

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

October 1989

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Sponsorship—more
than just a word

pg.s 2 and 4

Growth—can our
groups handle it?

p. 20



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** M A G A Z I N E

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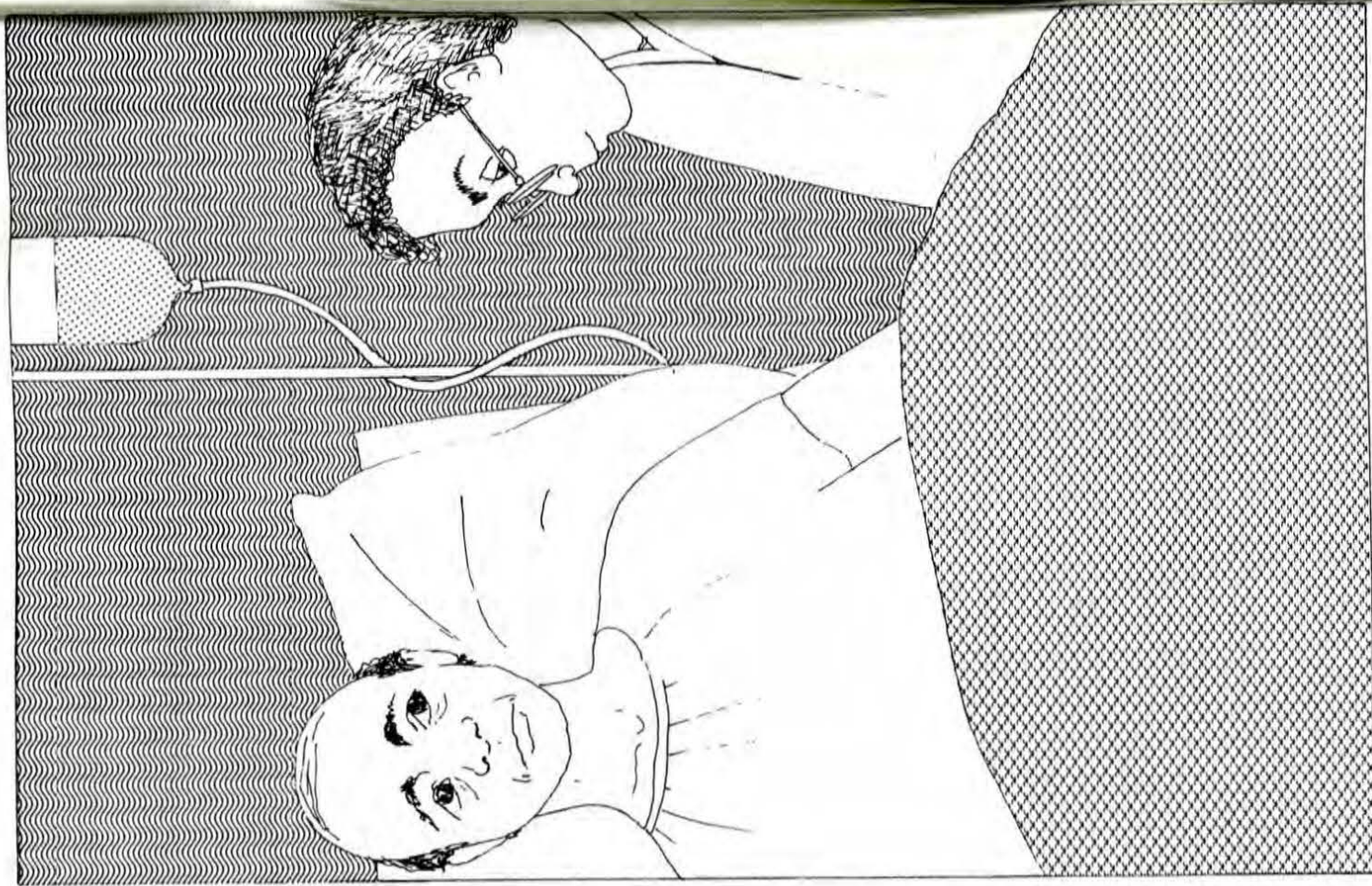
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Sponsorship

Before leaving treatment, it was strongly suggested to me that I find a sponsor within a month. It is entirely possible that I was "guided" in my search, for one night I found myself at a meeting I had not planned to attend. There I heard a man share his experience, strength, and hope in a way that touched my soul. I knew that I wanted something he had, and I was prepared to do what he had done to get it. With much apprehension, I took a risk and asked him to sponsor me. This marked the beginning of a relationship based on trust, intimacy, and unconditional love. It lasted for almost four years, until he died.

My sponsor promised me only one thing right from the start: that if I worked the steps of Narcotics Anonymous, I would never have to use again. He also told me that this program has as little or as much as I want, from simple abstinence to a deeper spiritual journey. He was right on both counts.

In the first year and a half, I stayed in real close touch with him. I needed guidance in living and with the steps, and I got what I needed. We talked about powerlessness and unmanageability, coming to believe, and the nature of God. I wrote a Fourth Step and shared my fifth with him.

My sponsor showed me how he humbly asked to have his shortcomings removed.

He helped me to identify those people on my Eighth Step list to whom I really owed amends. He talked about prayer, and was active in service. His move to another city was very difficult for me, but I came to realize that I had developed my own set of tools and my own internal strength. I believe this is how sponsorship works.

*I rarely tell
someone what
to do—I share
my experience.*

It is my privilege to sponsor a number of men in recovery. I know that I have given much of myself, but I also know that what I have given away has been returned to me, multiplied. I tend to sponsor the way I have been sponsored, so I rarely tell someone what to do. I simply try to share my own experience, strength, and hope.

Shortly before my sponsor was admitted to the hospital for the last time, I made the difficult decision to ask someone else to sponsor me. This man also came into my life unexpectedly, and he too touched a chord deep within me. We are still in the process of getting to know each other, but I have already benefitted from our relationship. My life has changed dramatically in recovery, and my needs are somewhat different now. Nevertheless, I can always use that guidance in living and with the steps.

P.W., Quebec

Sponsorship— a relationship

When I hit bottom and found Narcotics Anonymous, I was hurting deep within. I was in severe pain, and the drugs were no longer easing it. I could not live with drugs or without them. The disease of addiction had beaten me to a pulp. I felt like an alien and lived like an animal. Everything about me was phoney; I did not know what reality was. I lived in a fantasy world of nothingness. My family was baffled and confused. I was physically, mentally, and spiritually bankrupt. I hated myself.

I did not know what to expect when I walked into a basement of a church and attended my first N.A. meeting. I do not even remember what was said, but I do remember the welcome I received from those six recovering addicts seated around the table.

They welcomed me with open arms, regardless of the wreckage of my past. They accepted me unconditionally and treated me as a human being. They even told me to keep coming back! They supplied me with N.A. literature and gave me their phone numbers. I was attracted. And it was this attraction that helped me surrender and find recovery. I am grate

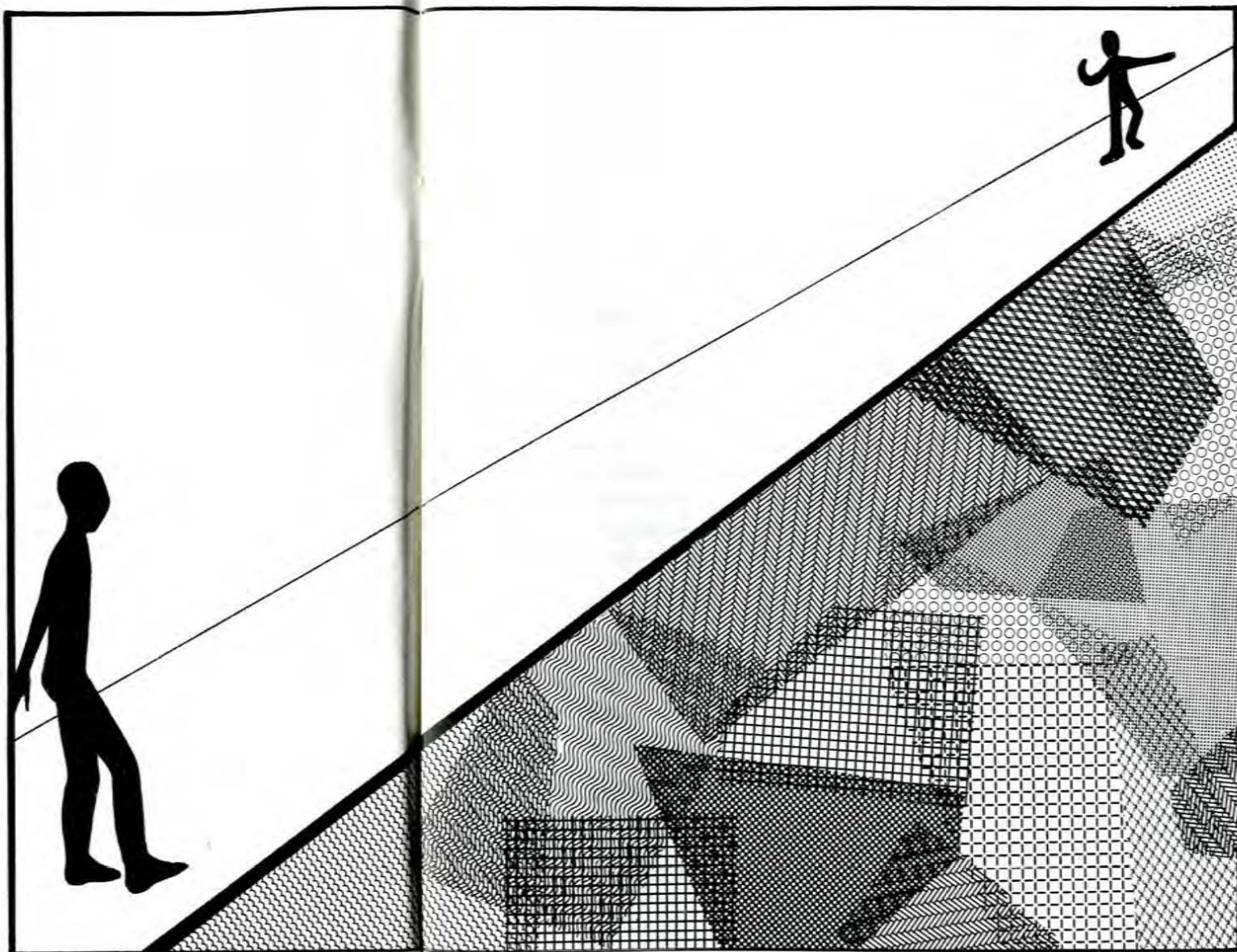
ful for it, because today I have over four years clean.

