

THE **N.A. Way**
M A G A Z I N E

March 1991

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*Classic
Issue*

Hoy

**LIFE ON
ITS TERMS**

CALL YOUR
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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[®]

M A G A Z I N E

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The N.A. Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

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Identity crisis

For many years I pondered the philosophical question, "Who am I?" I searched for meaning in life through fantasy after fantasy. I sought purpose for my existence in cause after cause. Finally, desperate for an identity to reconcile my multi-faced personality, I began to expand my consciousness through drugs, from hippie to hype. I searched the world over for stories about drugs and the culture surrounding them. I scoured the realm of pills from doctors, the best and the worst of liquid potions. I went from upholstered sewers full of disco-glitter to cribs cluttered with filth on the nod. Nowhere could I find me. Not in the dealer, the jetsetter; in the biker, or in the burn-out. I came to this fellowship totally lost. Not knowing who or what I was. I knew that I'd tried to be many things and had failed. I knew who and what I wasn't. My life only got worse when I used drugs—I wanted to stop.

Eventually I was able to surrender to the idea of being powerless over my addiction, my life had become unmanageable. Today I realize that chemical identities are just a very in-

sidious form of denial. My recovery is based on powerlessness over my addiction, not powerlessness over drugs. I'm sick, getting well the N.A. Way, recovering from my addiction. I don't think that I can recover from drugs. My body, and maybe my mind can get over their effects. Drugs are not incurable; addiction is. I can recover from my disease if I accept my powerlessness over it and work the steps on that basis. My denial is strong, the strongest part of my addictive think-

'I went from upholstered sewers full of disco-glitter to cribs cluttered with filth on the nod.'

ing. I'm sure that my denial could lead me to say that I'm a drug addict, an addict alcoholic, a cross addict, a chemically dependent pill head, or any one of a number of complex chemical-personality labels.

The Fellowship of N.A. taught me to identify myself according to my condition. I am an addict. None of the chemical symptoms of my disease, none of the drugs I used are any more important than the others. As an addict, I am addicted to all mood changing chemicals whether I used them moderately, excessively and even if I never used them at all. I'm an addict, recovering from addiction through the N.A. program. The chemicals I used are not even the most important symptoms of the disease that I'm powerless over...today.

Anonymous

Coming to believe

I have come to believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity...honesty.

Lying separates me from my God. Professing to believe something that I do not really believe, for whatever reason, to whatever personal gain is dishonest. When this dishonesty is about God, as I understand God, then I've lost contact and have no power greater than myself.

I've called God many things for many reasons, usually to look good in the eyes of other people (sometimes without realizing this was my motive). What is important now is that I've stopped confirming to myself exactly what I do believe.

My Higher Power is in people, things and events. Rocks, seeds, growth, water, smiles, memories, understanding, sunshine, snowfall, blue skies and empty canyons I've seen. It's being touched by children and loving adults; watching the flow of things changing; being patient with another and another's patience with me...breath...beauty and ugliness and a willingness to face both.

God is smiling to me in "alone mo-

ments" at nothing at all. Not in smugness, but in "okayness." Mute acceptance is found in inanimate objects, rocks shaped by wind and water, crumbling through the ages. It's found in people alive and in memories of people past. All that happens each moment and all the parts of that happening moment.

If God is everything, everywhere, then I am in God, and so is every other person and animal.

I am comfortable with this idea; by

'My thought or action can add to, or distract from, the value of each moment of life.'

honestly admitting that I am a part of God, then I have no need to lie to myself or another. As part of my God, how can I deny any other part of my God? I would then be denying part of myself. I cannot exist in isolation for long. This belief makes me a part of all that is happening. Not alone, as my physical body might suggest, but connected spiritually to every event at each moment.

My thought or action can add to, or distract from, the value of each moment of life. Believing this gives me an opportunity to be a part of whatever grand design or grand accident life is.

An opportunity for dignity. My God is my reality, let reality prevail.

Anonymous

A dopefiend living dead

Intense pain woke me as a reminder of the life I had chosen to live. Early morning heroin withdrawals had been my daily companion for the previous two years. I was fourteen when I first got caught up in that homemade hell. A woman and I

shared an extremely narrow cot that was really just big enough for one person.

She lay curled up, unaware of my situation. Her own self-imposed hell wouldn't forget to awaken her to suffer the same fate as I.

I decided to let her lie. She had started using at fifteen,

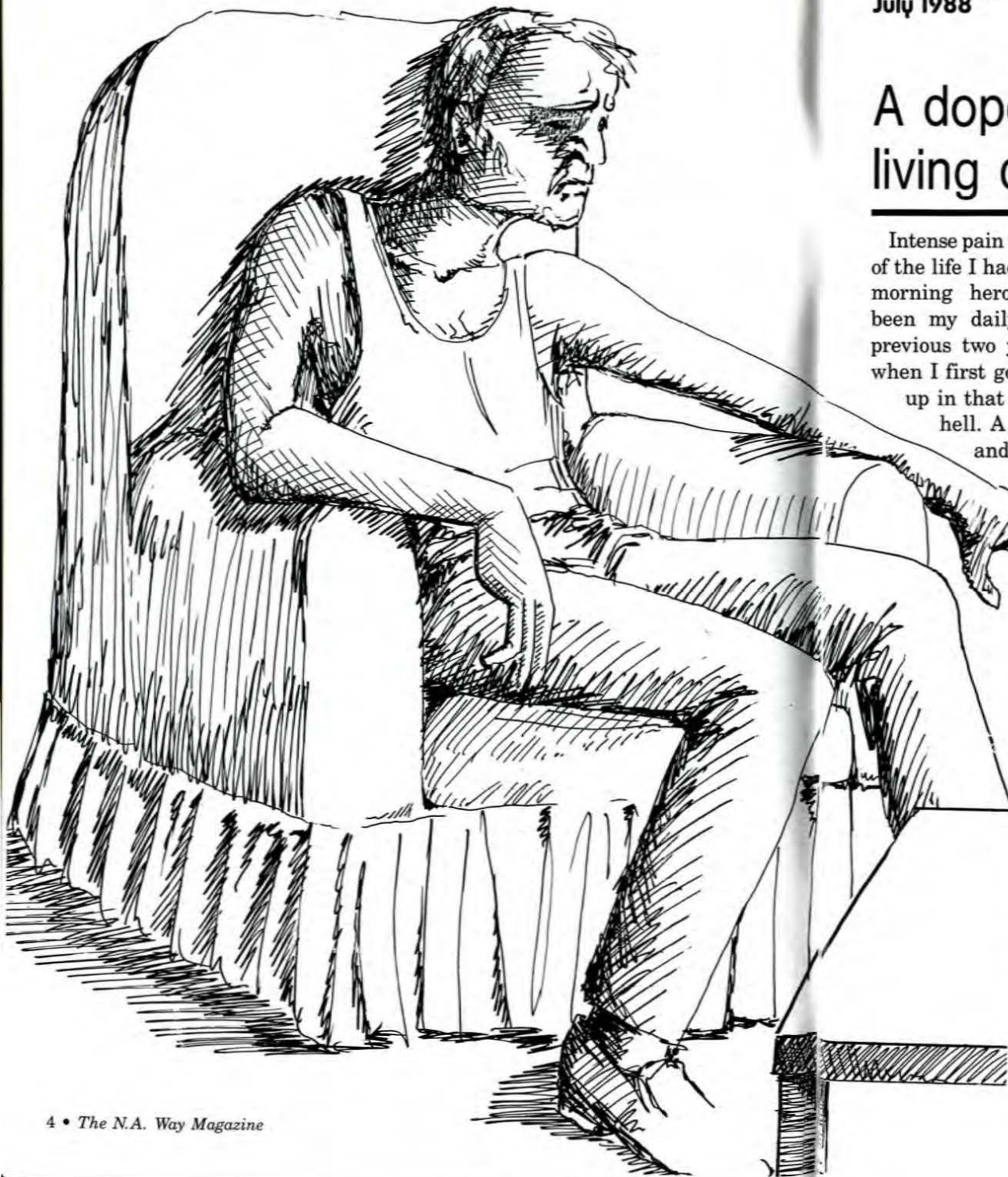
and had been running long and hard for four years with no breaks. She was three years younger than I, but addiction doesn't discriminate.

The pain crept around to my back and pinched at my spine, causing me to hold my stomach and groan in agony. My eyes and nose started to run, and I felt the first of hell. I closed my eyes tight, hoping to rid myself of the pain, but Mr. Hell wasn't going for it.

I found myself living from day to day as death awaited my cold-hearted soul. I had one foot and four toes in the graveyard, and knew it was only a matter of time before someone either pushed me over the edge or I took an overdose.

The woman gave out a half cry as her sickness took over, jolting her from sleep to confront her ordeal. At nineteen she still maintained her beauty, but it wasn't going to last much longer if she continued to abuse herself with dope. Although she possessed a sharp intelligence, I felt pity for her. She could have chosen better than the life of a larceny-hearted dopefiend. She did what was necessary to support her habit, and had the tracks up and down both arms to show for it.

