

HISTORY CONVENTION

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA AUGUST 1990

Greg P.: My name is Greg, and I'm an addict. Somehow I ended up on some kind of literature committee in 1971. A variety of things had happened. We used to have a taped meeting for the purpose of developing literature. Every Saturday we would go down to this guy's house and run the tape recorders and have a meeting. I don't know what happened to any of that stuff, to my knowledge none of it ever became literature. But it was real interesting, and there was interest there. I guess that was how I really got involved. I've got a letter I wrote in 72 asking for input for a text. Part of the problem, for me, was that there was always so much to do and so few to do it. In the seventies you didn't stay involved in any one thing very long because you were always fighting fires. There was no service structure, there was no working service boards and committees. Well, there was one. There wasn't any anybody taking care of your service needs. If there was need, you vent and did it. If there wasn't a group somewhere in some part of town, you went over to that part town and started a group. And then you went there every week for a year. If there was a need for H&I work, you didn't wait for some committee to tell you how to do it, you went and did it and tried to follow the traditions to the best of your ability. If there was a PI need, for instance, this was in California, if the LA County Sheriff's Department wanted an orientation on NA, you didn't go to a PI committee because there weren't any. A member who had been around some time grabbed a couple of white books and went and did it. That's really the way it was, there weren't too many bodies going around, I think there were maybe half a dozen live wires. I guess I got involved in the Basic Text before there was really much effort going. I've heard Bo talk about our first meeting, and I know that during the seventies we were always on the lookout for another live wire. "If any body showed any interest they got encouraged, they got put on a committee, they got asked to participate but very little was forthcoming. There was some writing prior and some work done prior to the effort towards the Basic Text. Maybe he'll talk about that in another section. But that's how I got here. I felt like I was here before we started. I got involved the same way the rest of us get involved.

Jim M.: Hi, I'm Jim and I am an addict. I got a letter in the mail, I think that was the first thing, maybe it wasn't, but it sounds dramatic so maybe I'll share it that way. The letter said "you are the book". It went on to talk about how "you are the only Basic Text that anybody will read. And unless you write it down and share it, we're not going to have one." I think that was what got me started writing it down. That's probably the most important part of my being a part of. This service effort was actually sitting down with that most intimidating of things, a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. When I was about 3 months clean, but claimed I had a year and 3 months, I went to my first convention. Which was a world convention because that was the only kind of conventions there were at the time. It was in Atlanta, I left about ten times, because there wasn't a single NA speaker. Not that the people didn't do what they thought was right and shared what they thought was kind of like recovery with everybody. It had a lot of spirit and a lot of caring love, a lot of love caring concern, they just weren't NA speakers. They didn't find their recovery here and didn't perceive themselves as being powerless over addiction. I'm very judgmental, the more you hear me talk, the more you will understand that. I make a decision right up about a speaker and even more so then. At any rate, we couldn't get literature in our group at home and I wanted to go see why, and fix it. I figured I couldn't just by jumping up and down and screaming. I heard about Wichita, I heard about there being a thing for the book, a movement to write the book, but probably the most important thing was that I went to a club house outside of Atlanta after the convention and heard an NA speaker, and sat in on this service committee meeting. I sat up next to this cuddly, pudgy fellow in overalls who put his arm around me and took me off to the side afterwards and said "do you need a tree?" This guy hunted in his house and brought it out after a long time and I got involved, and I got cared for. I think that's what I'm trying to say here with a lot of words. I got loved and cared for, I got an arm put around me with a lot of love, care and concern and the feeling of "we want you involved, we will include you whenever you are here, we will spend whatever time it takes to explain these concepts to you and what you have to say is important, it doesn't matter who you are or were you've been." That's the feeling I got and the spirit I caught and the service that I found in the Lit committee and in world service in 1979- 1960. That's what kept me coming and got me involved and that's what more than even recovery, that inclusiveness, teaching about surrender is what's made me who I

am today.