After attending several meetings, I began to hear about the importance of sponsorship. I got the information pamphlet on sponsorship and read it so that I would know what to look for in a sponsor. After becoming familiar with it, I was ready to find a sponsor.

The first stumbling block for me was fear. I had always been afraid of people, and carried the fear of rejection everywhere I went. I had to address this fear before I could get on with my recovery. When I approached a certain individual to ask him to sponsor me, I expected the answer to be "no." To my surprise, he said "yes."

Now I had a sponsor, somebody I could turn to, someone to share my problems with. The sponsor I chose centered his recovery in the N.A. program. He practiced spiritual principles in his life, he was an active member of the group, and he carried the message of recovery.

I wanted what my sponsor had. I



knew that in order for me to find it I would have to use him. The night I asked him, he sat down and shared his beliefs about sponsorship with me. He made it clear to me that it was my responsibility to contact him when I was hurting or needed to talk to him. From that night on, I began a relationship with him that would be an essential part of my recovery—"the therapeutic value of one addict helping another" had begun.

Sponsorship is a relationship that went beyond my distorted ideas of what relationships were supposed to be like. First of all, it was with

My sponsor allowed me to make my own mistakes.

another male. Secondly, it was built on sound spiritual principles. My relationship with my sponsor was the first one that had a meaning and purpose to it. Honesty, love, and acceptance were the main reasons.

In the past, I'd placed conditions on everything. Sponsorship is unconditional. It is two addicts getting together and sharing freely about recovery from the disease of addiction. It is not a one-way but a two-way street. My relationship with my sponsor has been a journey into the light of reality.

A relationship with a sponsor is the road to a personal involvement with the Twelve Steps of N.A. My sponsor taught me, both by example and word,

how to work the steps. No matter what type of problems I would share with him, he would point out the solution in the steps. My sponsor never turned me away. He was always there, regardless of the circumstances. It did not matter what time of day it was. He allowed me to make my own mistakes, and was there after I made them to help me through the pain. He never forced me to do anything I did not want to do. He loved me well before I could love myself or anyone else. He forgave me well before I could forgive. He cared for me well before I could care.

My sponsor showed me living proof that recovery is possible for any addict willing to practice the principles that make recovery possible. He gave it away—to me—in order to keep it himself.

There are many things I have received from my sponsor. I can remember thanking my sponsor many times for the help he'd given me; his response was that I, too, had helped him tremendously. That amazed me.

He has helped me find the N.A. way of life. He has shown me the need to get involved and help carry the message of recovery to addicts who still suffer. What started as sponsorship has developed into a deep and intimate friendship that can not have a price tag attached to it.

I am grateful for sponsorship. I know that if it were not for my sponsor I would have faced a rougher road. My sponsor is a gift from God.

Anonymous

Serenity pie

Start with ninety meetings in ninety days.

Stir in plenty of fellowship with other recovering addicts.

Add one cup of talking to the "winners."

Stir in two cups of reading recommended literature.

Throw in one Basic Text.

Add three pamphlets for newcomers.

Carefully select one sponsor.

Stir in: Honesty,
Openmindedness,
and Willingness,
Plus four cups of prayer.

Continue to fold with fellowship and calls to fellow recovering addicts.

Add three cups of service work,
Four pinches of rides to others, and
Five tablespoons of asking for help.

Add Steps One, Two, and Three.

Mix in more fellowship,
calls to other recovering addicts,
and N.A. functions.

If overtired or angry, H.A.L.T.

Add another four cups of prayer.

Continue to mix Steps Four and Five,
and one teaspoon each of: workshops,
talking to newcomers, and
Cleaning the room after meetings.

For constant nourishment, serve warm daily.

B.J., Missouri

The medicine maze

My close friend, Ed, with twelve years clean in Narcotics Anonymous, died of a liver disease. I watched his agony, his eyes crying out in pain. When the end neared, he was in and out of consciousness. The doctors had put him on some type of pain medication. I remember the look in his

tired eyes, and his words to me: "No more cakes; I slipped. I didn't make it." Shortly thereafter, he went to the Father.

During this time, I was also battling a chronic, terminal lung disease. For years, I have had doctors watching my plight. With eleven years clean in Narcotics Anonymous, I found myself alone and losing the battle. Physically, I was decaying; mentally, I felt like I was already dead. I was hooked up to oxygen and other machines twenty-four hours a day. I was full of a fear I had never known existed.

During this terrible time, I would never take prescription medicines that contained any type of pain reliever. Then the doctors told me that I was at the end of my disease. My mind went out of control. All I had to look forward to was cremation or

burial. Simply walking became a major task. My mind was full of fear, and my body obsessed with anxieties.

A morning came when I knew that the end was near—or so my mind told me—and I ended up at the hospital. The doctor took one look at me and knew I was on the brink of going insane. He felt, as I understand it now, that even though my body was failing, we must treat the mind. At that moment, I turned everything over to God and the doctors. I was given a medicine to help ease the effects of the disease which I was battling.

Within a short period, I began feeling guilty. All of the things I had

I felt dirty and alone, like I had failed.

learned and lived in Narcotics Anonymous seemed questionable after taking this medication. I shared these feelings with a friend in the fellowship who knows me well. His words were to the effect that he believed totally in what I felt I had to do, but suggested that I not tell anyone in the fellowship because many would not be able to understand.

I felt dirty and alone, and once more I felt that I had failed. I hated him, you, me, and God. Hate oozed out of every pore. People in the fellowship had stopped coming by. After all, who wants to see someone hooked up to oxygen?

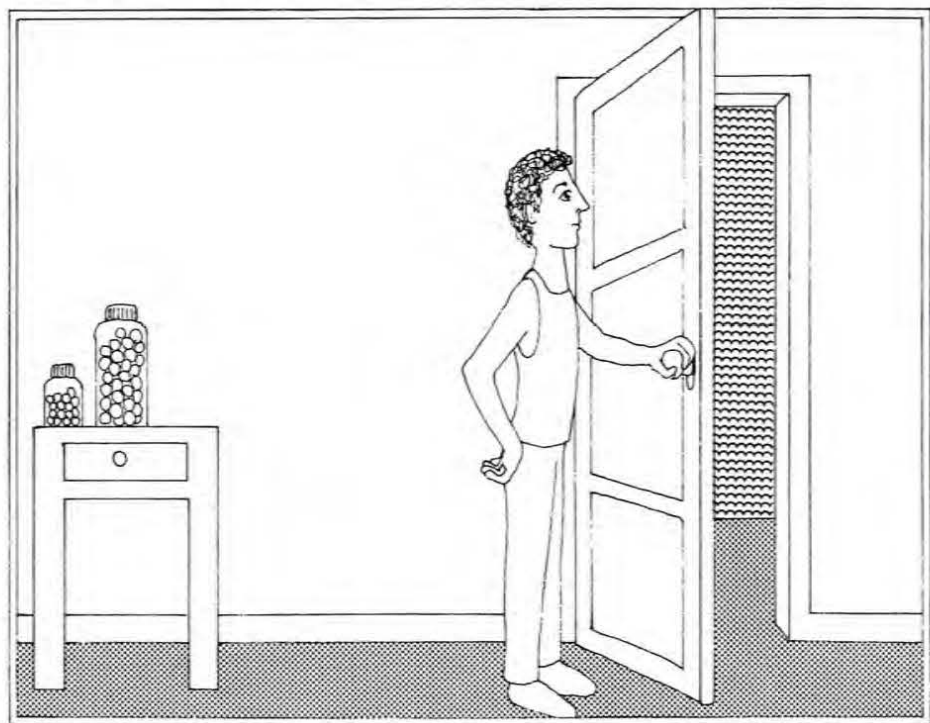
I had to draw on every bit of strength I had to fight back. Even then, I knew that God had not brought me this far to abandon me to the misery and fear of my own mind. I started to trudge my way out.

It is now two and one-half years later, and I'm proud to say that I am thirteen and one-half years clean in the program of Narcotics Anonymous. It's been quite a while since the doctors have advised me to prepare my loved ones for my death. I'm now off the oxygen apparatus. I quit taking the medicine a couple of years ago. I have worked twenty-four hours a day to battle, one day at a time, the disease that wants my life.

God has shown me the difference between medicine and addiction. God has been good to me. The medicine was used as medicine, and the obsession to get loaded never came. Don't tell me there is no God! I have enough to share with all. I only wish I could have shared this with Ed before he died.