We were both sweating and shivering with the smell of poison seeping through the pores of our skin. There came a need to reach for each other, searching in one another's embrace for the comfort we so desperately needed. We sought warmth, but found only coldness. We had a bonding love,



one that only other suffering addicts could have understood.

I lay a moment staring up at the ceiling and walls surrounding my fortress. I saw myself as a dopefiend living dead. Fate must have dealt my fifth card from the bottom of the deck. The cigarette-stained ceiling signified

**'I still wanted to
hold on to my
"macho" image,
to be a man,
a convict,
a dopefiend.'**

nothing but agony upon agony. The peeling paint on the dull gray walls held a message, like tears flowing from the face of a loved one.

Those who love and care for me need not weep for the likes of a dog such as myself. Allow me the privilege of destroying my mind, body, soul and spirit in solitude. My sickness tormented me toward insanity.

I still held on to that dopefiend mentality while awaiting trial in 1979 on robbery charges. I was tried, convicted, and sentenced to ten to twenty years.

I wasn't new to the prison system. My arrival back was greeted with handshakes, smiles and questions like "What the hell happened?" It was only a short time before I fell back into the groove of things and had the distinct feeling I had never left. I sought out what I'd come to know best. My choice of drug was heroin, but I had trouble getting it on a regu-

lar basis. I smoked pot, sniffed anything sniffable, drank pruno, and injected everything I could get my hands on.

I ran crazy for seven years, until the administration decided I needed a change of scenery, so they transferred me to a medium security prison. Again, I fell into the drugs the day I arrived.

One evening in April of 1987, I found myself attending an N.A. meeting with a friend. Outside people were allowed on prison grounds to share their personal experiences as recovering addicts. I sat in the back and half-listened to what was being said. Every so often I heard something I related to. Still, I wasn't totally convinced that they were as happy and fulfilled as they claimed to be.

One speaker mentioned that he had taken his First Step by admitting he was powerless and his life had become unmanageable. Much was said that first night, but I still had my doubts; I felt nobody could have lived and suffered through life as I had. I left before the break started, but came back within ten minutes for some unknown reason. Something had been said, or maybe a power had guided me back into the room.

I found myself listening more attentively this time, turning over in my mind what was being shared. I began to take a serious look at myself, at who I was and what I had become. This meeting gave me a little hope that there was a way out of misery and back into living. I felt a sense of salvation while attending my first N.A. meeting.

I began to attend the meetings on a regular basis. Soon, I wasn't able to get enough of my newfound hope. I listened to the speakers—both from outside and inside the prison—took advice, and followed the suggestions in the Twelve Steps. The energy I had poured into my pursuit of drugs, I rechanneled into working the N.A. program.

I took my First and Second Steps easily enough, but Step Three proved to be a stumbling block for me. I still wanted to hold on to my "macho" image, to be a man, a convict, a dopefiend. I couldn't bring myself to accept the fact that I needed a higher power in my life that could steer me on to the right track to a much happier life.

I managed to get over that obstacle when I heard an outside speaker share the story of how he had overcome his problem with Step Three. He said the Serenity Prayer had guided him toward the path to his higher power, whom he chose to call God. I thought about it and agreed it wasn't a bad idea at that.

Since I began using the Serenity Prayer, I have gotten closer to my higher power. I soon acquired a taste for love, trust, motivation, and responsibility, not to mention so many other good things I've long been without. I had been lost in a world of darkness, but things became brighter with each passing day.

From the meetings I've learned I have to choose whether I wish to use or not. I have chosen to not poison my mind and body with chemicals, and I feel great knowing I have that choice today. There's growth within me. I'm

a person—a human being. That gives me a feeling I wish to hold on to for the rest of my life.

I am learning how to deal with my problems, not bury myself in them, and live one day at a time. If I find myself with something on my mind that troubles me, I can talk with good-hearted people I've met through the fellowship. I've started to live my life one day at a time, not worry about what tomorrow may bring. My recovery from addiction has become extremely important to me, more important than anything else.

As a person with a disease, I have come to accept the fact that I'm only a relapse away from a life I want to leave far behind. I never knew before how twisted my mind had become with the use of drugs. In the past I had fooled myself into thinking that I had everything under control and didn't have a problem. I take my recovery seriously today, not because I have to, but because I want to.

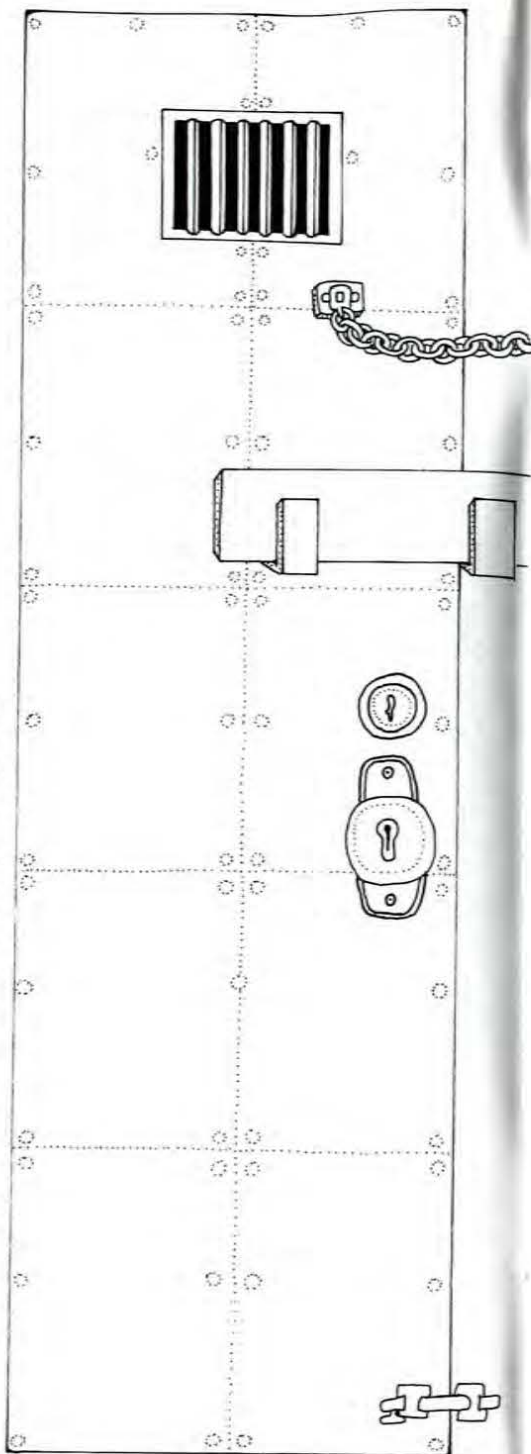
The program suggests that I follow the steps and abstain from drug use one day at a time. It guarantees my life will become more productive and meaningful. I've been drug-free for over seven months, and already the changes in my life are unbelievable. People trust, care, love and respect me today, and I feel the very same toward others in a way that I never thought would be possible. I never would have imagined that today is the beginning of a new life.

L.B., Connecticut

Give it away to keep it

I've been clean just a little over a year, by the grace of God, with the help of N.A. meetings. That first year was not an easy one for me. I went through a few crises and a lot of changes. I reached a point where I had not been working a good program, not really getting honest with myself and others. Several times I wanted to throw my hands up and quit. But I just kept coming back.

The turning point in my recovery came several months ago when I had the privilege of attending a prison meeting in my area. I can remember that night very clearly. I was very nervous as I walked through all the locked doors. But once inside the meeting room, I felt real comfortable. That was one of the best meetings I have ever attended. Going into the prison made me take a good look at



myself and be grateful for everything I have today. After the meeting, I spent most of the night praying and reading the Basic Text.

From that night until now I still have the privilege of attending the meetings in the prison. One night I was asked to tell my story to the inmates, and I really got honest for the first time.

I didn't think any of the guys had gone through a lot of the things I had as a child, and I was afraid they wouldn't be able to relate as I described the anger and humiliation I felt growing up. I can't tell you how surprised I was when the meeting was over and a couple of guys approached me to tell me that they could relate, because they had gone through the same thing in their childhood.

Words can't express how much the prison meetings mean to me, and what they have done for me in working a program. I can't speak for anyone else, but I do know they have helped me to be more honest in my life. They have helped me to really grab a hold of the N.A. program and hang onto it. They have helped me to start working a better program, and to stop taking everything in my life for granted.

I feel as though my Higher Power sent me into that prison to open my eyes and ears at a time when I had hit a low point in my program. This is something I will be forever grateful to my Higher Power for.

I know today that if I thoroughly work the Third Step to the best of my ability, everything will be okay. Today, I don't have to use to be able to deal

with problems; I have a Higher Power and the N.A. program to help me, along with the fellowship of recovering addicts.

