why he did such painful things to himself and others because of heroin. He was told immediately, "We only talk recovery here." That newcomer didn't even know what recovery was—yet.

I need to know that I can talk about my wanting to use, and that another addict can share their experience, strength and hope with me to get me through the insanity of wanting to stick a needle in my arm, without someone telling me they don't want to hear a specific drug term used in a meeting. Isn't this a program for drug addicts? Are we afraid to even mention the word "drugs"?!

We're getting too much into hearts and flowers, and too far away from how to *stop using drugs*. Good behavior comes when we stop using drugs and work the steps. We ain't going to be perfect!

I've heard so much about emotional relapse in meetings lately. Someone said once they were in relapse because they didn't feel as if they were growing. I didn't feel like I was grow-

ing either, off and on for a long time, but I wasn't in relapse, because I wasn't using.

Another addict thought, because he was in an emotional state once, that he was in relapse. I'm glad no one told me that when my friend died in a car crash and I was very emotional. That wasn't relapse—that was human nature.

Relapse in N.A. means "to return to using drugs." I don't take every little "living" problem I have to a meeting today. I work the Twelve Steps and call my sponsor, but I don't use the N.A. meetings as a dumping ground for my every little living problem. N.A. has taught me how to deal with these.

I love this program, and it has helped me grow in all areas of my life. But I must remember that I'm here to stay clean. This doesn't mean I have to "white knuckle" it, but to

***We're getting too much into hearts and flowers, and too far away from how to stop using drugs.***

make recovery a way of life.

Someone once said we should have called this fellowship Addicts Anonymous instead of Narcotics Anonymous. This is probably so true. But until then, let's remember who we are and why we're here.

*Anonymous*

## Concerns about the N.A. Way

I just received my February *N.A. Way*, and feel compelled to share with you my concerns regarding several articles that have been printed, as well as my disappointment in the magazine as a whole. Do as you choose with this letter, or any part of it, but please, before doing anything, listen to what I'm trying to say.

The *N.A. Way* magazine is delivered monthly to many people from many walks of life. It reaches addicts and non-addicts alike. The oldtimer reads the magazine and gives subscriptions to his sponsees. Treatment centers, doctors offices, probation and counseling services provide the *N.A. Way* to their staff and clients. Often our families, clergy, and teachers read the *N.A. Way*. I have even heard students in Addictions 101 quote from our monthly magazine. All these people, addicts and non-addicts, regard the *N.A. Way* as an example of what Narcotics Anonymous is all about: recovery in the mail box, so to speak.

I would like to see the *N.A. Way* be just and only that: *recovery*, a true example of what Narcotics Anonymous is all about. How attractive can our

fellowship be to the readers when our meeting in print is so full of dissention, conflicting opinions, judgmental statements, and general unrest? If the *N.A. Way* was guaranteed to reach only open-minded, dedicated, recovering addicts, perhaps all the controversy would be fun to read and discuss—but that just isn't the way it is!

We are very stringent about the guidelines we adopt for carrying the message to the newcomer in H&I

## *I would like the N.A. Way to be recovery only—a true example of what Narcotics Anonymous is all about.*

meetings and to interested others at P.I. presentations. Let's be just as conscientious and vigilant when deciding what we present to the world through our magazine.

There is so much recovery to be shared! So many miracles are happening in our lives that we can share in the *N.A. Way*. Let's get rid of the opinionated garbage and concentrate on recovery, huh?

Expressing opinions on controversial issues seems to be a stage in recovery. For me it was stage of denial, an attempt at defocusing from my biggest problem: me. I wanted to rant and rave and discuss and literally

beat to death all those things "not right" within and without our fellowship. It seems it was just another way of trying to fix, perfect, and put into a neat little package the outside stuff in an attempt to make the insides feel better or recovered.

It didn't work! The time came when I had to start dealing with myself and changing from the inside. And what a miracle happened from there! No longer did I need to put down or even mention other fellowships when I shared. I could love addicts still on medication. And when I could stop playing the victim, I no longer had a need to punish or put down men.