Even now, while I'm sharing this with you, I'm really talking to those who are suffering with a chronic, terminal disease. I feel stronger today about the program of Narcotics Anonymous and this way of life than ever before. My lung disease is still there. My disease of addiction is still there. The only difference is that I have been given a gift: "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."

B.R., California



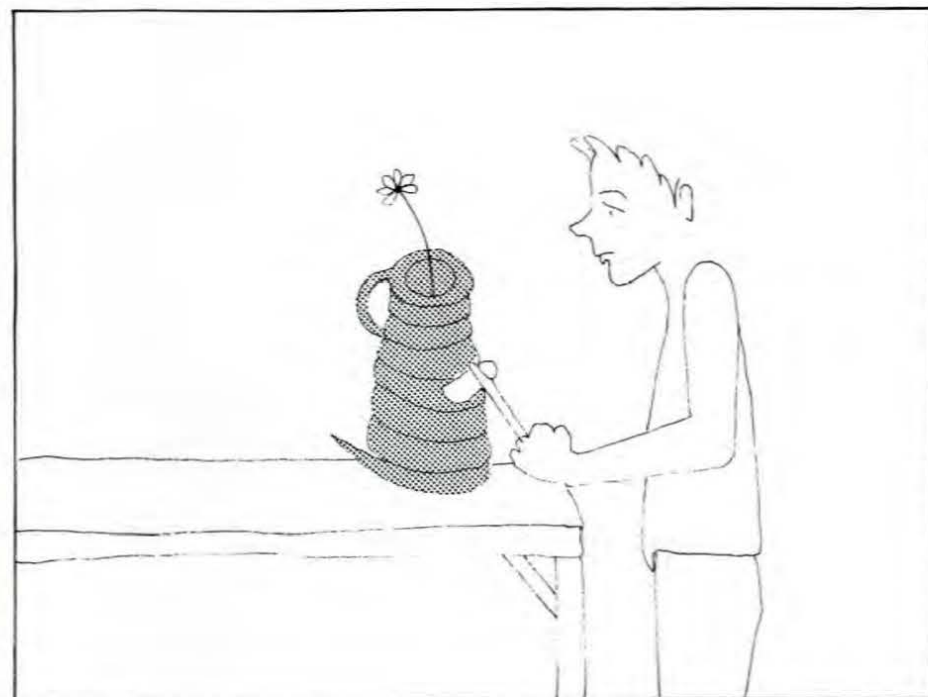
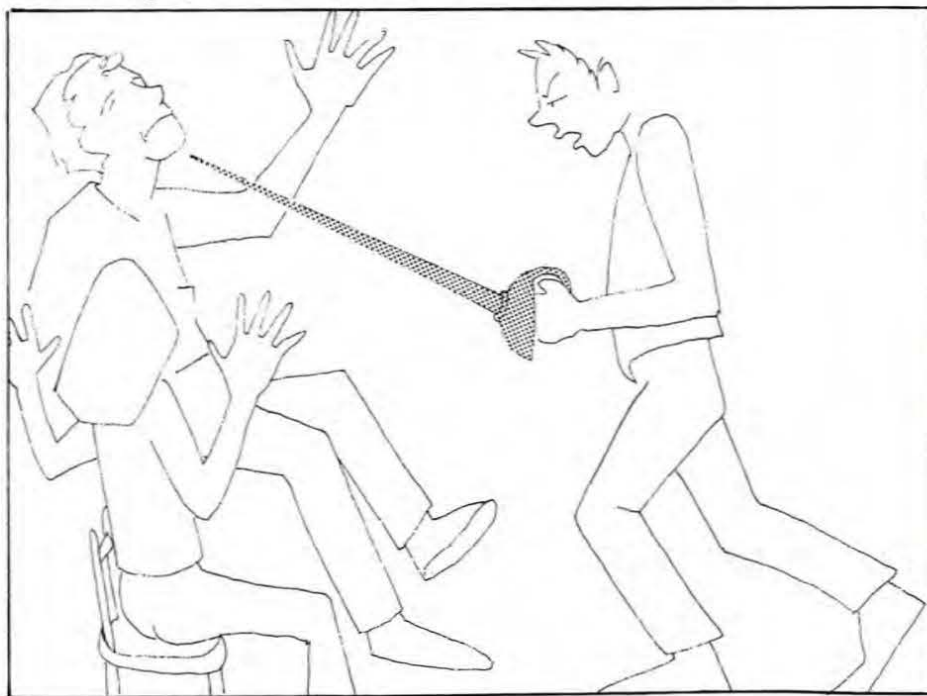
A clear message

Since 1982, the year I gave up using and picked up the Twelve Steps, I have had a nagging defect in my character that I have been unable to shake. It is a deep-seated false belief that I can find a magical prayer, slogan, principle, word, or system that I'll be able to master and, in short order, use to manage my life. This lie lives beneath the level of my conscious thought, because it is so

ridiculous when lined up with the reality of my life. It only pokes at me when I'm down in some psychic cesspool.

The lie uses the program. When I first got clean I worked the steps badly, unwillingly, and (in retrospect) comically. "Easy does it" dug away at me. It told me that I went to too many meetings. I didn't need to "work" the steps; I should wait until they "happened" to me. I only needed to go through the steps when hurting... only once... not in order... when I was ready. Thank God I listened to my sponsor.

After a couple years I quit detoxing, and the lie switched its tactics. It took up the purity sword. It had me slashing away at newcomers who didn't talk right yet, and at oldcomers who wouldn't let go of other fellowships, religions, psychologists, treatment



centers, spouses, kids, or whatever messed up their message. I fought this battle in my head, then condemned myself for not having the "courage" to put down others for being honest. It took a couple more years to realize that N.A. was growing just fine without me actually slicing up the impure.

The most recent phase of the lie, the one I'm just now pulling out of, is work. Somewhere, I picked up the silly notion that if I worked real hard, everything would be all right and that I would get everything I wanted. Well, after three years of this brand of the lie, I've looked into the cesspool and picked out the same old... stuff. I'm still looking for that big score, that flash in the pan that will change God, others, and me enough to suit me.

I am tempted to tell you all that balance is the magic formula. I'm

sure that's what is brewing in the old subconscious mind. Just work when it's time to work. Relax at the appropriate time. Live the program to perfection. But I'm afraid I don't buy that either. I'm stuck with reality.

The lie uses the program—it took up the purity sword.

I won't use. I'll go to meetings. I'll use my sponsor. I'll work the steps, one at a time. I'll pray. And I'll thank God for another clean, unmanageable day in N.A.

L.G., Michigan

Grief in N.A.

I came to this program three years ago, and in that time I have made many changes in my life. In my second year of recovery, I was facing many painful things from my childhood. I decided that going to meetings and reading my Basic Text wasn't enough. I had a sponsor before but it hadn't worked out, so a new sponsor was what I needed.

I was afraid of being rejected, but I asked an addict to sponsor me. Her answer was yes. We became friends. I felt very close to her, and she had a gift for sharing her experiences. She took me to meetings I hadn't ever been to. I was afraid to go, and she helped me with my fears. Things were going well, but because I was unable to keep up with my feelings, my old behaviors returned. Even though I never used, I started to isolate myself.

My sponsor was unable to reach me; I had closed the doors to her. My love for N.A. was dying. After some months of this, I started to realize that I was letting my disease take over. I was too afraid to contact my sponsor, make amends to her, and ask for her help. Down deep I knew she would help, but I wasn't ready to ask. We often saw each other at meetings. We talked and laughed, but neither

of us brought up the topic of why she wasn't sponsoring me anymore.

Then came the call that she had died. The reality of it all was so painful. It just couldn't be! All at once, denial, anger, blame, and guilt were flooding into my mind. When I realized that it wasn't a sick joke, I could hear all the things my friend had said: not to isolate, to talk it out, and keep coming back.

I realized I needed to talk to other addicts. I needed the phone and the book of numbers of people in the fellowship. As I told other addicts of her

death, I sensed their pain and they sensed mine. We shared and cried and tried to deal with what had happened.

When it came time for the funeral, we shared about the love this fine woman had given us, about all the service work she had done, and about all the addicts she had sponsored. We missed the sharing she would not be able to give now.

She had often said "I want to die clean," and she did. She had a wonderful life, and in my heart I know there wasn't anything else that could have made her life more complete.

She had found the answer in the program, and in that she died loved and clean.