I have been given the privilege of co-sponsoring the N.A. meetings in the prison, and also doing service work on an area level. I know that is what my Higher Power wants me to do, and He will take care of me. I get so much out of these meetings; they have helped me when I needed help in learning how to work a good program.

It has really helped me to watch the meeting grow every week. When I first started attending, there were probably twenty-five to thirty inmates attending. We now have up to eighty. Most of the time there are not enough seats for everyone, so some have to stand, but they are willing to do that to attend meetings.

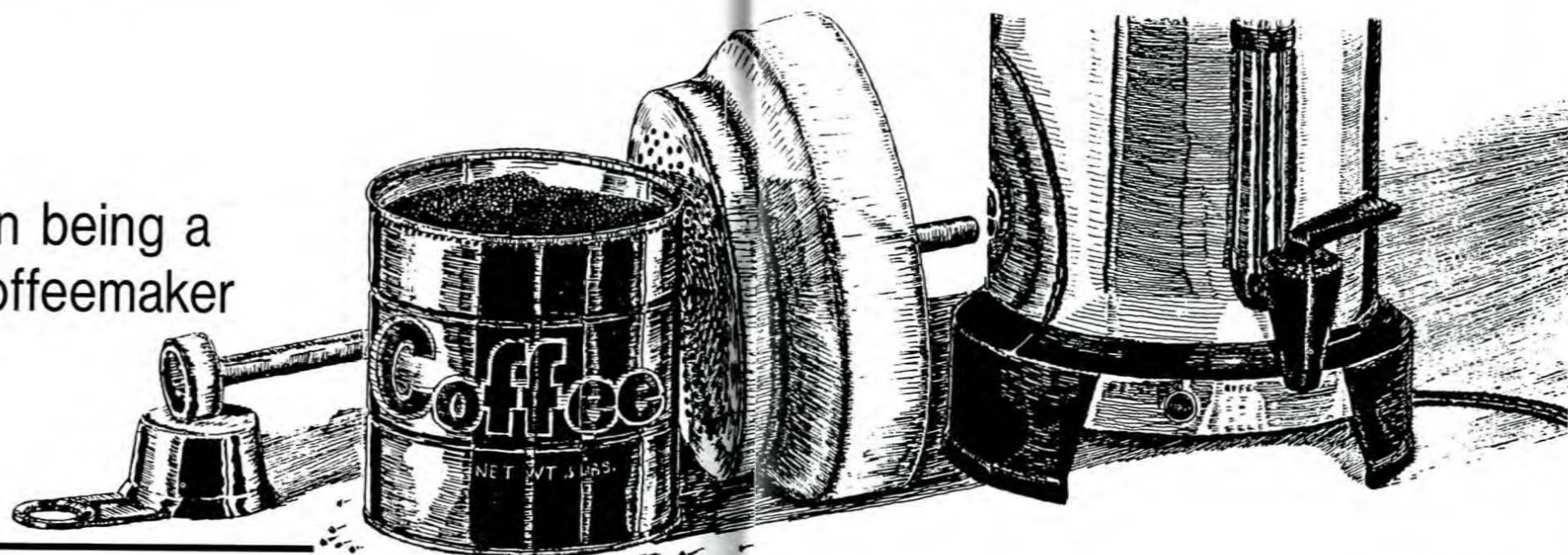
'Words can't
express how much
the prison
meetings mean
to me. . .'

I am happier today than I ever thought was possible. I would not trade my life today for all the riches in the world. I truly believe that God has blessed my life, and I will forever be grateful to Him.

If the opportunity comes, I strongly suggest that anyone who gets a chance to attend a prison meeting do so. It might just be a turning point in your recovery, as it has been in mine.

K.P., Alabama

On being a coffeemaker



One of my sponsors always said that there were two things that would get a person into the steps faster than anything else: a relationship and service. For me, it was service.

Being of service in Narcotics Anonymous has been an experience of joy and growth for me. To feel the joy, there sometimes has been sadness; to grow, there sometimes has been pain. But it's all part of the process of recovery. The pain has generally come from the battering my ego and pride have sometimes suffered, yet this has been the source of the greatest change that has taken place in me. My ego was so big to begin with, it had to be smashed; and the clash of personalities and principles that are so much

a part of service and of the fellowship are just what I needed to learn how to live, work and socialize with other human beings.

One of the things I'm doing in service now is something I am enjoying more than anything I've done in a long time. I'm making coffee again! And it's wonderful. It gets me to the meeting regularly, and forces me to do what was suggested to me in the beginning: come early and stay late. I have felt a strong need for the intimacy which can come from close involvement in a home group. I've had a lot of trouble with my disease isolating me from other addicts and from myself—trouble with knowing a lot of

people but being close to few. So, for me, it's back to basics.

What I want to share about being a coffeemaker is that I think it's the highest and most prestigious position of service which exists in Narcotics Anonymous. Most people think that service at the group, area, regional and world level is an uphill progression to greater glory, power, prestige and recognition. But, believe me, nothing could be further from the truth. If anything: it's a downhill path of greater anonymity, self-sacrifice, hard work and responsibility. I know most people think it's the other way around. If you're looking for applause and recognition, however, make coffee. Speakers, treasurers, group service

representatives (GSR'S) and secretaries all take a back seat to COFFEEMAKERS in the applause department!

So after five and one-half years of clean time, I am basking in the glory of making coffee these days, allowing the love and respect of the fellowship to be heaped upon me. What a thrill! Being a trusted servant has enhanced my membership and my recovery in Narcotics Anonymous forever. Today, my gratitude must be expressed in action. I must give freely and gratefully that which was freely and gratefully given to me (Basic Text-Step Eleven). I want what I have and am willing to do anything to keep it.

Anonymous



Why not
just for
today?

I've been receiving *The N.A. Way* for close to six months now. I read the stories contained and draw strength from their words. I have been wanting to write to you for some time now to tell you my story. Each day I would tell myself, "I'll do it tomorrow," just as I'd told myself for eighteen years in my addiction, when I would talk about quitting. I find that I can't do that anymore. For me, now, I realize that there is no tomorrow, only today; today, a precious gift of twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours to work the steps, twenty-four hours to pursue my recovery to the very best of my ability. If I use these twenty-four hours wisely, and deal with my tomorrows in their own time, I'll be okay.

My purpose in writing is to tell you about the todays of my recovery and how they have taken care of my tomorrows. How the fellowship being there, each and every day when I needed you, has helped me in my recovery.

Five months into my recovery, my

past, as pasts have a way of doing, came back to haunt me. Criminal charges arose stemming from a period in my active addiction. I was told there would be amends to make, and dues to pay. It was my first time and I was frightened, I wanted to pick up, I wanted to run and hide. I did run, fast—to a meeting. And there you were: you listened, you cared, you told me, "For today, don't pick up, go to a meeting; tomorrow will take care of itself." I took your advice, I took your hope and your care. I went to a meeting, I didn't pick up; I believed.

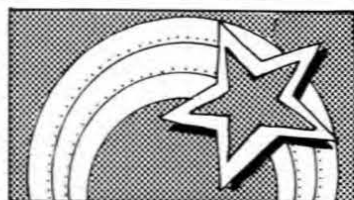
Ten months into my recovery I was sentenced to a term of two to five years in a state prison. Again, I was frightened, wanted to pick up, to give up. Then the letters, your letters, started to arrive. Those letters were filled with your hope, your love. You said, don't pick up, get to a meeting, we are with you; all will be well. I believed you. Where I was, there was no meeting, and with your help I started one. You came to support it, to give away your hope and your love to both myself and others. You stayed right there by my side, showing me the way.

And now, one year into my incarceration, even with the fences, barbed wire, guards, and gun towers, my recovery is alive and I feel freedom, a freedom I've never known; all of you give me that. And because of you, your love, you support, I don't have to endure this nightmare alone; I don't have to feel the cold that surrounds me. I know that if I stay on my path of recovery for each today that comes along, nothing will stop me from realizing all of my tomorrows.

I.H., Pennsylvania

Feature

February 1985



Recovery is my life

Of the 3,000 or so articles that were examined for this issue none seemed so fully, honestly, hopefully and completely descriptive of the N.A. experience as "Recovery is my life."

It is a little longer than most manuscripts offered *The N.A. Way Magazine*, but we think it is well worth the time, and so it occupies the monthly "feature" position. It is truly classic.

Up until my first high, I never felt comfortable with another human being. I always felt like I was much different from anyone else. I lived in a fantasy world most of the time, doing just enough to get adequate grades in school. I never had a crowd that I felt apart of. I bounced from one crowd to the next, always looking for a place to fit in. I loved sports, but was uncoordinated. I loved music, but couldn't carry a tune. I grew very negative towards people.

When I was fifteen, I got a job in a restaurant, and I began to feel like I'd found my niche in life. The people I worked with seemed to like and accept me, and it was through them that I learned the pleasures of getting high. For two years, I worked in restaurants and got high regularly and life was a lot of fun for me. My grades in school plummeted and my family grew distraught, but I felt like I was really living for the first time.