When addicts in the "vigilante" stage of recovery shared their opinions at meetings I could love them, pray for them, and share in a loving, caring way after the meeting that our opinions differed, or were the same, and invite them to get together later to "really get into it." What a freedom that gave me! Then I could share my feelings, and my fears too—but I was always free to stay focused on recovery instead of controversy. I wish our magazine could be more like that.

Somewhere I've heard, "quality, not quantity" (I wonder where?), and I would implore you, the editors and writers of the *N.A. Way*, to consider that concept when publishing the magazine. Is the focus on quality sharing of recovery, or has it turned more and more to outside issues, controversy and obsession with finding "the way it should be."

Please don't allow our magazine to become a rag. Let's publish articles that will create unity and attraction. Let's share the answers we have found

that work for us so that the newcomer might have some hope; the counselor might see some attraction for his client; the oldtimer in a funk can learn from another's experience; and the addict still living in the depths of hell who might pick up the *N.A. Way* at the welfare office or the probation office may see some strength and unity in the fellowship of N.A. and begin to want what we have to offer.

My suggestion is that we shit-can the "Viewpoint" section and replace it with "God stories" or "H.P. stories" (to avoid opinions about God). Or how about "Coincidence, or..?" or "Who's in control?" I'm sure you could come up with a real fitting and non-controversial title.

I've got zillions of what I call God stories, and so do my friends. We often call each other, excited and in awe, and say, "Boy, have I got a God story for you." How real it is to share the positive things happening in our lives instead of arguing, stirring up animosity with controversial issues.

Any addict who has been clean one day has miracles and miraculous stories to share. Let's allow our magazine to become a sharing of those miracles.

*S.M., Indiana*

*Editor's Note: S.M. backed up this suggestion by including a few "God stories" of her own. We printed them as the lead article in this month's issue. See the "From the Editor" column for some thoughts in response to this letter.*

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## Editorial replies

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### Not a second class member

**From Mississippi:** The October 1988 issue came to my door and was met with, "Right on!" Thank God for that letter about the second class member. It expressed my sentiments exactly:

## *Are we so insecure that we can't print letters like that one in the N.A. Way?*

we all have to do what we have to do. I am in an area where the majority of addicts are young enough to be my children. I understand and love them, and I can relate to where they're at because I've been there, but sometimes I need to hear someone who is talking mature recovery. This doesn't mean I think I'm so different—just much older in some aspects of life.

Let's also always remember: you are a member of Narcotics Anonymous when you say you are. Are we so insecure that we can't print letters like

that one in the *N.A. Way*? That letter helped me at a time when I was feeling like leaving the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous because of my age. That letter showed me I can stay, and much more. Thanks!

C.Y.

### Group dis-services?

**From Virginia:** I am writing in response to the interview article, "Serving the Groups," in the February 1989 issue of the *N.A. Way*. The title first caught my eye, since I have always been under the impression that serving groups was the job of an area service committee. Reading on, I was interested in how the interviewee responded to questions regarding the WSO's Group Services Department.

I certainly agree that group, area, and regional registration with world service is important, especially for statistical purposes and for maintaining a central data base of N.A. contacts. I was a bit disturbed by the emphasis put on "helping new groups" get started, as I feel this is definitely a function of an ASC, or in the absence of one, an RSC.

The interviewee went on to state that if an individual calls the WSO about a conflict, they are encouraged to go through their local service structure. I am sure a balance exists; however, the focus in this article seemed to be on helping the individual addict or group in positive ways, while referring "conflict resolution" back to areas and regions.

I feel that *all* questions from individuals or groups need to be referred back to areas and regions

and, where a local service structure does not exist, to the nearest existing one. Even newly formed areas and regions have experience to share with others about how to get a service structure started.

The article seemed to paint a picture of world service as a personal assistant to every addict, rather than a strong advocate of regional service committees or area service committees. Encouraging development of stronger local service structures can,

*I have always been under the impression that serving groups was the job of an area service committee.*

in my opinion, help Seventh Tradition fund flow improve and thus provide more growth for the fellowship.