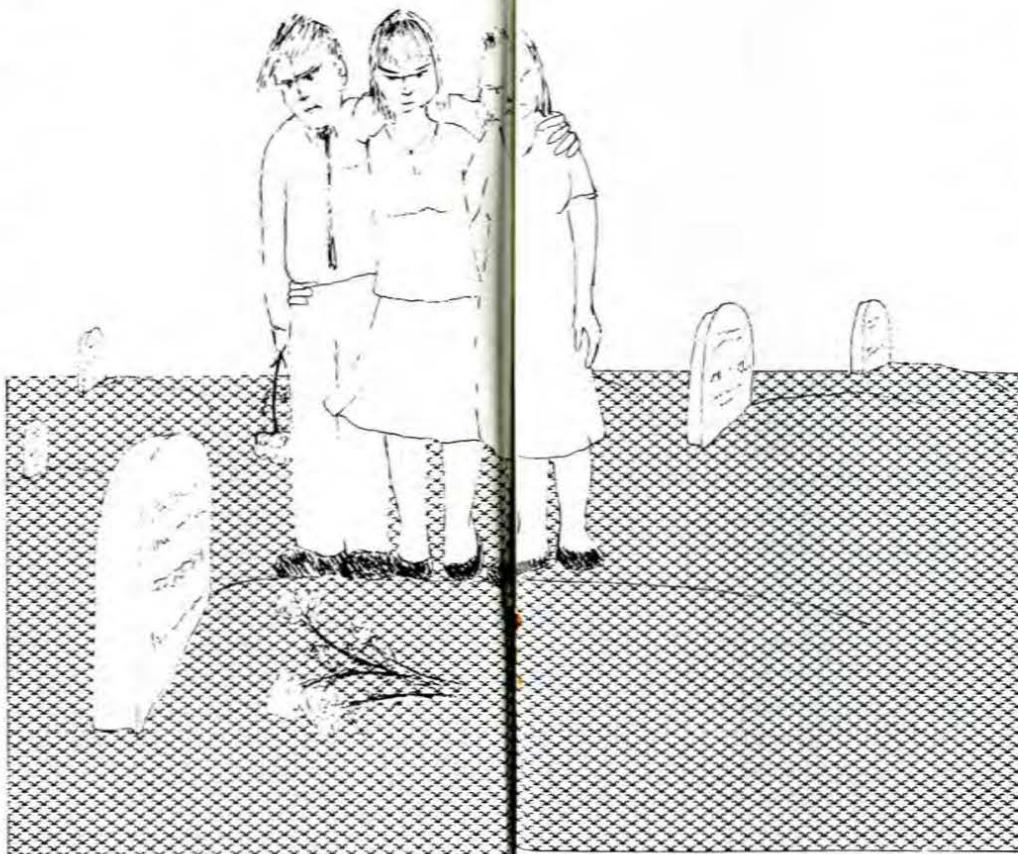
I have been to two funerals since I came into this program: one for a friend who died while he was using, and the other for my friend who died clean. When I compare the love and caring showed at these two funerals, there is no comparison.

When my friend in N.A. died, it was hard for us to leave her. When it came time to leave the grave we all lingered, hugging and holding each other. We took roses from around her grave, as if to symbolize taking a part of her home with us one last time. Later, we went to her home and shared more about our love for her. I learned many things that day: the love in the fellowship, the need for pain even though we don't want it, and that, even in death, the message of recovery can still be carried.

She had often said, 'I want to die clean,' and she did.

I'm grateful to N.A. for making it possible for me to have the love I felt for my friend, for the pain of letting her go, and, last but not least, for the ability to get through it without using. It was said at her funeral that the best tribute to her would be to continue to carry the message.

Anonymous, Wisconsin

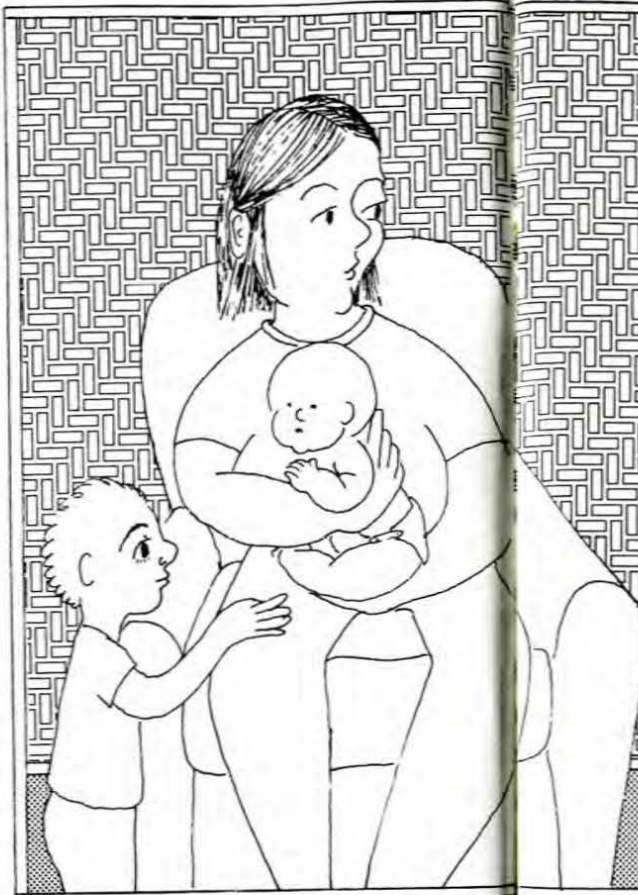


An awakening of the spirit

In the six and a half years I've been clean (gratefully), I have heard a lot of talk and confusion about the term "spiritual awakening." What is it? When does it happen? Could it possibly happen to me? Do I have to have one? How will I know when it happens? These are some of the questions I asked when I came. I would like to share my thoughts on the subject, and also a little bit of my experience.

When I first got here, the only feelings I felt were self-pity and numbness. I had lost my family, my friends, my home, and most important of all, my self-esteem. As I look back, though, I see that I never really had self-esteem to begin with. I had no sense of self, except for where I was going to get my next high. I was emotionally, spiritually, and physically bankrupt. I felt like a walking void. Through the grace of God, and some willingness on my part, I got into treatment.

It was there that I was introduced to N.A. At first, I was repelled at the word "God," and the thought of a spiritual awakening was as foreign to me as only smoking half of a joint. I was told, "Bring the body, and the mind will follow." I was loved until



I could start loving myself. I got a sponsor, and at her urging, I used you people as my higher power.

Then, after the cloud lifted a little more, I began to want what you had: that light behind your eyes. I knew it was attainable; after all, if you could do it, I could too. But was I willing to give up my past prejudices and fears in order to get what you had? I was reminded that I needed to be willing to go to any lengths, so I took a risk and started using what I referred to as the "G" word, God.

Well, six and a half years later, it has gotten much easier to speak, write, and, more importantly, to feel

God in my life. I think one of the turning points in my recovery was when I looked at the term "spiritual awakening" and defined it for myself.

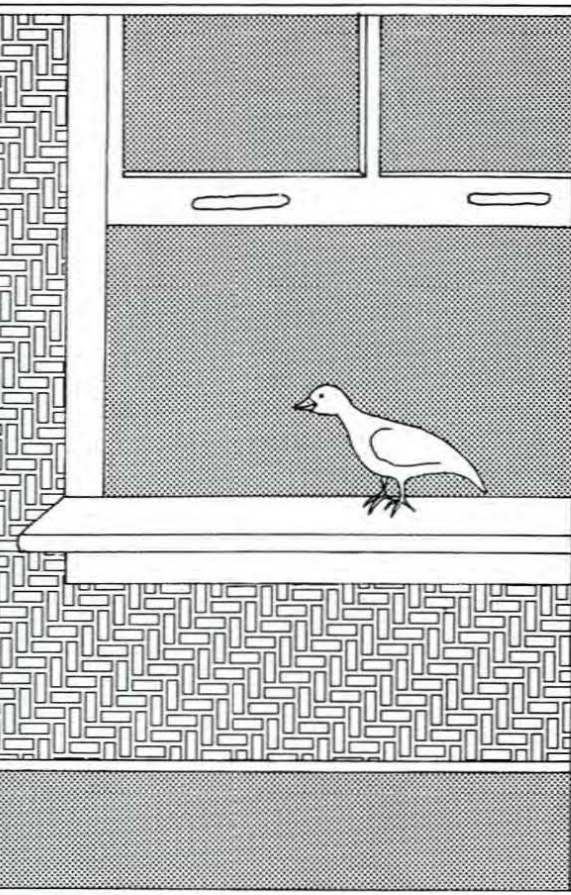
I think of spiritual awakening as simply an awakening of the spirit. The spirit inside me, the same one I had deadened with drugs, is soaring high today. I have a much lighter load to carry in my heart.

I have seen many things in my recovery that have helped me to believe, and have made me willing to see more. I think one of the things that has had the biggest impact on my spiritual growth is simply helping a

newcomer. Showing someone else the way, and helping them to fulfill their dreams, makes me know in my heart that I am but an instrument for God's voice. That is, when I get my ego out of the way!

I have been through hard times in my recovery, but by not picking up, *no matter what*, my higher power has lifted me up and loved me unconditionally. There is light at the end of the tunnel for me. And, by experiencing those hard times, and staying clean, I can now help others face those bad days too.

Giving birth to my son two years ago has helped awaken the spirit in



me, and also the "little kid" within! What a miracle!

There have been many, many "coincidences" in my life, but this one happened last weekend and has me convinced there are no mistakes. My husband and I recently moved to a small town in the country, population 150. Some friends came up for the weekend, and they brought their two kids. They had a campsite near our house so, on Saturday, we spent the day there helping them to set up camp.

The plan was to drive into town that night for a meeting. As we were setting up camp, a guy walked over, said that he had noticed our N.A. stickers on our car in the parking lot, and wondered if we were in the program. We got to talking, laughing, and hugging when two guys from the next

campsite saw us and came over to ask us if we were in recovery!