I was in a parochial high school and hated it, so I transferred to the public school where my using friends went, and we got high regularly. On weekends I would hitch-hike to a college, where drugs and parties were never-ending, and life became a real adventure.

One night I threw a big party in my parents' house, and over one-hundred people showed up. I had visions of

Woodstock in my own living room. My parents gave me an ultimatum. They were moving to another state where my father had been transferred, and they told me that I would either come with them, or never be considered a part of the family again. For some reason I decided to go with them. This was the first of many attempts by my family to intervene in my progressing addiction. It worked for a short while.

In our new environment, we grew very close as a family. I didn't use for three months, and began to feel the love and acceptance of my family for the first time in my life. I saw using as a phase of growing up that I'd gone through, and now I was mature and above that lifestyle. I finished high school with good grades, found a girl friend and discovered a love of writing. I took trips all over New England, getting off on the history and culture of that whole area. I got involved with a youth group, and for the first time had straight friends I felt comfortable with.

Then, on graduation night, someone offered me a hit of mescaline, and it had been awhile, so I figured one time wouldn't hurt. I had my first bumper trip that night, and I became alienated and withdrawn from my family, my new friends and my girl friend. I didn't want to get high, but I had an overwhelming compulsion to just die. What followed was a long

summer of just working and committing slow suicide every night. I became so depressed that I could no longer work, so I quit my job and vegetated for awhile. I tried returning to my old hometown, but it didn't work. My old friends were doing the same things, but I had changed. I reached out to my mother for help—she was a recovering alcoholic. At the time, I thought I had a severe mental disorder. There was no N.A. around then.

She found a psychiatrist, and I began my first of many attempts to figure out what was wrong with me. The psychiatrist put me on anti-depressants, and for a while I began to feel better. I had not yet learned how to be

honest, so she couldn't really help me.

I went to college, and felt so isolated and different that I was afraid to be around other students.

Then I went on a weekend retreat with the youth group, and fell in love. I started getting high again that weekend, and turned a lot of my straight friends on to the joys of getting high. Again, I felt a new life surging through me, and I stopped fighting the fact that I felt most comfortable when I was high.

I no longer needed the psychiatrist, and I was off and running. I got involved with the school newspaper, started a coffeehouse, got involved with a presidential campaign, and

joined a church folk-singing group. As long as I stayed high, I was able to keep going with all of these things.

I grew to truly love my drugs, until they stopped working for me, and everything fell apart again. I would get so high that people began to question my sanity, and friends grew to distrust me. I couldn't find the energy to keep up with all of my new interests, and one by one they fell away from me. I fell back into a worse depression, and this time I felt like I'd never pull out of it. I went back to the psychiatrist, but this time the anti-depressants didn't do anything for me. I still couldn't be honest about my drug usage, so no progress at all was made with her. In despair, I joined the Navy in hopes of changing my life and finding some discipline and peace of mind.

In the service, I learned how to get high regularly and still get up for work. I got into harder drugs, hung out with the hard-partiers, and figured that as long as I did my job and kept my record clean, everything was all right. There were many addicts over the world, but I began to notice that it never seemed to matter where in the world I was; if drugs were available, it was a good port, if they were not, I felt stranded. The drug alcohol was always a last resort, as that was available everywhere, but I was never content until I found the best stuff.

I maintained this lifestyle for four years, until my last long cruise to the Mediterranean. In seven months, my ship only pulled into port a few times, and I was forced to stay straight most

of the time. This is when I discovered how important drugs had become to my ability to function and get along with people.

During the last month of the cruise, in an act of rage towards the captain of the ship, I shut down the reactor and put the ship "dead-in-the-water" while it was on a search-and-rescue mission. I was never caught, but I found it very difficult to live with the guilt and the fear of being caught.

When we returned to the states, I dove back into my full-blown addiction, using constantly. I could no longer perform my duties in the engine room, and after attempting to kill an officer, I went AWOL. My insanity was at its peak. I traveled all over the country, getting high and getting sicker. I blamed my addiction on the Navy, and swore that when I got my discharge I would stop.

After several months, I was picked up and turned in to the authorities. I managed to con my way into an honorable discharge, and began my attempts to stop using. I could not do it. Everywhere I went, drugs were there, and I couldn't resist picking them up. I got real scared; I kept putting my foot down and swearing that I'd stop tomorrow, but tomorrow never came.

I wound up back in my home port, living in a rundown apartment with ten other addicts, using as much and as often as I could (which was all day, everyday) until I knew I was close to death. I returned home to my parents house to "rest up" for a few days, and it was then that I admitted defeat and asked for help. I believed that I was too far gone to be helped, but I never

'I grew to truly love my drugs, until they stopped working for me, and everything fell apart again.'

wanted to use again. I was totally bankrupt in every area. My mother pointed me in the direction of several rehabilitation centers, but I would never stay for longer than a couple days.

I felt hopeless; I couldn't stand to be around people. I tried another fellowship, but I had trouble relating. My parents told me that if I didn't use, I was welcome to stay with them. Today, I know that this saved my life. Though they couldn't understand the extent of my illness, they were willing to help however they could. For seven months, I just watched TV and slept. I was afraid to venture out into the world, for fear that I would get high.

Then, I checked into a V.A. hospital to be treated for depression, and I was put back onto anti-depressant drugs. I found a job, and started working in a paper warehouse. For about a year, I seemed to be doing all right, but then I started to smoke pot on occasion. The occasions grew more frequent, and then I discovered opium and cocaine, and again I was off-and-running. It seemed different this time, but the only thing that had changed was the people and my situation.

I grew to where I had to be high to perform my duties; I was now a warehouse manager. I bought my drugs from the people who worked for me. I lost their respect, and the company began to question my judgement. Fate stepped in when my best friend died. He'd been fighting Hodgkin's Disease for two years, and five days before he died, he had pulled me out of a cocaine-induced coma. His death brought me to my knees, and I cried

for the first time in years. I felt a very deep loss, and I spent months searching for the meaning of it all. I would just go to work, come home, get high, and cry.

I began to look at his life, at the many good things that people said about him after his death. He was not an addict, yet he had been true and honest to me as a friend for many years. He had lived by spiritual principles, and he had always displayed an inner strength and a love of life which I had truly admired. I asked God why He took him, and not me. I seemed like a worthless human being, whereas he had always given of himself to others.

Somewhere during those long months of looking at his life and my life, I experienced a revelation of sorts. It occurred to me that he had had a disease, and that from the time he had found out about his disease, he had done everything he could to stay alive. I remembered his periods of remission—he would be so calm and serene. Then it occurred to me that that's what we had in common. I, too, had a disease. I didn't understand it, but I could feel it deep inside. I remember feeling so calm inside that night, when I finally knew what was wrong with me. I'd been exposed to the disease concept of alcoholism, but I knew that what I had was similar, but it involved more than just alcohol.

I started attending meetings of another Twelve Step Fellowship, and the feeling of remission began to come over me during those meetings. I was afraid to talk, because when I did, people didn't seem to know what to say to me. I felt different from them,

but they accepted me with love, and told me to keep coming back. I did.

One night a person my age spoke, and he related to drugs in his story, and he referred to his addiction, and he talked in terms of recovery instead of sobriety. I felt an instant kinship with him, and after the meeting I asked him a lot of questions. For the first time, I got answers that made sense to me. He was like me. His thoughts were my thoughts. It blew my mind! He told me about Narcotics Anonymous, and as he talked, I hung on every word. N.A. was just starting up in that area, and he told me about a meeting close by that he and another addict had just started. He asked me to come to it.

For the rest of that week, I was excited about attending that meeting. I could feel that something very special was about to happen to me. For once in my life, I knew that I'd finally found what I was looking for.

The energy and love and honesty that I felt in that room were something I'd always been looking for in drugs but had never found. Now it was here. I felt like I'd died and gone to N.A.! It truly felt like heaven.

Meetings were few and far between at that time, but my newfound friend would call me up and ask if I wanted to go to a meeting that was hours away, and I'd say "yes!" Every meeting, my joy and feeling of newfound

life grew.

After a couple of weeks of going to meetings every day, I went back to some old friends to tell them all about my newfound freedom. I wasn't there for five minutes before I got high. It was the only thing I knew to do in that situation. I thought I'd blown my only chance at recovery! But when I returned to meetings, I was accepted with love and understanding. I made a commitment to make recovery my life, and to let nothing come between me and my recovery. I have been clean ever since.

After my return to meetings, I heard people talking about sponsors, so I asked someone to sponsor me. He

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life, I knew that
I finally found what
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The energy and
love and
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was a lot like me, and he helped me a great deal through those first few months of recovery. He was always there when I needed him, and he shared with me the importance of working the steps in my life, and with his guidance, I began to apply

them to my life. None of the steps came easy for me, but it seemed that the harder I worked at them, the more positive results I got. I wrote out a Fourth Step, and for the first time in my life, saw the insane patterns that ran through all of my relationships, and began to see some of my character defects for what they were. The relationships that I had begun to develop with God and my sponsor helped a lot while I was writing these

things down. Those relationships also helped me to admit to God and to myself the exact nature of my wrongs. The day that I shared my Fifth Step with my sponsor was one that I will always remember. It was the beginning of my journey towards spiritual growth, and I have never felt alone since.