**O**ur World Service Office should be most concerned with helping regions, so regions can help areas and areas can help groups. In our area, the hardest thing lately has been to untie the apron strings between groups and WSO. We have had an ASC for several years with little desire from groups to utilize *our* services since WSO was doing such a complete job. We recently have been able to encourage groups to use the resources available at the area level and we are growing stronger. In the near future, we will be strong enough and large

enough to require further utilization of regional services. As I understand the service structure, *this* is the natural flow, not the other way around.

M.S.

### Changing images

Thank you for printing the "Viewpoint" article about a shortage of women in N.A. service in February's *N.A. Way*. It has given me a belief that woman do grow and change in N.A.

When I came to N.A. I was the only female who came regularly, and I was really sick. I was always trying prove that I fit in with the N.A. guys by showing them just how crude and disgusting I could be. I was so hungry for attention that I believed this way of prostituting myself for that attention was worth it.

Then something happened: I started to grow. My old using ways no longer worked for me; they were causing me pain. I no longer needed to be the grossest person in the fellowship to feel a part of. I was starting to work the steps, not just hear them through closed ears.

**I**n N.A. I have been through a lot of change—some good, some not so good. Yet there is one thing that I must always remember: I don't have to be what I was when I slithered through the doors into abstinence and then recovery. Each day I need to work on becoming the person talked about in "How it Works": "The sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society."

I want to become a better person, so

I need to stay away from old behavior. This has come to mean that I choose not to attend some meetings or service committee meetings due to the language and behavior that is common there. I am still very vulnerable to my old ways, even if they no longer fit. So, if you choose to be crude, lewd, and disgusting, I can not be around you without slipping back into old behavior; that leaves me feeling emotionally raped.

I discussed this in my home group. I was told by some people present that if I didn't like their behavior, that was my problem. People wonder where the women are? Well, don't blame me when I ask if that behavior is really necessary, and you say that you have a right to act any way you feel. It is just like an addict to justify some of our worst behavior by saying it is someone else's fault.

Anonymous

## N.A. Way Features Coming Soon:

Trustees, Part 2

World Service Conference summary

Proposed new 'Twelve Principles of Service' for Narcotics Anonymous

## From the editor



### “Viewpoint” section

The format of the *N.A. Way* is primarily designed to provide experience related to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. The first half of the magazine is dedicated to the section we call “Meeting in Print.” That is the heart of the *N.A. Way*. The second half of the magazine includes a feature article, the “Viewpoint” section, letters and short articles from our readers, coming events, and sometimes this “From the editor” column.

When the decision was made to include a section which presents personal opinions on internal N.A. matters, the kinds of considerations that S.M. raises this month (p.29) were discussed extensively. Would a “Viewpoint” section constitute “airing our dirty laundry,” as some feared, or would it present our fellowship as being open and accepting of differing views?

S.M. has presented the case on one side of that discussion very eloquently. That article prompted us to once again thoroughly air that discussion in an editorial board meeting. I’ll try to summarize that discussion here.

We remain convinced that the “Viewpoint” section improves the magazine’s service to the fellowship. To the professional or member of the public, we believe it presents a picture of a fellowship that is growing and

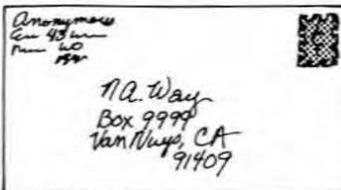
changing, undergoing an honest self-evaluation, and engaging in a lively discussion about a variety of issues as it does so. That seems to us to describe N.A. pretty well. We believe presenting that picture honestly each month can go a long way toward enhancing the reputation of N.A. rather than hurting it.

We are also convinced that our “Viewpoint” section promotes a more open-minded atmosphere in N.A. It seems to us that the N.A. reader is broadened and stretched in a positive way by a vigorous exchange of ideas. We agree that the most important aspect of the magazine is a substantive discussion of recovery presented in our opening section, the “Meeting in Print,” but we’re convinced that the features and the open dialogue that follow are also of substantial value to N.A.

We plan during this year to survey our subscribers to get your feelings on this and a variety of other aspects of the magazine. The last time we did such a survey, it weighed heavily in any decisions about our format that we have made since. So will the next one. Please be thinking about these things, and share your thoughts with us. This magazine is always open to further growth and change.