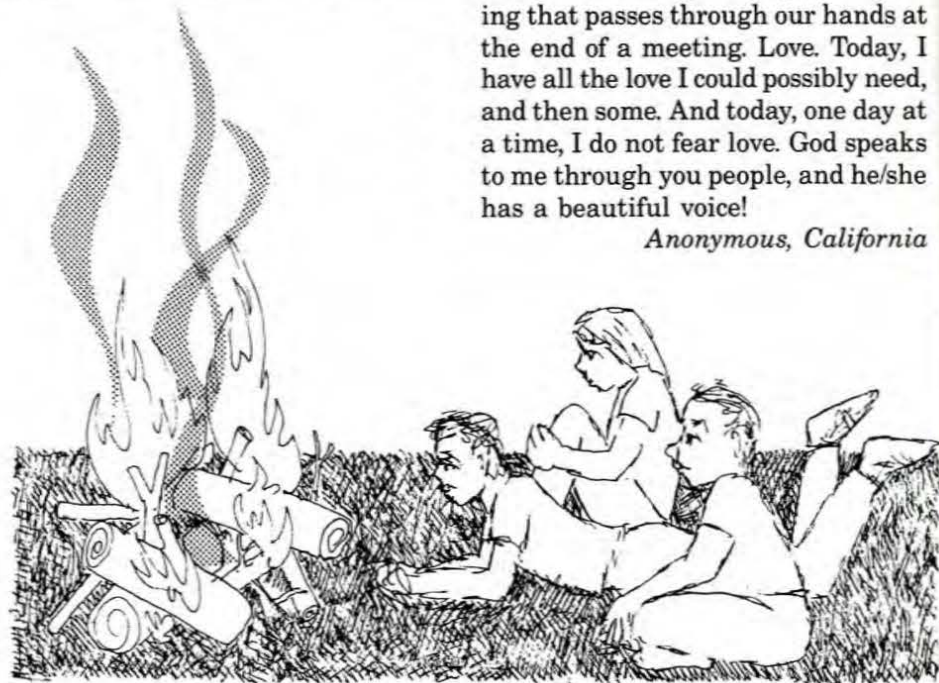
Well, to make a long story short, it turned out that we never drove into town for a meeting. We didn't have to.

The spirit inside me is soaring high today.

At 9:00 that night, fourteen of us sat around an open campfire and shared our stories. It was truly an awakening of all our spirits.

Today, I find the most spirituality in meetings and in nature. My "definition" of God today is simply the feeling that passes through our hands at the end of a meeting. Love. Today, I have all the love I could possibly need, and then some. And today, one day at a time, I do not fear love. God speaks to me through you people, and he/she has a beautiful voice!

Anonymous, California



Obsessed with obsession

And now for our latest update on the bumpy but exciting road to self-acceptance in *all* areas of life. Yes, folks, it's that three-letter word again: *s-e-x*.

When last we left our traveler, she had come through that initial exposure to lust with a deeper self-understanding (and thank you, H.P.). Having discovered the emptiness of "one-nighters," she added that to her repertoire of things to laugh about. In fact, many friends have voiced concerns over her continuous chuckling and Cheshire cat smile. Heaving a big sigh of relief, she then settled in to watching the reruns. Unbeknownst to her, her Higher Power had other plans.

Sleeping and dreaming had always been an enjoyable experience for her. It was like going to the movies for free, and she was usually the star! This morning, however, as soon as she opened her eyes, she knew that "it" was back... *The obsession from hell.*

The strange thing was there, and no body was attached to it—not even a face. Picking up pen and paper, she desperately began examining her feelings and motives. What she discovered was that she was obsessed with

"wanting to be obsessed." What a concept! It had begun as a natural longing to cherish, caress, and nurture, and somehow had changed. Calling her sponsor, she revealed this new realization.

Scrambling for tools to overcome this problem, she quickly began sharing with friends. It was during this process that she learned another lesson. There are co-signers in abundance; to find them, just share often enough!

Discarding this, she finally surrendered and shared at a meeting (yes, about that three-letter word again). With her new self-awareness, she also prefaced her sharing with the disclaimer, "This is not an advertisement." Sure enough, the next morning she awakened with feet planted firmly on the planet, chuckling, and with that silly grin!

C.S., Hawaii



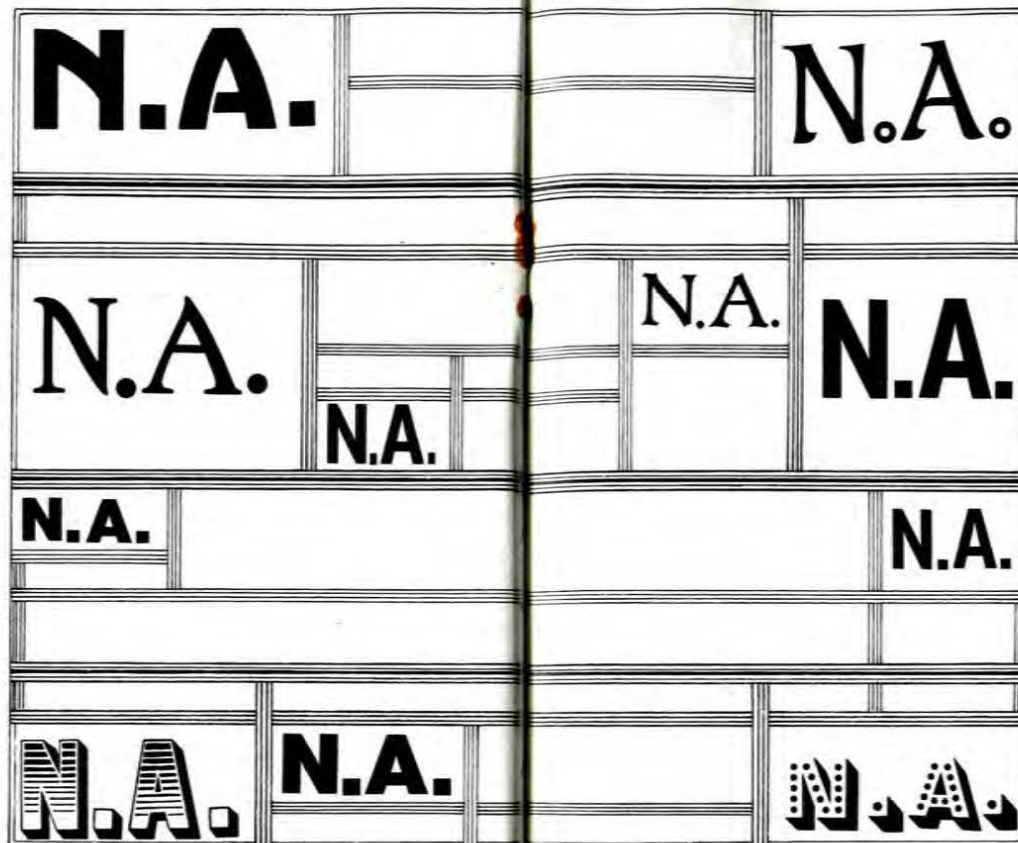
A world of N.A.

By God's grace, I was fortunate enough to be able to travel with my mother and father to some far away places. My experiences are not really very different from any other person's experiences when traveling in a foreign place. I found people in general to be friendly and helpful. I found some of the same problems and victories as I do in my home country. What did interest me was where I found these things, and my reaction to these experiences.

As I was not going to be able to get to many meetings, I planned out as best I could where and when my best chances would be. The first came in Honolulu, Hawaii. I felt anxious and nervous as I walked into the room. I looked around at men and women talking, hugging, getting coffee, and felt left out. I didn't know anyone.

Just then, someone walked up to me, said "hello," and gave me a hug. That started the process. I went around to a few people, gave some hugs, and settled down on a hard bench with some coffee and started talking. I was traveling, feeling "apart from," and they were traveling, too, and feeling the same way. My feelings changed; I now felt a connection with all those people at the meeting.

It was three to four weeks before I had another experience that connect-



ed me with the program. The meeting was in a hospital treatment setting, which I felt comfortable in from the beginning. This was a smaller meeting (twelve to fifteen people), but I felt the connection no less.

Next, I visited a regional service office. I had written this office previously for a meeting list, which they sent me promptly. I also received a very nice letter from the service office manager, who invited me to visit the office when I was in town. I called to arrange a meeting, and we made a date. Our visit was spent telling jokes, trading T-shirts, and talking program. He became my friend in just a few minutes. This person just accept-

ed me as I was at that moment and was willing to give of himself.

Several weeks went by until I could get to another meeting. I had no phone number, no address, and no meeting list. I checked the phone book; it worked! They gave me an address and a time. When I showed up late, the meeting was already going on.

They were speaking in English where and when they could. I sat down, and they finished the readings and reports and broke for coffee. Someone brought in a tray of coffee and tea, asked me if I would like one or the other, and if I would like one

of the cakes (called something that I can't pronounce or spell). Some others came up and asked me if I was from the U.S., and the chairperson asked if I would speak.

I felt relieved, but nervous. Their format is different than most of ours. After the readings and coffee break, several different people share with the group about what's going on in their life. I was just one of many people who shared that night. I found

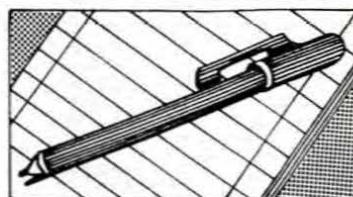
Our visit was spent trading T-shirts and talking program.

they had the same fears and doubts as I had.

I found myself again getting out of myself, and talking with others after the meeting. I also learned why there were no women at the meeting. They come in and go right back out after a short time; this is because there are no other women for them to identify with. They say that is the way it is in all the groups in Bombay. I didn't want to leave, but I knew I had to get back to my own country and group.

I must say that there is not much new in this world, but there are new ways of looking at ourselves and at what is around us. Looking at our fellowship in this way, I find that there is not much wrong with anything. We really are doing all right.

B.B., Ohio



Viewpoint

How well are we handling the growth of our meetings?

During the past several years, I have been fortunate to attend meetings in many parts of the United States and in several other countries. I have noticed an interesting pattern that sometimes affects meetings in certain local areas as N.A. grows. Perhaps a few N.A. Way readers will be able to identify with this pattern in their own area.

When N.A. groups in an area first start, the meetings have a wonderful, close-knit family feeling. The original members often became close friends because in small, newly-formed groups, there just aren't as many people around and you have to hold on tightly to each other.