I got involved in service two weeks after I got clean, and this has formed the backbone of my program. I started by cleaning up after meetings and making coffee and dumping ashtrays. Doing this gave me a very warm feeling inside, and made me feel like I was making a contribution to the cause. I made the coffee for two different meetings for three months. This kept me coming around, even when I didn't feel like it. A step meeting I was attending decided to quit violating the Sixth Tradition, and removed the step book of another fellowship from its tables, setting out to develop material about the Twelve Steps of N.A. This happened when I had several weeks clean, and was my introduction to literature work. We would meet each week in a member's apartment and discuss each step, one per week. Our discussions would be taped, and then I was asked to transcribe these tapes to writing. I felt the importance of this work, and spent every free moment at the typewriter.

A bunch of us went to the first East Coast Convention, and there we met addicts from all over the country who were involved in writing a Basic Text on recovery through N.A. It was a weekend of many miracles, and seeds that were planted that weekend have

taken root and grown into thousands of miracles all over the world.

At that time, there were fifteen meetings in the entire Tri-State Area where I was from. In the next year, we would watch N.A. grow to over seventy-five meetings in that same area. I got involved in public information for N.A., and began to learn how to talk to non-addicts about N.A. We were now part of a fellowship-wide effort to write our Basic Text, and that year was the most exciting year I have ever lived through. I got to know recovering addicts from all over the world, and the feeling of "We," not "I," became a way of life for me. After many, many conferences and workshops, and a lot of waiting and praying, our Basic Text became approved by the fellowship to be printed and published. A year later, I saw the first edition of this book sitting in a fellow member's living room, and experienced a moment of gratitude and hope that I could not describe. Today, I am experiencing feeling happy, joyous and free on a daily basis, and I know that all I have to do to maintain this feeling is to keep attending meetings regularly, work the steps on a daily basis with the guidance of my sponsor, and always be willing to do whatever is necessary to grow in recovery. Recovery is not simply the most important thing in my life today... it is my life!

February 1986

Bridging the gap

"I can't picture you crazy like me. You're not that type of person. You're so serene, so easy going." I wasn't sure whether the sponsoree who spoke those words to me was complimenting me or not. I had to chuckle at my own reaction. I wanted at first to defend my familiarity with insanity. If he only knew the extent of that familiarity... But here I am today living the principles of the Narcotics Anonymous Program to the best of my ability, and insanity has become an insignificant part of my life. Spiritual principles have a way of taking care of that. Still I have to laugh at myself when I panic for a second in the absence of my old image—you may not believe I'm really a "dope fiend."

By the time I was ready to surrender to the Narcotics Anonymous program and seek the help of a God of my own understanding, I was whipped. I had tried living the "party animal" life, and instead of giving me sustained excitement and happiness, it had led to a grey painful isolation. I was still functioning, but my life was draining. I had tried in every

way I knew how to "use drugs normally," (if I could only figure out what that meant) or to quit using. Any success I had at either of those was short lived. The insanity of wild and crazy partying had given way to the insanity of using drugs against my own will, to the despair of everyone who cared about me.

But I finally made it to N.A. At first the lure of the lights and glitter of the hearty party life still had some pull. I was still somewhat a victim of the delusion that maybe somehow, some day I could have that. Fortunately, though, I had been bludgeoned just enough by my previous attempts to ignore the reality of my disease. I knew I could not use drugs safely. Whenever I tried I always became obsessive and compulsive and still couldn't satisfy the insatiable desire. The desire to get high always turned into a desire for oblivion, and for me oblivion always left despair in its wake. The members of N.A., by sharing about themselves, helped me to keep enough perspective to stay clean "just for today." Eventually the desire to get high went away.

At first I wasn't sure just what I was surrendering to, though. Was my life over now? Would there be no more good times? Would my life be boring and dull? The sparkle in the eyes of the N.A. members was just enough to keep me hoping for the best. I secretly felt that this fellowship was great for people like them, who got into this sort of thing, but I really didn't fit very well. Still I stuck around for awhile, just in case it might work for me. I was strongly attracted to it on the one hand, and



fearful that I couldn't fit in on the other. So at first my surrender didn't run too deep.

I soon found that recovery could be great fun. In the small community where I got clean, the N.A. members were always partying at someone's house, or at an N.A. dance or something—without drugs. That was the first level of understanding, the first glimmer of a vision of a happy life without drugs. Fun is fun, clean or loaded. I found that once I got

used to being clean, my friends and I had more fun clean than I ever had loaded. My interests began to broaden now that drugs weren't a part of everything I did, and I really started to enjoy life.

As I began to apply the Twelve Steps in my life with the guidance of a sponsor, another dimension of enjoying life emerged that I hadn't been able to predict. I had thought of a good time before only in terms of a certain level of excitement or euphor-

ia, so I had a very narrow view of what it meant to enjoy life. I really didn't have a glimpse of what it would mean to calm down and experience some inner peace so that I could fully appreciate many of life's more subtle pleasures that were out of my reach before.

I came to N.A. with lots of pressing questions, and two things happened. I got some of the answers and I forgot some of the questions. The pressing urgency went away. Similarly, I came here with fears about what life without drugs would be like, but I was trapped in my limited perspective. I found out that I couldn't truly evaluate, from that diseased state of mind, what life clean could be like. The steps have unlocked a whole new level of pleasure and enjoyment that I couldn't have envisioned before.

So many times along the way I was asked to take a risk and venture into the unknown. At Step Three I had to learn to suspend cynicism about God and trust the unknown, unseen. At Steps Six and Seven I had to trust in the promise that as my character defects faded and my personality changed, the changes would be positive. (I had trusted drugs to change my personality before, and got burned.) My most fervent prayer at that time was "God, please don't make me weird." Throughout the process of personality change, of spiritual awakening, called the Twelve Steps, I have been challenged to trust and go forward. I have found that each time I met the challenge, a greater level of freedom was on the other side.

But how do you say all of this to the newcomer who thinks someone with "your kind of serenity" couldn't possibly relate to what he's going through? I'm reminded of something the Sunday morning speaker at the World Convention in D.C. said. She said that newcomers in this Fellowship are like race horses coming in after the final stretch. When your horse is panting, still in a lather, trying to come down from the intensity of the race, what do you do? Critique the race? Start practicing for the next race? If you're a good trainer, you walk with her, talk to her, brush her down and make her as comfortable as possible. There will be time for preparation later.

That's what we're trying to say when we say "keep coming back," and "more will be revealed," and "it gets better." Almost before you know it you find yourself looking into what feels like your own eyes saying, "Just stay clean for today; things will work out okay." Whenever I say things like that I can only pray that some spark of hope gets through. I can only hope the addict won't give up before the miracle happens. And every time I'm in that situation I feel very deeply that this kind of exchange is the heart and soul of my recovery. As long as I stay alive and vital, striving to make recovery make sense to the new person so he can understand that this good stuff is his for the asking, as long as we're focusing on the steps together to bridge that imagined gap between us, there's a full life in store for both of us.

R.H., California

The ties that bind

"As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well." What are those "ties that bind"? The answer to that question seems to change as we grow into a greater awareness. I have some thoughts to share about those ties as I see them today.

One important tie that binds us together is our personal tolerance of individual differences. We come to this program from active addiction still often carrying the old baggage of prejudice, mistrust, insecurity and warped values. In such a state, our tendency has been to become preoccupied with flushing out the defects of character in other members. We need some time to practice the new values we adopt in N.A. After a period of recovery, this tension eases. We come to see many of our former states of mind as insanity, which recovery gradually replaces with new levels of open-mindedness. We accept with gratitude every "growing experience" along that path.

This "growing clean by growing together" is definitely a factor that binds our fellowship together. Resistance to recovery gradually fades in the light of the openness and

acceptance shining at N.A. meetings. We are a diverse fellowship. Our common survival depends upon valuing this diversity. Our love cannot be selective. It must grow beyond the fetters of selfishness to become unconditional.

A second "tie that binds us together" lies in our phrase, "principles before personalities." Individually we must learn principled living so that collectively we can experience harmony. The key to understanding this point, as our Twelfth Tradition states, will be to grasp the spiritual significance of anonymity.

Anonymity is much more than confidentiality and far less than secrecy. The "spiritual foundation" of our Fellowship lies in an inner current of spirituality flowing in the heart of each member in equal measure. By stripping away the outer layers of self-centeredness, this "inner sanctum" of serenity can be reached. In this light, there is a simple core to the principle of anonymity: it is not my name or status that defines success in N.A., nor is it my employment, my record or my story; what really counts in N.A. is my willingness to surrender my self-serving, self-willed impulses and tendencies, and become guided by that inner, calm connection to the universal spirit of our Second Tradition. In our discussion of anonymity, that point is often missed.