R.H., Editor

## From our readers



### Step One: the war is over

For years I tried to be someone, to find my niche in the real world. I kept getting the same results, and I didn’t want to accept them: results like being asked to stay away, failing in school, losing jobs, going to psychiatrists and to treatment centers. I only knew one way to live, and that was to get high.

As I grew older, my addiction progressed and my coping skills decreased. I became withdrawn and depressed and said to myself a lot, “Could it be the drugs?” The fear I had with the acceptance was, could I be helped and could I stay stopped?

What I learned from the program is that I had to be honest with myself first. Only I knew where I had been, and the effects drugs had upon my life. Once I made this admission, surrender became practical for me—because I didn’t want to die. My addiction had beaten me to that point.

How much more unmanageable could I have been at that time with no self-worth, no job, and a habit? So I reached out to a family member for help. I made that call and went to that meeting.

I have learned that drugs were only a symptom of my disease. That my main problem was me. And that I would always be out of control after I took that first drug. Also that my life

was unmanageable and I needed guidance. And that no matter what happened I would never have to use again. The war was over, there is hope for me today. Thank you Narcotics Anonymous and God for giving me a life that I thought would never happen for me.

PC., Florida

### Inside looking out

After reading your February 1989 issue, I felt I had to thank you. For the first time in my two years of being clean, I feel support.

I am serving a life sentence in a prison which does not offer N.A. We do have a “drug group” but unfortunately it’s based on education (i.e. DUI statistics, facts about drug trafficking, etc.).

How could I possibly repay the feeling of love and acceptance I have gained from your magazine? I have enclosed my story in hopes of helping someone as others have helped me.

How far must an addict go before he is willing to admit powerlessness over addiction? How much failure, destruction and pain must he encounter before he is willing to admit his life is unmanageable? For me it took a life sentence in prison.

At the age of sixteen I was admitted into the first of three drug treatment centers. It was easy for me to admit that I had problems—everyone

does. But I couldn't see my drug use as a problem.

When I first attended an N.A. meeting, I remember thinking, "This isn't for me." When I saw the First Step I was sure I was in the wrong place. My life definitely was not unmanageable. I resumed my using as soon as I was released. Within two months I was readmitted to treatment.

I saw my parents' love as interference, and I became angry and rebellious. It didn't take long before I was transferred to a mental hospital. Now my original suspicions were confirmed. My problem was emotions, not drugs.

The staff members in this hospital wanted to get to know me. One of my worst fears was my fear of rejection. I just couldn't *allow* these people to get to know me. What if they didn't like me? I became scared and confused, so I did what I've done all my life: I ran.

I ran from the hospital, I ran from my parents, I ran from myself. I ran so hard that I ran straight into trouble—serious trouble. Now I was on running from the police.

I decided what I needed was a change of scenery. I ran to Tampa, Florida. Maybe in a new city I could get a grasp on my life. Maybe I could start fresh. I could finally live the way I wanted to live. I had jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

One day while I was going to the beach, my world fell apart. I was arrested on charges of murder and conspiracy to commit murder. I was extradited back to Georgia to stand trial.

In a Georgia jail cell, reality hit me. I had lost everything. I had lost my

Job, my car, my apartment, my friends, and even my mother. I was finally ready to get clean—but how?

My father came to visit me frequently at the jail. He had been a part of Nar-Anon for just about a year then. Through this support group he still loved me. He could still see hope.

I was convicted on both charges in July 1987. I was sentenced to serve a life sentence in prison!

My recovery has been slow. Though

***I knew that they  
were 'my  
people' but I  
had no way to  
reach them, to  
touch them.***

we don't have N.A. here, I have been clean for almost two years, which I credit to the help of my father and my Higher Power. I have just begun to receive the *N.A. Way*. I am finally ready to work the steps back to sanity. This time it's different. This time it's for me, and it is for real.