Bo S.: Here I am, out of order again, my name is Bo, and I'm an addict. well, I feel like I got started on this last night, I don't want to be as dumb as I am, and repeat everything, but maybe that's what I need to do. Maybe from a slightly different angle. For one thing I'm real glad that Ed and Jim and Greg and I can be here, and I still hope our other buddy Joe, will drag in from Memphis, we may try to keep it light but actually we're sort of like revolutionaries and the war's are real real and the wound's are real and we have casualties so if Joe can't make it, pray for him. Battles are played out in these halls and we do the best we can to care and share and occasionally we get a chance to really do something in service. I guess my personal starting place was like every other starting place in my life, I was there, wherever it was, I was there very much before it happened: but wherever it was, I was never around when it was happening. I was always hearing about it, reading about it, doing some dope, I kept missing it, whatever it was. I wasn't even sure it was real or really happened. Obviously there was a lot of stuff around so you figured it came from some place but you know, like how to actually be there. I was always to young or to old or to fat or to skinny or to smart or too dumb or too early or too late or just out of sync actually. Of course part of the time in active addiction I may not have been out of sync except I put myself out of sync with what I put in, and missed chances that way. The last thing I expected when I read IS? lines in a book called the Beets that Synanon drew out of some meetings in a building where NA meetings were held in Santa Monica that I would ever get involved much with NA, because I was just a sixteen year old beatnik reading a book finding out how to be weird. Truncating the whole deal a little bit, in 1971 or so, I called information in Atlanta to find out if there was a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous in Atlanta, because all that back ground behavior up to that point it seemed like I ought to be contacting Narcotics Anonymous. At that point I had just spent two years on the strip down at Atlanta, I was on the 6 o'clock and 11 o'clock news whenever I wanted to be. The mayor came to human improvement project on 10th street in Atlanta frequently. We used to figure out ways to force him to come down, and if he didn't come down we'd go down there like one time Mohamed Ali donated fifty thousand dollars to fight addiction in Atlanta. And so this rough looking hippie with blond hair like this leans over this desk and says " how about some of that fifty thousand dollars Mayor Marcell." and Sam leaned back, you know and people were dying down there, and we interacted with federal, state and local efforts, churches, do gooders, medical societies, there were Jesuits down there, there were federal people down there a lot of people goodwilled down there, a lot of people came down there looking for there kids. A lot of times we would develop relationships with families slash kids. A lot of weird stuff happened. Towards the end I had to strap on a loaded six gun every time the sun went down because it was that rough down there. Just to feel okay like I could walk to the store and back. The reason I'm stressing all this is because two year experience like that, working at night and day, eating, sleeping, breathing it, reading magazines, hearing whatever people brought, all convinced me that there was absolutely no hope anywhere on the entire planet for addicts seeking recovery. There was no hope at all, there was none, there was nothing you could do. You were trapped, it was over, there was no way out, there was no such thing as living clean. It was like you had slid into a pit, I guess you got them around here, these creatures that live in the sand and make a living off of killing ants. The way they do it is they make a little suck hole for themselves and the ant comes in if it ever crosses within that circle that's like a fallen cone then the Ant Lion, I think is the name of it, kick up sand so that the ant even though it struggles, it thinks it's going get out, and get's to the edge, it really doesn't it really just keeps falling to the lower and lower circle to the bottom so the Ant Lion can bite it and suck it's juice out and all that. Kind of like ground spiders, in a way. Being an addict was sort of like that. Once you were over the edge a little to far, you might see the edge again, you might think you were actually going to get out, but something would always happen right befor you did, and you would be at a lower level to lower level. I'm sure everybody in this room knows how ridiculously I'm glossing over actual horror and feeling that goes with discovering that you are that kind of addict. And something's got you and you can't see the motherfucker but you know it's there because it's doing it to you. Sometimes were struggling to be nice, sometimes were struggling to do better, sometimes were struggling to be a good person, to do the right thing, but as soon we get to the close to the edge like we're going to be on our way with our lives something has got us, something kicks in in our face and we fall down, and all we know is we are trapped and can't get out of it until the last moment. Then we know something's got us but we don't have time to talk about it much. We're clean addicts who figured out something had them and if there going to do any talking, they better talk quick, mostly because