A third tie, which flows naturally from the first two, is service. When service is a "labor of love" which springs from our spiritual foundation described in the previous paragraph, it becomes a vital and necessary part

of our common survival. When we are free of envy and personal power struggles, we are free to allow each member to do what he or she does best. Our feelings of uniqueness or differentness use to alienate us from the world and keep us sick. In service to N.A., individual differences are our greatest strength. When the feelings of isolation and separateness have been eliminated by our growing sense of our universal spirit, service highlights our individual strengths and teaches competence and self-esteem.

We must be cautious, though, of allowing our desire to serve eclipse our need to recover. It would seem to me that the first priority is the reduction of "self," and the growth of spirit (the Twelve Steps). Only then are we ready to serve N.A. without bringing with us a hidden agenda of selfish motives. If service is to be a "tie that binds," it must be a flow of spirit, not of self. Service, in its healthiest form, is gratitude made visible.

What happens when we are bound together in spirit? We provide an arena into which a suffering addict can step and find recovery. We have no higher priority than that. For the first time in history, there is a program of recovery for addicts that unifies us all under a single umbrella of spirit. We are that program! We must rise to this historic call by surrendering self-centeredness and striving for an always greater unity. We're well on our way now to the maturity of spirit we'll need to pull this off. I hope you're in there pitching. We need you.

*From the heart of an addict who loves
N.A., Iowa*

Awakening

One Saturday at my father's home, I noticed the grapevines and how they had become overgrown with honeysuckle and briar. My father's recent surgery prevented him from the chore of pruning. I decided I would do the job. I began working and thinking of the similarities of sorting the vines and sorting my life. I felt God with me, speaking with me, as I began separating the vines I would keep from the ones I planned to cut away.

The vines were a maze of thorns, honeysuckle and grape. I began by cutting near the root of the briar and honeysuckle. It soon became a complicated job, sorting out each vine. I thought of my past, and how I needed to sort out my thoughts and emotions, fears and pains. Some of the briars left scratches and cuts on my hands. These became scars and wounds from pains I had long forgotten, buried and overlooked. The fresh



blood and tears became real to me again.

There seemed no end to the beauty of the honeysuckle. But its fragrant flower and sweet taste had all but taken over the vine. I saw that too many would choke the plants. Too many would steal the sunlight and rain, preventing each plant from reaching its full potential. This plant became the "good times" to me. The drugs, the money, and playmates. These so-called "good times" had taken over my life, preventing me from facing life on its own terms.

Many of the branches from the honeysuckle had wrapped so tightly around the grapevine that deep gashes were left when removed. In time I hoped these would heal, as my own life had begun to heal when God removed the bindings I had set in place.

It took much careful separating, sometimes taking it inch by inch, to

free each vine. Often briars scratched and pricked my hands and arms. I continued sorting, cutting and pruning each tendril. This reminded me of the mixed up emotions I had carried inside me for so long. It became a long and painful process, discriminating between the desirable and the unwanted. The job of strengthening those I wanted to keep was difficult. The more I searched and got rid of, the more I saw that must go.

Finally getting to the end of the job I had begun, I stepped back to survey the grapevines. I felt sorrow and pity, for each had been stripped bare, left naked for all to see. They were no longer overshadowed by the choking, life-taking vines of the honeysuckle. The thorns and briars would no longer draw blood from the branches of the grape. I hoped that stronger branches of the grape would reach out and produce new bindings and branches.

This reminded me of the steps I had begun taking, which would allow me to grow and feel again. I began feeling, seeing, and hearing things I never thought I could. I knew the pruning, sorting, and cutting away of dead and unwanted branches and vines was necessary. The searching and sorting of my past was necessary for the rediscovery of who I am today.

Looking again at the work I had begun, I realized in order to keep the honeysuckle and briar away, I would have to remove the roots of each vine. I needed tools for digging as much as I had needed those for cutting. This reminded me of the help I needed with my life. I thought of God, and how often people had entered my life

to help me overcome the fears and problems I had begun to face. I knew I had to search my heart and look very deep before I would get any better. I was offered help many times from willing hands and patient ears. The tools I had needed were placed before me. I only had to reach for them.

Constant care of the vines is necessary in order to produce the fruit we desire. Sunshine and water, fertilizer and pruning are small jobs compared to the task of tearing down and replanting. Daily care is needed in order to be aware of when unwanted vines return for their control. These must be taken care of at once.

I realized that constant care and love were necessary parts of my growth. Like the grapevines, I need daily care and maintenance in order to prevent the fears and pains from controlling my life again.

I close with patience. Like fruit which is eaten too soon, bitterness remains. I had to allow the grapes time to ripen before eating. No matter how much labor and care is put into a plant, it must wait until it's ripe for the harvest. It's the same for me. Often the things I want in life I want immediately, but I must always remember where I came from and the time I spent there. The step-by-step process, the day-by-day care—the grapevine became a symbol of my own life. As it grows and produces its fruit, so I pray that I may continue to reach out, grow, and produce the fruit of life which God so desires for me.

D.H., Alabama

OPINION



September 1987

Some thoughts on our relationship to A.A.

The question of just how Narcotics Anonymous relates to all other fellowships and organizations is one which generates a good deal of controversy within our Fellowship. In spite of the fact that we have a stated policy of "cooperation, not affiliation" with outside organizations, much confusion remains. The most sensitive issue of this nature involves our relationship to the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. A constant stream of letters is received by the World Service Board of Trustees asking a variety of questions about this relationship. The time has come to shed some light on this subject.

Narcotics Anonymous is modeled after, though not identical to, Alcoholics Anonymous. Nearly every N.A. community in existence has leaned to some degree on A.A. in the N.A. groups' formative stages. Our relationship with that Fellowship over the years has been real and dynamic. Our Fellowship itself sprang from the turmoil within A.A. over what to do with the addicts knocking on their doors. So we will look at those roots for some perspective on our current relationship to A.A.

Bill W., one of the A.A. co-founders, often said that one of A.A.'s greatest strengths is its single minded focus on one thing and one thing only. By limiting its primary purpose to carrying the message to alcoholics, avoiding all other activities, A.A. is able to do that one thing supremely well. The atmosphere of identification is preserved by that purity of focus, and alcoholics get help.

From very early on, A.A. was confronted by a perplexing problem: "What do we do with drug addicts? We want to keep our focus on alcohol so the alcoholic hears the message, but these addicts come in here talking about drugs, inadvertently weakening our atmosphere of identification." The Steps were written, the Big Book was written—what were

they supposed to do, rewrite it all? Allow the atmosphere of identification to get blurry so that no one got a clear sense of belonging? Kick these dying people back out into the streets? The problem must have been a tremendous one for them.

When they finally studied the problem carefully and took a stand in their literature, the solution they outlined possessed their characteristic common sense and wisdom. They said that while they cannot accept addicts who are not alcoholics as members, they freely offered their Steps and Traditions for adaptation by any groups who wish to use them. They pledged their support in a spirit of "cooperation, but not affiliation." This far-sighted solution to the problem paved the way for the development of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

But still the problem that they wished to avoid would have to be addressed by any group who tried to adapt those principles to drug addicts. How do you achieve an atmosphere of identification so necessary for surrender and recovery if you let all different kinds of addicts in? Can someone with a heroin problem relate to someone with an alcohol or marijuana or Valium problem? How will you ever achieve the unity that the First Tradition says is necessary for recovery? Our Fellowship inherited a tough dilemma.

For some perspective on how we have handled that dilemma, one more look at A.A. history will be helpful.

Another thing Bill W. used to frequently write and speak about was what he called the "tenstrike" of A.A.—the wording of the Third and

Eleventh Steps. The whole area of spirituality vs religion was every bit as perplexing for them in those days as this unity issue has been for us. Bill liked to recount that the simple addition of the words "as we understood Him" after the word "God" laid to rest that controversy in one chop. An issue that had potential to divide and destroy A.A. was converted into the cornerstone of the program by the simple turn of a phrase.

As the founders of Narcotics Anonymous adapted our Steps, they came up with a "tenstrike" of perhaps equal importance. 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..." Drugs are a varied group of substances, the use of any of which is but a symptom of our disease. When addicts gather and focus on drugs, they are usually focusing of their differences, because each of us used a different drug or combination of drugs. The one thing that we all share is the disease of addiction. It was a masterful stroke. With that single turn of a phrase the foundation of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship was laid.

Our First Step gives us one thing to focus on, so that 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.

The phrase "powerless over a drug"

does not go far enough for most of us in ongoing recovery—the desire to use has been removed—but “powerless over our addiction” is as relevant to the old-timer as it is to the newcomer.

Our addiction begins to resurface and cause problems in our thoughts and feelings whenever we become complacent in our program of recovery. This process has nothing to do with “drug of choice.” We guard against the recurrence of our drug use by reapplying our spiritual principles before our disease takes us that far.