**W**hile I was looking over the Twelve Steps, I noticed one which will require a great deal of preparation. The Ninth Step is one I will have to cover. There will come a time when I will face those whom I've hurt and try to repay them. One question haunts my mind. How will I repay the pain I placed in one family's life? How can I fill the void which I left when I took their son's life? I'm not sure I can, but with my H.P.'s help I will try.

Through N.A. and the people in it,

I can see a reason to live. Now I too can finally see hope.

*W.S., Georgia*

### **Lost and found in space**

All of my life, I have felt separate from others. I felt like an alien who had been dropped onto this planet and left to die. I remember many times looking up into the night sky (usually loaded) and thinking that the twinkling stars were the eyes of all the other lonely and lost souls of the universe looking back and wondering, "Where do I belong?" What a feeling of isolation and loneliness!

The cold, dark, lifeless infinity was what joined me to all those other lost beings out there. I knew that they were "my people," that I belonged with them, but I had no way to reach them, touch them, or tell them I loved them. In my mind I would call out, pleading for them to come and take me away to the place where we could be together. I earnestly hoped a silver spaceship would dart out of the infinity of the universe and carry me away to a place of peace and plenty, a place into which I would be welcomed with open arms, smiles, and love. You see, I never felt that I had the resources to make it in this world. I felt like a stranger in a stranger land.

How different things are for me today! Today I feel I am in that world of peace and plenty much of the time. All I have to do is use what is offered by the program of Narcotics Anonymous to get to that place. It is as if that silver spaceship has finally come to get me.

**T**oday, as I look around in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, I see the

twinkle in the eyes of other recovering addicts. It reminds me of the twinkling stars and how far away they used to seem. I feel I am on that silver spaceship at last. I feel safe and secure in that warm, glowing, loving place. I feel I am on a mission with my fellow recovering addicts to welcome in the lost souls who are making those first steps toward recovery. I feel that I'm responsible to give to them what was given to me: the open arms, the smiles, and the love of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

*M.M., California*

### **Crazed crustaceans, or the amazing addict crabs of Hawaii**

While attending the Oahu fellowship gathering this February, I found myself walking along the beach and pausing to reflect upon the similarities between addicts and crabs.

First, crabs have a hardened exterior to protect themselves and their vulnerable insides. When approached, they put on a rather menacing act to keep outsiders away when, in fact, they are locked up in fear. They dig holes in the sand and isolate themselves from others, leaving only when they must, and then only for the protection of the ocean. Given the chance, they will run rather than risk confrontation, and even then they travel sideways and go around obstacles.

Sound familiar? Think of this next time you start feeling a little "crabby." Then you can be grateful that our Higher Power gave us means to work through our feelings: the Twelve Steps and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous—truly a "miracle of love."

*D.B., Arizona*

# Comin up



**LET US KNOW!** We'll be happy to announce your upcoming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phonenumber, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**  
MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409.

(818) 780-3951.

**ALBERTA:** Nov. 3-5, 1989; 3rd Alsask Regional Convention; Polish Veterans Hall, 9203 144th Ave., Edmonton

**ARKANSAS:** Jun. 16-18, 1989; 8th Clean'n-Crazy Campout; Beaver Lake, Rogers; Clean'n-Crazy, Rt. 2, Box 155, Konawa, OK 74849

**AUSTRALIA:** Sep. 29-Oct. 1, 1989; Sydney Combined Areas Convention; Hurstville Entertainment Centre, McMahon Street, Hurstville, Sydney; Fellowship Service Office (Surrey Hills, NSW) tel. 61-2-211-2445; CAC-89, P.O. Box 286, Double Bay 2028, NSW, Australia

**BRITISH COLUMBIA:** Jul. 14-16, 1989; Campout; Felker Lake Legion Campsite, Williams Lake; Williams Lake Group, Site 8, Comp 17, RR 4, Williams Lake, BC V2G 4M8

**CALIFORNIA:** Jun. 16-18, 1989; 5th San Diego-Imperial Regional Convention; Holiday Inn at the Embarcadero, (619) 232-3861; regional office (619) 584-1007; SDIRC-5, 2260 El Cajon Blvd., P.O. Box 184, San Diego, CA 92104