As new groups spin off from the original groups, they frequently adopt the same meeting format as their predecessors, because that format feels familiar and seems to be the "correct" way to have a meeting. However, as N.A. gets bigger, groups

sometimes become large and unwieldy. Sometimes griping can be heard because meeting formats aren't working as well as they used to.

Trying to preserve that special flavor of the original meetings can be difficult. What worked with six or eight people doesn't always go smoothly with 80 or 180 addicts. When groups grow, it shows that N.A. is achieving its primary purpose, but it also creates tension and challenges. Sometimes, instead of looking forward with faith and flexibility, people feel threatened and dig in their heels.

There are many ways an area can address the influx of addicts, but in many places, fear of letting go of outdated practices makes handling growth more difficult than it needs to be. To give one amusing example, I spent a few weeks a couple of years ago in an area that was struggling with the changes brought on by growth. The original meetings in this area adopted the practice of simply letting whoever wanted to speak start talking as soon as the last person was done.

I was told that addicts in this particular community didn't like the authority and structure that would go along with having speaker meetings, or having a chairperson call on people to speak, or if members had to raise their hands. I can understand

that, I said. I don't know many addicts anywhere who like being told what to do.

Well, the practice of having any member start talking as soon as the last person finished was probably a charming and workable custom in the beginning. But the meetings I went to usually included fifty people or more. It took me several meetings to realize that in order to say anything, I would just have to grab the floor! When I finally was able to share, others were poised on the edges of their seats, waiting to jump in at the moment I ended. When I paused to take a breath, my turn was over. Three or four others were already introducing themselves and jockeying for position to see who was first. Every meeting I went to was the same. The situation, although extreme, is paralleled in many other places where traditional formats have been rigidly clung to.

People have sentimental attachments to the formats that worked for once-tiny, close-knit groups. When such formats don't continue to work smoothly, it doesn't mean they were *never* any good. Nobody should take it personally if a change or a new idea is introduced. Variety and diversity in meeting formats and styles is a sign of a healthy area. But in order for diversity to flourish, open-mindedness and tolerance are required.

For example, some meetings ask everyone in the room to introduce themselves before the sharing begins. But when a meeting draws a large attendance, introductions can take substantial time. If a group wants to have introductions, even for 150 people or

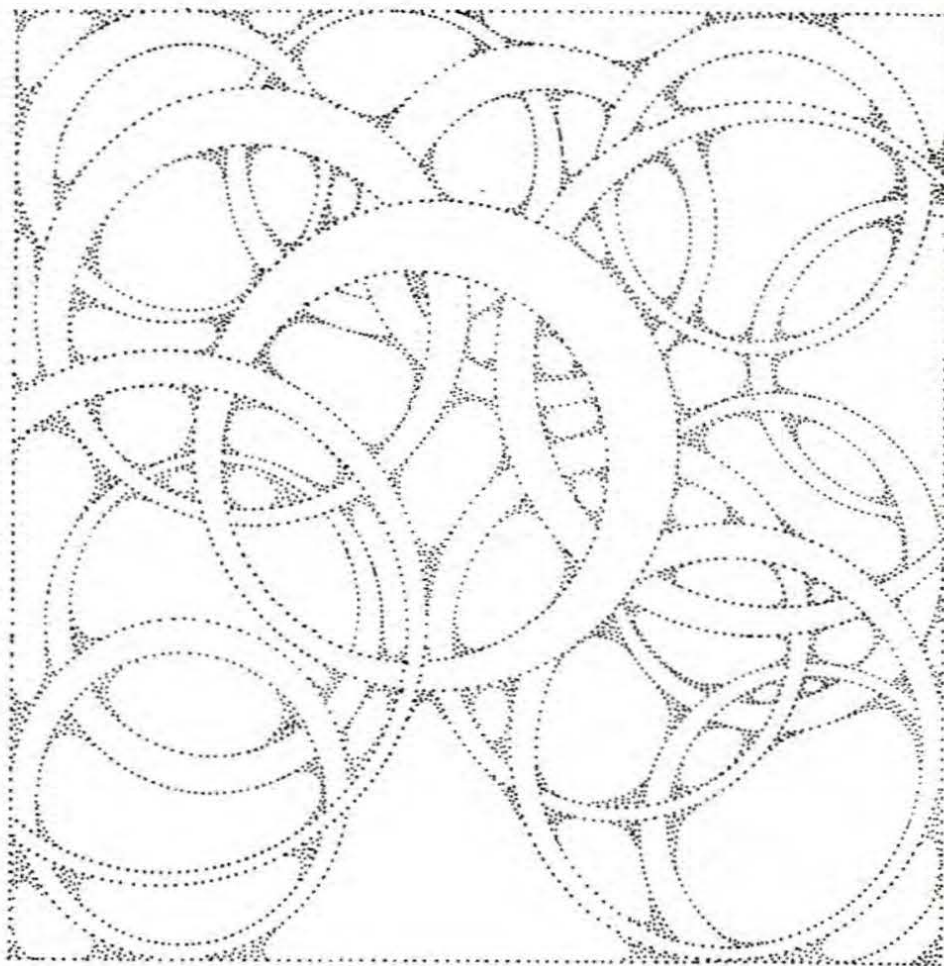
more, that group has the right to do so. But it is important for everyone to know that a group also has the right to get rid of introductions if it wishes.

I have seen many times when small adjustments to a meeting format were vigorously and angrily opposed by so-called oldtimers. When I listened to their reasons, what I heard was, "That's not how we used to do it, so we shouldn't change." That sounds like closed-mindedness to me.

Many people in N.A. experienced group therapy before coming to N.A., and in many places group therapy ideas and techniques have had a major impact on the shape and style of N.A. meetings. For example, participants in group therapy often give each other "feedback." Feedback is based on the idea that others can see things in you that you can't see in yourself. By receiving feedback, you can understand yourself more clearly. I have seen many N.A. groups attempt to use the concept of feedback.

Perhaps getting and giving feedback worked in some early, small N.A. groups. Unfortunately, feedback is generally not helpful to the process of N.A. meetings when the fellowship starts to get larger. I have seen people try to give feedback during N.A. meetings many times, and they usually sound more like amateur psychologists than recovering addicts. The next time someone in your group asks for feedback or tries to give it, look around the room to see how people are reacting. It tends to be a big turn-off in Narcotics Anonymous.

If you really want feedback, ask for people to approach you with it after the meeting. There are plenty of



would-be counsellors around, happy to give you all the feedback you need. If you feel the desire to give someone feedback, I also suggest offering it after the meeting. That way, the person you're giving it to has the choice to listen to you or ignore you. Confining such activities to the time after the meeting will allow the meeting itself to move ahead with its purpose.

Another example of how group therapy has crept into N.A. is the idea that N.A. meetings are a place where you should "get things off your chest,"

or "dump your stuff." In many therapy groups, getting participants to open up and release secrets and deep inner emotions is encouraged. The theory is that this helps reduce painful, pent up feelings, and the detrimental effects these feelings may have on us as adults. Some people also believe that such deep sharing increases the level of trust in the group.

I often hear people in N.A. say that, like group therapy, meetings are a place to "leave your garbage" or "get your feelings out in the open." But is

this a realistic or helpful philosophy? An N.A. meeting usually has people in the room who are fresh in from using, or about to go out. People at all levels of recovery and sickness are present. Under such circumstances, it may be that not everyone is trustworthy.

Opening up one's guts in a meeting can lead to unnecessary emotional damage. It is irresponsible to suggest this kind of sharing to new members. Giving people, especially newer members, the idea that they should share personal feelings and make themselves vulnerable at meetings is a disservice. It's more appropriate to share personal feelings and become vulnerable away from meetings, with people we know and trust. If we need professional therapy, nothing in N.A. prevents us from getting it. But N.A. itself is not professional therapy.

The idea that meetings are there for us to unload pain and negativity misses the whole purpose of N.A. The purpose of a meeting has been summed up like this: "The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away." The question we should ask ourselves is whether we want to keep our "garbage" by giving it away, or if we would rather keep our joy in recovery by giving it away.

Self-centeredness is one of the most damaging features of addiction. Sitting in a meeting and thinking about myself and what I want to get off my chest is just that: self-centeredness. When I come to a meeting hoping to speak, that is the best time for me to be quiet and listen. Putting the focus on me instead of the newcomer is a

result of too much ego.

When a meeting's format and philosophy are designed to deliver a message of recovery to newcomers, it doesn't matter how big we get; we will be able to maintain the positive climate we want. A message of recovery does not revolve around personal melodramas. It speaks to the newest person in the meeting and says, "recovery is real." It does not offer platitudes or canned pitches. It is alive and current and honest. It is not a song and dance, a sales pitch or sermon. It is simple and clear.

Has your meeting format become outdated? Are your meetings affected by pseudo-therapy ideas? Does the atmosphere at meetings you go to leave something to be desired? If the answer is yes, time's a-wasting. There are many formats used throughout our fellowship. You don't have to be stuck in an endless rut. As long as you use the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, a meeting is a meeting, whether the format is the same as other meetings in an area or not.

Gather your friends who you have been talking with about how you all wish the atmosphere at meetings could be improved. Talk about solutions and new ideas. The hard part is that rethinking the process of running a meeting challenges us to examine what a meeting really is and what our own purpose is for participating. But those are questions we should ask ourselves, and the results are worth the effort. If you face opposition to new meeting format ideas, don't give up. And don't forget—we're all in this together!

W.L., New Jersey

Editorial replies

Computerized recovery instrumentation

From Wisconsin: Our subcommittee is deeply concerned with an article that was printed in the April 1989 issue of *The N.A. Way Magazine*. The article was entitled "Computerized Recovery Instrumentation." It is the opinion of this subcommittee, after two hours of discussion, that this article should not have been printed. It is, in the words of the committee, "a slap in the face of recovery."