So our First Step applies regardless of drug of choice, and regardless of length of clean time. With this “ten-strike” as its foundation, N.A. has begun to flourish as a major worldwide movement, clearly appropriate to contemporary addiction problems. And we’ve only just begun.

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 we try to mix them, we find that we have the same problem as A.A. had with us all along!

When our members identify as “addicts and 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 separate diseases, that our 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.

It has become clear that our common identification, our unity, and our full surrender as addicts depend on a clear understanding of our most basic fundamentals: We are powerless over a disease that gets progressively worse when we use any drug. It does not matter what drug was at the center for us when we got here. Any drug we use will release our disease all over again. We recover from this disease by applying our Twelve Steps. Our Steps are uniquely worded to carry this message clearly, so the rest of our language of recovery must be consistent with those steps. Ironically, we cannot mix these fundamental principles with those of our parent Fellowship without crippling our own message.

Does this mean that A.A.’s approach is inferior to ours, and based on denial or half measures? Of course not! A casual, cursory glance at their success in delivering recovery to alcoholics over the years makes it abundantly clear: theirs is a top notch program. Their literature, their service structure, the quality of their members’ recovery, their sheer numbers, the respect they receive from society, these things speak for themselves. 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. Because of

the inherent need of a Twelve Step Fellowship to focus on “one thing and one thing only so that it can do that one thing supremely well,” each Twelve Step Fellowship must stand alone, unaffiliated with everything else. It is our nature to be separate, to feel separate, and to use a separate set of recovery terms, because we each have a separate, unique primary purpose.

The focus of A.A. is on the alcoholic, and we ought to respect their perfect right to adhere to their own Traditions and protect that focus. If we cannot use language consistent with that, we ought not go to their meetings and undermine that atmosphere. In the same way, N.A. members ought to respect our primary purpose and identify ourselves at N.A. meetings simply as addicts, and share in a way that keeps our fundamentals clear.

As a fellowship, we must continue to strive to move forward by not stubbornly clinging to one radical extreme or the other. Our members who have been unintentionally blurring the N.A. message by using drug-specific language such as “sobriety,” “alcoholic,” “clean and sober,” “dope fiend,” etc. could help by identifying simply and clearly as addicts, and using the words, “clean, clean time and recovery” which imply no particular substance. And we all could help by referring to only our own literature at meetings, thereby avoiding any implied endorsement of affiliation.

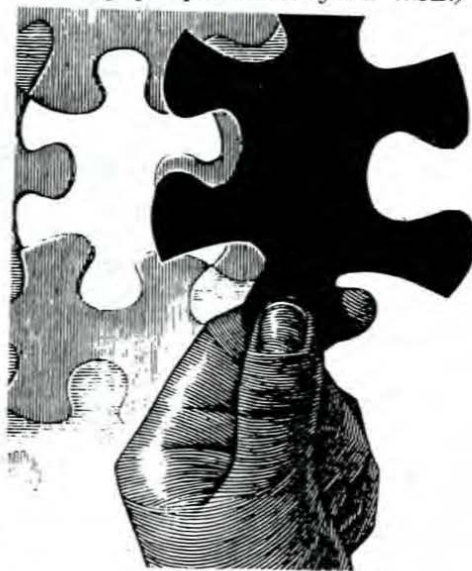
Our principles stand on their own. For the sake of our development as a Fellowship and the personal recovery of our members, “our approach to the

problem of addiction” must shine through clearly in what we say and do at meetings

Our members who have used these sound arguments to rationalize an anti-A.A. stand, thereby alienating many badly needed stable members, would do well to re-evaluate, and consider the effects of that kind of behavior. Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual Fellowship. Love, tolerance, patience and cooperation are essential if we are to live up to that.

Let’s pull together our energies now and unify behind these powerful principles. Let’s put those energies into our personal spiritual development through our own Twelve Steps. Let’s carry our own message clearly. There’s a lot of work to be done, and we need each other if we are to do it effectively. Let’s get on with it in a spirit of N.A. unity.

(First published in the Newsline from a paper produced by the WSB.)



Inside enterprises

Eyes burning with tears of rage, "Oh no, you're not going to fool me with your spiritual sayings! There's got to be a catch! Somebody's deriving personal profit from all this! I don't believe you love me!"

The trouble with the Sixth Tradition of Narcotics Anonymous as it is now applied within N.A. is that there seems to be a big lack of definition as to what constitutes an "inside enterprise." The Sixth Tradition reads: "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." Most of our members have no difficulty in understanding the part about related facility or outside enterprise. Everybody agrees that recovery of even one addict is more important than money, expensive things, or personal glory. Very little is explained, however, about how the service boards or committees we form may function to carry out their objective in service, how we may employ special workers, or what constitutes an inside enterprise. The reason for this, it seems, is that we have only a

few recognized service boards and committees and almost no recognized special workers. We have had to struggle so hard that only today, in 1982, do such things exist on such a broad scale throughout the fellowship that many of us are prompted to reach a new level of understanding about these things and how they might relate to the needs of those we serve.

Enterprises can be actions undertaken by individuals or groups to make money. They can involve the elements of greed, lust and power. Certainly we are all susceptible to these things to some extent. Enterprises within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous are undertaken to serve groups and members and share recovery. While they can appear to the uninformed eye to be "big deals" involving "huge sums of money" undertaken for reasons of "personal power and prestige," with a possible "profit motive," the results usually speak well of the intent, dedication, and spirit of N.A. members trusted to serve. No matter how they appear to those not directly involved, all N.A. service efforts result in recovery for some sick addict. If not, they aren't N.A.

These inside enterprises, within N.A., give body and soul to the promise of new freedom. The chains of our addiction deny us many things. One of those things is the ability to trust others. Faith lends to trust providing the opportunity to meet together in groups and share our recovery. Recovery teaches us to be unafraid. We become able to admit our personal need for help. We find a personal contact with the God of our

understanding, are freed from restraints within and without and allowed to go our way in peace.

The first example of an inside enterprise is the group itself. A group passes the basket for money to buy literature and coffee. We also pay rent and financially support N.A. services so that we can maintain our autonomy as a group and as a program. If there are problems with money, property, or prestige which take precedence over the primary purpose of carrying our message, the group soon ceases to exist. Problems within the group are usually dealt with directly by the steering committee. Only an extreme violation of our traditions would warrant alarm in neighboring groups, areas or regions. Group attendance and participation can remedy most all tradition problems.

Extreme Sixth Tradition problems seldom occur and when they do they are only examples of how it doesn't work. Much could be made of ownership and possession of a large coffee urn. "That's quite a basket—who gets the money?" "Where does all this literature come from?" If these questions were not easily answered, we might have a problem. Actually this inside enterprise, the group, managed by group officers or a steering committee composed of members in regular attendance, is so commonplace that it is not thought of as an enterprise at all, just a meeting.

Area and regional committees collect money from groups and fundraisers, spend it through their sub-committees on local services and pass the balance on to the next level

of service. Each sub-committee could be thought of as an enterprise. People coming together, money changing hands, and being spent in various ways, people occupying "prestigious" service positions... an uninformed eye could make much of this. The truth is, without these services the groups would flounder and die. Not all of them, but it takes service to have newcomers. Every addict clean today is the desired result of some form of

**'All forms of
service are equal
when it comes to
recovery for those
who are dying.'**

service. All forms of service are equal when it comes to recovery for those who are dying. It doesn't matter how we get here. All that really matters is receiving what first attracted us to N.A.: relief from our addiction. The necessity of renting a meeting place, going to a printer or a hotel, shopping for food or music for a party or a convention, staffing a newsletter, arranging for a hotline, and funding for a service need are all enterprises undertaken by members with one goal in mind: keeping you and me alive and helping us, and others, find a life worth living.

The circle of life will be complete when I can give back to you what I have received.

On those days when self pity tells me I have nothing to offer, I look in the mirror and receive a smile.

Anonymous

The broad perspective

Here's hoping you have enjoyed the 1991 Classic Issue. Putting it together involved the examination of the whole sweep of sharing that has been printed during the eight and one-half years the magazine has existed. An N.A. Way review person reminded us that December, 1990, marked the 100th issue of the magazine.

We teetered on the edge of mixing some "today" activity in this issue, when a letter was received from an addict stationed in the Persian Gulf. That letter closed with the statement "We woke up two hours ago to the news that we were bombing Iraq and Kuwait. They have just called for outgoing mail, so I have inclosed what I have written so far. . . God help us all to keep the faith." We are corresponding and plan to include the first letter and anything else we can get, from her or other recovering addicts in the war zone, in the April issue.

As you can see, Slugg and the "Home Group" crew did make it into this issue, no disrespect for the gravity of the classics intended. It is believed the continuing saga of "Home Group" antics helps us lighten up, even in difficult or pensive times.

Mid-Atlantic Con-venference

The 7th Annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference was the "most successful ever" according to one regional spokesperson. Over a thousand people attended the event, February 7-10, in Harrisburg, Pa.