**2)** Jun. 17, 1989; 3rd San Francisco Area Unity Day; Mission High School, 17th and Dolores, SF; phonenumber (415) 621-8600; San Francisco ASC, P.O. Box 6150, San Francisco, CA 94101

**3)** Sep. 8-10, 1989; 3rd Mountain High Campout; KOA Campground, S. Lake Tahoe; phonenumber (916) 541-4100; South Tahoe ASC, P.O. Box 6706, Stateline, NV 89449

**COLORADO:** Jul. 28-30, 1989; 2nd Annual "Standing on Higher Ground" Weekend; Telluride, central rsvn.s (800) 525-3455; regional office (303) 320-8323; Telluride Retreat, P.O. Box 2124, Telluride, CO 81435

**CONNECTICUT:** Jun. 2-4, 1989; 3rd Family Campout; Lone Oaks Campgrounds, E. Canaan; phonenumber (203) 266-0563; Greater Waterbury ASC, P.O. Box 1075, Woodbury, CT 06798

**FLORIDA:** Jun. 30-Jul. 3, 1989; 8th Florida Regional Convention; Omni Jacksonville Hotel, 245 Water Street, Jacksonville FL 32202; rsvn.s (904) 355-6664; RSO (305) 563-4262; phonenumber (904) 723-5683; Florida RSO, 1110 NE 34th Court, Oakland Park, FL 33334

**2)** Aug. 31-Sep. 3, 1989; 19th World Convention; Stouffer's Orlando Resort

**HAWAII:** Oct. 20-22, 1989; 2nd Maui Harvest of Recovery; Camp Maluhia, Maui; Roundup Committee, P.O. Box 978, Puunene, HI 96784

**IDAHO:** Aug. 4-6, 1989; 4th Oregon / Southern Idaho Convention; Red Lion Riverside Motel, Boise; rsvn.s (208) 343-1871; phonenumber (208) 343-0188; OSIC-4, P.O. Box 1234, Boise, ID 83701

**2)** Aug. 4-6, 1989; 3rd Snake River Area Campout; Thompson Flat Campground, Albion; MCGNA, P.O. Box 875, Burley, ID 83318

**ILLINOIS:** Jun. 23-25, 1989; 5th Little Egypt Area Campout; Carlyle Lake, Carlyle; phonenumber (618) 548-3547; Little Egypt ASC, P.O. Box 1062, Salem, IL 62881

**2)** Jul. 21-23, 1989; Basic Campout; Okaw Bluff Group Campsite, Lake Shelbyville; phonenumber

(217) 373-2063; New Beginnings ASC, P.O. Box 689, Normal, IL 61761

**3)** Jul. 28-30, 1989; 5th Mid-Coast Convention; Hyatt Deerfield, 1750 Lake Cook Rd., Deerfield IL 60015; Chicago Service Office (312) 848-2211 or 848-4884; MCC-5, P.O. Box 633, Zion, IL 60099

**IOWA:** Jun. 30-Jul. 2, 1989; 6th Iowa Regional Convention; Stouffer Five Seasons Hotel, 350 1st Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids IA 52401, rsvn.s (800) HOTELS-1; phonenumber (319) 398-9100; IRC-6, P.O. Box 2062, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

**KANSAS:** Jun. 30-Jul. 2, 1989; 11th Mid-America Regional Campout; Methodist Church Camp, Webster Lake, Stockton

**2)** Aug. 11-13, 1989; N.A. Campout; Thunderbird Marina, Rolling Hills area, Milford Lake, Junction City

**MAINE:** Sep. 8-10, 1989; 6th Southern Maine Area Convention; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred; phonenumber (207) 761-6695; Southern Maine ASC, P.O. Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

**MANITOBA:** Jun. 9-11; 6th Upper Midwest Regional Convention; University of Manitoba, Winnipeg; phonenumber (204) 338-2370; UMRC-NA 6, P.O. Box 5393, Fargo, ND 58105

**MICHIGAN:** Jul. 1-4, 1989; 5th Michigan Regional Convention; Clarion Hotel, 6820 S. Cedar, Lansing MI 48911; rsvn.s (517) 694-8123; phonenumber (517) 483-9101; MRC-5, P.O. Box 4818, E. Lansing, MI 48826