Our first and biggest concern is the effect that this article might have on the newcomer. If I may quote:

1. "Get well quicker than the rest with a Sharecuel!"
2. "Ever worried about not sounding well enough?"
3. "Can even disguise defects and project humility..."
4. "Good-bye to all that tedious praying."
5. "Yes, your prayers can be heard instantly, and the answer, should you wish to hear it, will be loud and clear."

A newcomer reading this would not only get the wrong impression of recovery, but would, in all probability, get a very bad impression of N.A. as a whole, and never return to a meeting.

What about the non-addict who gets hold of this article? One of our purposes in public information is to make sure that the image of N.A. that the public sees is the "correct" one. This one article has the capability to undo a lot of work done by a lot of trusted servants.

We realize that you cannot be responsible for the content of the articles that are submitted to you, but we feel that you are, or at least should be, responsible for the articles that you choose to print. Editorial privilege allows you to choose which articles will or will not be used for publication, and we feel that you have chosen poorly in this case.

***'This article was
a slap in the
face of recovery.
It shouldn't have
been printed in
The N.A. Way
Magazine.'***

We must all try to work within the traditions, and we realize that while this is not always possible, the blatant trashing of twelve of our most important principles is to be avoided at all costs. We are extremely disappointed with the judgement shown by the editorial staff of the *N.A. Way*, and hope that more care will be exercised in the future.

M.P.

The "Viewpoint" section

From Texas: My comment has to do with the "Viewpoint" section on controversial issues. My vote goes to keep it included in the magazine. Why try to paint the picture that Narcotics Anonymous is nothing but unconditional love with never a misunderstanding or disagreement? Newcomers are sure to catch on something is amiss when they attend their first business meeting or see their first fist fight in the parking lot. Besides, we are a volatile group of colorful people and that is nothing to be ashamed about. As with many things, our greatest strength is also our greatest weakness.

D.J.

From New York: I have been subscribing to the *N.A. Way* for the past two years and regret to say, I will not be renewing my subscription.

You see, over the past year, I have noticed that this publication has become increasingly more controversial. Where it once focused on sharing experience, strength and hope, it now leans toward individual opinions, i.e., purist views, politics, etc.

Is our primary purpose to "carry the message to the addict who still suffers," or to have him identify himself/herself as an "addict" only?

I'm sorry to say, I do not consider this to be a tool suitable for use in my recovery any longer.

J.N.

What is addiction?

From Illinois: Lately, I have been hearing a lot of debate over the definition of "addiction." We as addicts must remember this is a simple program. So, let's keep it simple. First of all, defining addiction is an outside issue for the professionals to debate. Controversies like this will divert us from our primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

Second, defining addiction is like defining our Higher Power. There are no right or wrong answers. We all have our own definition of God and addiction, as we understand it. As long as a person believes he or she is an addict, then they are an addict.

The most important question is, "Who is an addict?" And, as we all know, "We do not have to think twice about this question. We know!" If it is important for the individual addict to define addiction, then they should take a fearless and moral inventory of themselves. At this point, the addict will have a clear definition of what addiction is "as they understand it." Who is an addict is a much more important issue to Narcotics Anonymous than what is addiction.

Once again, I have found the answer to my question in the Twelve Steps. I must remember to keep it simple! Thank you, God, for this simple program of recovery. I know if I continue to work these steps, I will get a better understanding of addiction, and more will be revealed on a daily basis.

P.L.

From the editor



This is the last time I will be writing this column in the *N.A. Way*. I have recently resigned after five years as editor of the magazine. I was asked to write one last column looking back over the last five years; I'm grateful for the opportunity.

I was hired to edit the *N.A. Way* in July of 1984. The magazine was a couple of months behind schedule, and had about four hundred subscribers. About half of those subscriptions were going to expire in the following couple of months, so the low point in our circulation was reached late in 1984, when we mailed just over two hundred magazines.

There were many obstacles to overcome at that time. Since the magazine's exposure within the fellowship was so limited, we had few writers to draw from. We had to find a way to encourage people to write.

The graphic presentation in the magazine was of poor quality. We had to find a way to make improvements in that area with no experience and little money.

So our first task in 1984 was to put together a varied collection of articles each month that carried a solid N.A. message, and get it to subscribers on time. We wrote a letter to all world level trusted servants first, asking them to write. We called individual members asking for submissions, and

we included in every magazine an appeal for more articles.

As the magazine improved, so did our circulation. Within a couple of years we had leveled off at somewhere around 4,500 subscribers. We made steady changes in our art and graphics, contracting with an artist to do original drawings for each article.

In 1986, we surveyed N.A. members, asking about possible changes to the magazine's format. A strong majority of those who responded favored changing the format to add the "Viewpoint" and "Feature" sections. With those additions in 1987, we felt we had a quality magazine, both in its graphics and its content.

The next hurdle, and one we haven't really gotten over yet, was how to most effectively circulate the magazine throughout the fellowship. We've tried several methods, and we've had some success, but there's still a long way to go.

Even with no concerted effort to increase our circulation, our subscriber base grew steadily on its own until it reached about 4,500. Then it began to waver, and even decline. We realized after some study that we were really not very different from other magazines. We were going to have to coordinate an active circulation effort or we would reach only a small fraction of our potential readership.

In our case, the motive for increased circulation is to carry our message to the greatest possible number of addicts. We are certainly seeking to be financially responsible, but we don't ever see this magazine becoming the source of any significant net income. We do see it as having some very powerful potential for stimulating the growth of N.A. and of individual N.A. members. Small circulation, however, severely limits that potential.

After some trial and error, we settled on two separate programs to increase our circulation. One we call our "single copy sales" program and the other we call the "group drive." Through these two programs, we have increased our paid circulation from 4,500 to the 8,000 we mailed this issue to. That's still not enough—we're still losing money—but we've learned a lot about how to keep the numbers growing.

The group drive is a free trial offer to members at the group level. We've found that we about break even on this effort financially, and we have increased our paid circulation by about 1,500 each time we've tried it. I suspect that will be tried again, perhaps with some changes to try to make it more effective.

The single copy sales program is still in the experimental stages, but I feel it has promise. The idea behind it is to make single copies of the magazine available for purchase directly at meetings, so members can get it when they want it without necessarily subscribing.

We sell the magazine to offices at a reduced price, and they sell it to groups at the cover price. That works well for regional offices, which are al-

ways looking for ways to produce enough income to survive, particularly ways that carry the message of recovery as directly as this one does. It gets complicated to work out just how this program could be expanded to get the magazine on the tables in general, right alongside the other literature of the fellowship, but that seems to me to be the proper goal. If the magazine is to be as effective as it possibly can be, it must be circulated broadly within N.A. and it must be read.

So although I won't be directly involved in it, I'm sure we'll be seeing more efforts along these lines as the magazine grows. If everyone reading this decides to bring a copy to a meeting, make an announcement about it, invite people to subscribe, or in some other way give a little boost to your fellowship magazine, we'll keep it moving forward. Anyone can subscribe at any time by just writing your name and address on a piece of paper and sending it in to the *N.A. Way*. They'll bill you later.

It was a rich five years for me personally. The people I've had the opportunity to know in N.A. world services, the awesome growth of N.A. that I've witnessed up close, and the obvious touch this fellowship has received from a Higher Power, all of it has changed me deeply. At those first meetings they said "keep comin' back," and I did. I hope all of you do too. Maybe our paths will cross one of these days at a meeting. Come check out my home group on any Tuesday night. I'll be there!

R.H.



From our readers

Anonymous
Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA
91409

N.A. Way
Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA
91409

Spirituality

I believe in a supreme being which is greater than myself, loving, caring, and also genderless. The two most important things I believe in spiritually are peace and love. Another thing I feel strongly about is that what matters most about people is what they have on the inside. What's inside of them? What are their beliefs? What do they feel strongly about?

What makes absolutely no difference at all is what they look like, what color their skin is, how they dress, how old or how young they are, how long or how short their hair is, where they come from, what they do, or if they are male or female, straight or gay.

It's OK to have fun, to express myself the way I feel, so long as I'm not causing any harm. I believe in compassion and equality and humility, understanding and goodwill. I don't believe in materialism (or any other "isms") or selfishness. I don't believe in killing of any kind of anything or anybody for any reason. I don't believe in violence or war.

I may not have the same beliefs or feel the same way as other people do but that doesn't make me right and them wrong. It doesn't make me any better or worse than anyone else, just different, and that's OK. We're all human beings, equal in the eyes of God,

put here to love and to help one another. We are all equal. Let's treat each other that way today in N.A., please. It can start with me.

Anonymous, Indiana

The alphabet of recovery

I have been receiving the N.A. Way for over four years, and I am embarrassed to say I've only contributed a couple times. I was, however, very touched by an article that appeared in the May 1989 issue. It was written by a man who had turned himself in for sexually abusing his children, in order that they might get some professional help. As a result, he is now doing time in prison.

That brought my mind back to when I had my first baby. I used quite heavily while pregnant; I even used the day I arrived home from the hospital after delivering. I put my son in his cradle and went into the bathroom to shoot up my stash of dope I had set aside for when I got home.

I let him cry in his crib for many hours, and did not come out of that bathroom until I was done. What scared me the most was that I know that if my stash would have been any bigger, I may not have come out of there for days.