The spokesperson added, "It was an opportunity to experience firsthand that there's a lot of unity in N.A., no matter where you are from." The Narcotics Anonymous Board of Trustees conducted a meeting, including a forum period, at the site of the conference.

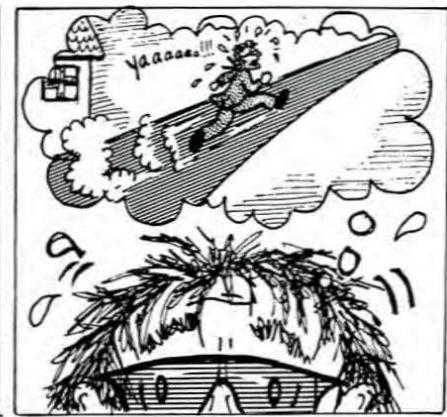
Group Drive

Once more the claim is made that the annual N.A. Way Magazine "Group Drive" is underway. We appreciate those who have inquired about it and assure you the opportunity is enroute. Planned for early January, a last minute delay was called when the staff began an update of the addresses on record at the WSO. It seemed worth the wait to get the update especially as we heard as many as 25 percent of you were either new or had changed addresses.

We are taking advantage of a different postal rate this year, also, so the packages may have taken an extra week or two to get to you. By using this process some fairly serious bucks are being saved, and another benefit (we hope) is that the lighter packages are going straight to group secretaries or GSRs. In the past we have sent very large packages to ASCs, with the request that they be distributed to groups.

Home Group

First date





Comin'up

LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming 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.

ALABAMA: Apr. 19-21, 1991; 5th Annual Spring Fling; Wind Creek State Park, near Alexander City; Registration Information, PO Box 2653, Auburn, AL 36830

ARIZONA: Apr. 27, 1991; Arizona Regional Talent Show; 5818 N. 7th Street; AARCNA, PO. Box 26404, Phoenix, AZ 85282

2) May 24-26, 1991; 5th Arizona Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Hotel, 4550 South Palo Verde Boulevard, Tucson, AZ; rsvn.s (602) 746-1161; information (602) 244-0432; ARCNA V, P.O. Box 57443, Tucson, AZ 85732

ARKANSAS: Apr. 26-28, 1991; 8th Annual Central Arkansas Area Campout; Tumbling Shoals Campground, Greer's Ferry Lake, Heber Springs, AR; information (501) 373-8683; Central Arkansas Area, P.O. Box 250027, Little Rock, AR 72225-0027

CALIFORNIA: Apr. 2, 1991; Second Annual Unity Day; Elks Lodge, Chico, CA; 916 North, P.O. Box 8556, Chico, CA 95926

CANADA: May 3-5, 1991; Calgary Area Convention; hotline (403) 235-9901; Area Convention Committee, PO Box 30086, Stn B, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2M 4N7

2) May 31-Jun. 2, 1991; 4th Ontario Regional Convention; Steps to Freedom; Holiday Inn, Downtown Toronto; information (416) 256-3149; , PO Box 7079, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1X7

ENGLAND: Apr. 5-7, 1991; London Regional Convention II; Holland Park School, Airlie Gardens, Holland Park, London; information (071) 351-6794; Programming Committee, P.O. Box 417, London, ENGLAND, SW10 0RS

2) May 25-26, 1991; 2nd South West Regional Convention; Beechen Cliff School, Alexandra Park, Bath; information 0225 481803; SW.R.C. II, PO Box 285, Bristol, BS99 7AS, ENGLAND

FLORIDA: Mar. 15-17, 1991; Florida Spring Service Break Conference II; Eden Roc Hotel, 4525 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida, 33140; rsvn.s (305) 531-0000 or (800) 327-8337; FSSBNA II, P.O. Box 011288, Miami, FL 33101

2) May 16-19, 1991; 4th AL/NW FL Regional Convention; Ft. Walton Beach, FL. on Okaloosa Island; 1110 Santa Rosa Boulevard; rsvn.s (904) 243-9181; Convention, P.O. Box 6499, Pensacola, FL 32503

GEORGIA: Mar. 30-31, 1991; 1st Anniversary Convention; Chatahochee-Flint Rivers Area; Uptown Econo-Lodge, 1011 4th Avenue, Columbus, GA; rsvn.s 1 (800) 446-6900; , P.O. Box 12333, Columbus, GA 31904

2) May 2-5, 1991; The Tradition Continues; 1991 Fun-In-The-Sun, Panama City Weekend; 1991 PC. Weekend, P.O. Box 47848, Doraville, GA 30362

ILLINOIS: Apr. 19-21, 1991; 3rd Chicagoland Regional Convention; Recovery What a Concept; information (708) 848-2211; CRC III, 212 S Marion, Suite 27, Oak Park, IL 60302

KANSAS: Apr. 5-7, 1991; MARCNA VIII; More Will Be Revealed; Wichita, Kansas; information (316) 269-0487 or (316) 564-2545; Hotel (316) 264-1181; MARCNA VIII, PO Box 8732, Wichita, KS 67203-8732

KENTUCKY: Mar. 29-31, 1991; Kentuckiana Regional Convention V; Executive Inn Rivermont, 1 Executive Boulevard, Owensboro, KY 42301; rsvn.s (800) 626-1936; KRCNA V, 2626 Parrish Ave., -228, Owensboro, KY 42301

LOUISIANA: May 24-26, 1991; The 9th Annual Louisiana Regional Convention; Sheraton Pierremont Hotel, 1419 E 70th Street, Shreveport, Louisiana 70115; rsvn.s;(800) 325-3535; information (318) 746-0910; LRCNA IX, PO Box 4937, Shreveport, LA 71134

MARYLAND: April 5-7, 1991; 5th Chesapeake and Potomac Regional Convention; Ocean City Convention Center; Hotel Request, P.O. Box 4062, Salisbury, MD 21801; information (800) 654-5440 or (301) 636 4600; C.P.R.C.N.A. V, P.O. Box 1551, Pasadena, MD 21122

NEW JERSEY: May 24-26, 1991; 4th New Jersey Regional Convention; Continue the Miracle; Ramada Renaissance, 3 Tower Center Boulevard, East Brunswick, NJ; information (201) 251-2402 or (201) 396-9809; NJRC VI, PO Box 1768, Rahway, NJ 09065

NEW ZEALAND: May 3-5, 1991; Seize The Day; Auckland College of Education; information (649) 787734 or (649) 366-1892; Convention Committee, P.O. Box 6826, Auckland, New Zealand

NORTH CAROLINA: May 10-12 1991; Annual Coastal Carolina Area Campout; Roger's Bay Campground; Topsail Island, N.C.; information (919) 686-1173

OHIO: May 24-27, 1991; 9th Ohio Convention; We Choose To Live; Looking for tapes, must have minimum of 4 years clean; information (216) 543-9833 or (216) 442-9261; OCNA IX, 25931 Euclid Avenue, Suite 136, Euclid, OH 44132

OKLAHOMA: Mar. 22-24, 1991; 5th Oklahoma Regional Convention; Tulsa Marriott Hotel, Tulsa; rsvn.s (918) 627-5000; OKRCNA 5, P.O. Box 890501, Oklahoma City, OK 73189

PORTUGAL: Apr. 27-28, 1991; 1st Portuguese Convention; Stop, Listen and Keep Coming Back; Convento dos Padres Carmelitas, R. Marechal Saldanha no 145, Foz do Douro; I Convencao Portuguesa De Narcoticos Anonimos, Apartado 21644, 1137 Lisboa Codex, PORTUGAL

TENNESSEE: Apr. 5-7, 1991; 12th Anniversary Convention; Quality Inn, 1 International Plaza, Nashville, TN 37217; rsvn.s (800) 221-2222; phonenumber (615) 297-9762

TEXAS: Mar. 29-31, 1991; The Fairmont Hotel, Dallas Arts District, 1717 North Akard Street, Dallas, TX 75201; rsvn.s (214) 720-2020 or (800) 527-4727; Program Committee, c/o LRSRO, 10727 Plano Rd., -200, Dallas, TX 75238

WASHINGTON: Apr. 26-28, 1991; Washington Northern Idaho Regional Convention VI; Tower Inn, 1515 George Washington Way, Richland, WA 99352; information (509) 582-5418; W.N.I.R.C.N.A. VI, 1415 N. Young, -400, Kennewick, WA 99336

WEST VIRGINIA: May 10-12, 1991; Out of the Shadows; Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV, 26502; rsvn.s (304) 372-7000; Mountaineer RSC, P.O. Box 2381, Westover, WV 26502

N.A. Way[®]

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3TEA

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.

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

The program of
N.A.
only makes one promise
-FREEDOM-
from active addiction

WORK THE 11 STEPS
OR DIE!

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

YOU CAN'T SAVE YOUR ASS
AND YOUR FACE AT THE
SAME TIME.

SOLO POR

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a non-profit 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. This is a program of
complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one
requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest
that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break.

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.