**MISSOURI:** Jun. 9-11, 1989; 4th Show Me Regional Convention; Quality Inn North (formerly Hilton Inn of the Ozarks), 3050 N. Kentwood Ave., Springfield; phonenumber (417) 866-7392; SMRCNA-4, 809 W. Calhoun, Springfield, MO 65802

**2)** Jul. 21-23, 1989; 10th "High on Life" Picnic; Stockton Lake, Stockton; phonenumber (417) 781-2210

**3)** Sep. 15-17, 1989; Show Me Regional Unity Campvention; Camp Rising Sun, Lake of the Ozarks State Park, Jefferson City; Campvention, P.O. Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

**NEVADA:** Jul. 28-30, 1989; 2nd Sierra Sage Regional Convention; John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks; phonenumber (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage RSC, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510-1913

**NEW JERSEY:** Jul. 21-23, 1989; 2nd Central Jersey Area Scavenger Hunt; home base at Bradley Beach Municipal Bldg., Main Street between McCabe and Lorraine Ave.s; phonenumber (201) 462-9199

**2)** Jul. 28-30, 1989; Quad State Unity Convention; Parsippany Hilton, 1 Hilton Court, Parsippany-Troy Hills NJ 07054, (800) HILTONS; Bergen County ASC, P.O. Box 104, Northvale, NJ 07647-0104

**NEW YORK:** Jun. 16-18, 1989; 3rd Annual Manhattan Area Convention; convention messages (212) 995-0763; Unity '89, c/o Community Center, 208 W. 13th St., New York, NY 10011

**2)** Jun. 23-25, 1989; 10th East Coast Convention; University of Buffalo, Amherst Campus; phonenumber (716) 878-2316; ECCNA-10, P.O. Box 141, Buffalo, NY 14216-0141

**3)** Jul. 28-30, 1989; Northern New York Regional Convention; Aurora, NY; phonenumber (716) 323-1530; NNYRCNA-89, 2605 Elmwood Ave., Ste. 135, Rochester, NY 14618

**OHIO:** Jul. 14-16, 1989; 5th Columbiana County Camp-Vention; Chaparral Campgrounds, 10136 Middletown Rd., Salem; Columbiana Co. ASC, P.O. Box 451, Salem, OH 44460

**OREGON:** Sep. 29-Oct. 1, 1989; 12th Pacific Northwest Convention; Airport Holiday Inn, Portland; Portland Central Office, 1730 SE 12th, Portland, OR 97214

**PENNSYLVANIA:** Nov. 3-5, 1989; 7th Tri-State Regional Convention; Hyatt Hotel, Pittsburgh; rsvn.s (412) 471-1234; Tri-State RSO, P.O. Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

**SOUTH CAROLINA:** Jun. 16-18, 1989; Carolina Regional Convention; Radisson Inn, Spartanburg; CRC '89, P.O. Box 5201, Spartanburg, SC 29304-5201

**2)** Nov. 9-12; Serenity Festival; Best Western Landmark, Ocean Blvd., Myrtle Beach; rsvn.s (800) 845-0658; phonenumber (803) 449-6262; Serenity Festival, P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

**UTAH:** Aug. 4-6, 1989; 6th Utah Campvention; Utah RSC, P.O. Box 6157, Salt Lake City, UT 84106-0157

**VIRGINIA:** Oct. 6-8, 1989; 3rd Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Center, Front Royal; Almost Heaven Convention, phonenumber (800) 777-1515 P.O. Box 448, Charleston, WV 25414

**WYOMING:** Jun. 30-Jul. 2, 1989; 6th Western States Unity Convention; Little America Hotel, Cheyenne; rsvn.s (307) 634-2771; phonenumber (307) 632-6433; WSUC-6, P.O. Box 184, Cheyenne, WY 82003

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9TEA

## The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups of N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Twelve Traditions reprinted by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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

## What Is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a worldwide fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover.

It costs nothing to belong to N.A.—there are no fees or dues. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.

For more information about N.A., see your local phone directory, or write us at the address inside.