I got clean a couple years after that, and now I have another child, a baby girl who I carried and gave birth to

while clean. The night I got home from the hospital after having her, I went to an N.A. meeting. I have been clean since November 1984. My kids are six and a half and three, and both go to meetings with me. They love to go to the dances and campouts. The first letters of the alphabet my son learned were "N" and "A."

Sometimes I think our children deserve this program as much as we do. We like to think our higher power is working in our lives, but maybe it is our *kids'* higher power working in our lives!

I've got a whole lot to be grateful for. Everything I have comes either from or through N.A. in one form or another. I guess there are a whole lot of people that are grateful I'm clean—everybody that drives on the highways for example, 'cause I'm not driving loaded anymore.

D.J., Texas

Thanks!

I thoroughly enjoy *The N.A. Way Magazine*. It is a meeting when I can't get to one and a real enlightenment and healing medicine anytime. Thanks for sharing your experience, strength, and hope and for those who share their E., S., and H. through you.

My son, Tony, is 16 years old and, thanks only to God and N.A., will have one year clean shortly. He is very excited and active concerning his new-found recovery program.

The enclosed one-year subscription is for him. Also enclosed you'll find my check for the \$15 requested—which, by the way, will never begin to equal the true payment that returns, time and time again.

Thank you for being there and

thank God and N.A. for giving me back the son who was lost to me.

J.P., Texas

An inside job

We in recovery sometimes face tough times, no matter how long we've been clean. Each day is a new one, and some days have a tragic ending. My family and I recently buried my eighteen-year-old brother, who died an addict.

I have been clean for three years and have never experienced a more painful moment in my recovery. We pray and hope others will find recovery, but some do not. The sadness, loss, and pain are still with me. Now I try to keep good memories of my brother; they help me through the days.

I have been praying longer and more to my higher power, who has helped me stay clean another day. Certainly, this has made me more grateful about living clean. In time, my sense of loss will heal. In the meantime, I do what was suggested in the beginning: go to meetings, talk to my sponsor, and pray. Life will continue to change on the outside, but what I need to do for myself on the inside has not changed.

D.D., Connecticut

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 phoneline number, 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.

ALABAMA: Oct. 14, 1989; South Avondale Group 10th Anniversary; phoneline (205) 320-8836

2) Nov. 3-5, 1989; Surrender in the Mountains; Cheaha State Park, Lineville; rsvn.s (205) 488-5115; Surrender '89, P.O. Box 214, Decatur, AL 35602

ALASKA: Mar. 9-11, 1990; 6th Alaska Regional Convention; send speaker tapes; ARC-6, P.O. Box 84946, Fairbanks, AK 99708

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

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

2) Nov. 11-12, 1989; 2nd S. Australian Area Convention; Brighton-Glenelg Community Centre, 20 Tarlton St., Somerton Park, S.A.; Area Convention Committee, P.O. Box 479, Norwood 5067, S.A., Australia

3) Jan. 26-29, 1990; Victoria Area Convention; phoneline 61-3-417-6472; Victoria CAC, GPO Box 2470-V, Melbourne 3001, Victoria, Australia

CALIFORNIA: Oct. 6-8, 1989; 10th So. Cal. Regional Convention; Anaheim Hilton & Towers, 777 Convention Way, Anaheim CA 92802-3497; rsvn.s (800) HILTONS; SCRC-10, P.O. Box 1674, Redondo Beach, CA 90278

COLORADO: Oct. 13-15, 1989; 3rd Colorado Regional Convention; Denver Airport Hilton Inn, 4411 Peoria (I-70 & Peoria), Denver CO 80239; rsvn.s (303) 373-5730; phoneline (303) 832-DRUG; CRC-3, P.O. Box 18247-149, Denver, CO 80218

2) Nov. 3-5, 1989; Western States Public Information Learning Days; Radisson Hotel Denver South, 7007 S. Clinton (I-25 & Arapahoe), Englewood CO 80112; rsvn.s (303) 799-6200; phoneline (303) 832-DRUG; Colorado P.I., P.O. Box 9524, Ft. Collins, CO 80524-9524

FLORIDA: Nov. 2-5, 1989; 8th Palm Coast Area Convention; Palm Hotel, 630 Clearwater Park Rd., W. Palm Beach FL 33401; rsvn.s (407) 833-1234; Recovery 8, Palm Coast ASC, P.O. Box 3151, W. Palm Beach, FL 33402

GEORGIA: Feb. 22-25, 1990; 9th Georgia Regional Convention; Ironworks Convention Center, Columbus; accommodations at Columbus Hilton, (800) HIL-TONS, and Sheraton Inn, (404) 327-6868

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

INDIANA: Nov. 18, 1989; Multi-Regional H&I Awareness Day; Local #292 UAW Hall, 1201 Alto Rd. W., Kokomo; H&I Subcommittee, Indiana RSC, P.O. Box 871, Indianapolis, IN 46206

IRELAND: Oct. 6-8, 1989; 5th Irish Regional Convention; Kiltarnan Hotel, Dublin; rsvn.s (Dublin) 01-955-559; N.A., P.O. Box 1368, Sheriff St., Dublin 1, Ireland

KENTUCKY: Apr. 13-15, 1990; 4th Kentucky Regional Convention; Executive Inn, 1 Executive Blvd., Paducah KY 42001

MARYLAND: Mar. 23-25, 1990; 4th Chesapeake & Potomac Regional Convention; Ocean City Convention Center; CPRC-4, P.O. Box 771, Ellicott City, MD 21043

MICHIGAN: Oct. 20-22, 1989; W. Michigan Area Retreat; WMA Retreat, P.O. Box 5, West Olive, MI 49460

MISSISSIPPI: Oct. 1, 1989; 8th Jackson Area Campout; Roosevelt State Park, Morton, MS; phoneline (601) 949-7106

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Oct. 28, 1989; 3rd "War is Over" Group Anniversary Party; Arrowhead Ski Lodge, Claremont

NEW JERSEY: Nov. 3-5, 1989; 1st Central Jersey Unity Weekend; YMCA Camp Bernie, Port Murray; Central Jersey Weekend, P.O. Box 274, Monmouth Beach, NJ 07750-0274

OHIO: Oct. 13-15, 1989; 2nd Ohio Regional Twelve Step Retreat; Tar Hollow State Park, Laurellville; ORSNA, 1034 Dublin Rd., Columbus, OH 43215

2) Dec. 29-31, 1989; 1st Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, I-670 and Cassidy Ave., Columbus; rsvn.s (614) 475-7551; phoneline (614) 252-1700; Central Ohio ASC, P.O. Box 14460, Columbus, OH 43214

3) Dec. 31, 1989; New Years Eve Celebration; Rhodes Center, Ohio State Fairgrounds, 17th Ave., Columbus; phoneline (614) 235-9662 or 252-1700; Central Ohio ASC, P.O. Box 14460, Columbus, OH 43214

4) May 25-27, 1990; 8th Ohio State Convention; Seagate Center, Toledo; send speaker tapes; Ohio Convention, P.O. Box 1046, Toledo, OH 43697

ONTARIO: May 18-20, 1990; 3rd Ontario Regional Convention; ORC-3, University of Toronto New College, Box 7079 Depot A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X7

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

2) Nov. 25, 1989; 4th Annual Thanksgiving Day Family Reunion Banquet; Genetti's Motor Lodge, Wilkes-Barre; rsvn.s (717) 823-6152; phoneline (717) 963-0728 or 283-0828; Wyoming Valley ASC, P.O. Box 211, Taylor, PA 18517

QUEBEC: Oct. 6-8, 1989; 2nd Quebec Bilingual Convention; Sheraton Laval, 2440 Autoroute des Laurentides (Rte. 15), Laval; CRQNA-2, P.O. Box 313, Lachine, PQ H8S 4C1

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 9-12, 1989; Serenity Festival; Best Western Landmark, Ocean Blvd., Myrtle Beach; rsvn.s (800) 845-0658; phoneline (803) 449-6262; Serenity Festival, P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

2) Feb. 16-18, 1990; 2nd "Just for Today" Convention; Hyatt Regency Resort Hotel, P.O. Box 6167, Hilton Head SC 29938; rsvn.s (803) 785-1234; phoneline (803) 681-9595; Just for Today Committee, P.O. Box 22155, Hilton Head, SC 29925

TENNESSEE: Nov. 22-26, 1989; 7th Volunteer Regional Convention; Marriott Memphis; rsvn.s (800) 228-9290; phoneline (901) 276-LIVE; VRC-7, P.O. Box 172102, Memphis, TN 38117

TEXAS: Mar. 23-25, 1990; 5th Lone Star Regional Convention; Hotel Galvez, Galveston; rsvn.s (800) 392-4285; Lone Star RSO, 10727 Plano Rd., Ste. 200, Dallas, TX 75230

VIRGINIA: Oct. 6-8, 1989; 3rd Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Center, Front Royal, Virginia; Almost Heaven Convention, P.O. Box 448, Charles Town, WV 25414

2) Jan. 5-7, 1990; 8th Virginia Convention; Radisson Hotel, 601 Main St., Lynchburg; rsvn.s (804) 528-2500; Convention Committee, P.O. Box 11843, Lynchburg, VA 24506

WEST VIRGINIA: Oct. 27-29, 1989; True Colors 2; Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley WV 25271; rsvn.s (304) 372-7000; phoneline (304) 344-4442; MRSCNA, P.O. Box 2381, Westover, WV 26502

WISCONSIN: Oct. 20-22, 1989; 6th Wisconsin State Convention; Best Western Downtown-er, 321 S. Washington St., Green Bay WI 54301; rsvn.s (414) 437-8771; WSNAC-6, P.O. Box 1385, Green Bay, WI 54301

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 or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. 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.

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*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.