a lot of us have seen our friends die, you know, using, car accident, choke on your own puke, OD shot, stabbed, you know, there is just a lot of ways. This one young lady shared with me and God I hope she's here, I hope she hears this and I hope she don't get pissed at me talking about, but it's just so fucking typical, and this woman was shooting dope with her girlfriend and the girlfriend had the dope and she had wanted the dope, so they got off, and her girlfriend went into a heavy nod, so she took the rest of the dope and shot it and split before her girlfriend had come out of the nod because she didn't want to get yelled at for stealing the rest of the dope and doing it, and left the woman there passed out on the couch with her two or three year old daughter and found out later her girlfriend had died and the baby had been left with her dead mom on the couch for three days, and didn't feel too hot about herself, you know, or maybe, you know, there was something wrong about the way she was living, it didn't have anything to do with the cops, the establishment or all the TV ideas about what drug addiction does to you. Coming from that background, and the thing we had been doing on the strip had sort of died out, which was great. Now I tried to call Narcotics Anonymous, we held like six meetings and had a copy of a green colored copy of the white book but had no idea about anonymous principles or real steps or traditions. The people who were good enough to provide the green covered booklet were alcoholics and I couldn't relate to that. I thanked them a lot, you know, and after a while we stopped the meeting, you know it's kind of like trying to learn the song, we couldn't quite catch the tune. So, three years later is my clean date, and I've been going to meetings ever since. Since June 10, 1974. Yeah, I think I went through a stage, you know, there was, let's see, I got clean in 74, and there wasn't even the grey form until 80 or so, that means I was, some one folk's was bringing the little white booklet for maybe, six years. I understand how a lot of people feel real strongly about some of the lines in Recovery and Relapse, some of the lines in We Do Recover, some of the basic stuff about the steps. I think I read a couple of the stories in the back of the basic text a couple of times. The thing that kept me going was the sincere newcomers, the idea of recovery, all those discussions, all the phone calls, eventually all the meetings. When NA started clicking and growing there were meetings in nearby states and other parts of the country and communicating with them, those are the things that really fired my recovery. In a sense, more because being in a situation that God set up for me, we had more, like, terrifically sincere newcomers; The questions they asked kept me moving, and jumping, and calling, and writing, trying to get their answers. You couldn't do something as simple as go to a book and flip it open to a section you read, this is even with other material from Alcoholics Anonymous or from other sources, you know, we were doing the best we could back then. The answers just really weren't there. There were breakdowns, I mean I was going into NA meetings and there would be NA newcomers there, sometimes quite upset, sometimes real pissed off about the notion of having to substitute drug for alcohol, and problems other than drugs, which was a famous piece. I said, hey, look, I know something about that program and that guy did not ever mean to piss somebody like you off or make you uncomfortable or kill your chances of recovery. So I believe if that guy were here today, he would tell you to do what I'm going to tell you to do, and that's tear that damn pamphlet in half and throw it in the trash. The guy was sort of trapped a moment before I said that, but the idea that he could do that, and plus he had my support and encouragement and permission, he was suddenly free. That guy is still clean today, right? But, you know, a lot of people didn't have somebody there to say no, get clean, that's the main thing, don't pay attention to that paper, it'll upset you. It was that kind of fertile land or something, you know, so much shit there any seed that dropped there is bound to grow. I had pressure put on me like that, I hit the NA trail. It's always sickening how I read occasionally how phrases like this get turned around. I headed out to the greater NA, I had to discover the greater NA, I heard that line like, abused by someone who quoted is an instance of, like, better NA was where they were at, or something weird like that, okay, I mean I don't know what that is, sometimes I think it's like everybody is born in recovery somewhere and they got themselves and their locale, and their circle of friends, and somehow the old human habit of, anybody that's close, anybody that knows their name, anybody in my circle of friends it's okay, but those other people, you know, they're out to get you, I mean, even within the fellowship, it's sort of like were all ape men or something, and we got to live by the law of the thing. If you're not careful, then somebody will come in and burn your village. It's real weird, it's real weird, I think something that changed my recovery experience early on was, for being a hippie all those years, and all the other stuff, was just the idea that if the most dangerous thing to do, short of actually using was to wish harm to another member, and it's been extremely to walk the mile of walks and not wish harm to other members, with the road filled with thieves and assholes and sonofabitches along the way, but I've never wished them harm, I've tried to rationalize it and play down the bad part of it and

accentuate the good part of it. But, I was used to overriding it you know, you don't have a choice of drugs like LSD without expressing the positive and emphasizing a lot of interdirection and being objective. I still bear marks from that, you know, maybe they'll continue to rub out of my personality. But the main thing is when people like got clean there was no basic text, like what Greg said, I saw a copy of a letter sent out from the office in 1972, maybe that was it, or there was another one, there was a mock letter saying that an effort for writing the Basic Text was under way, don't miss out, send you story in today. Nobody went for it, nobody sent in their story. When I'd been in contact Jimmy Kinnon, and several other people, maybe, but mainly Jimmy, and I wasn't satisfied with my answers, I mean I actually reached the point where together with another member I'd sit down and written the letters saying like, where, if there is a group conscious, where is it, where does it live, what is it's name, does it have a phone number, does it have a mailing address? I was just short of being insulting, like, what in hell is going on? because I was getting dodges on the telephone. I kept asking, and reasking the same kinds of questions over about eight pages, and guess what, I got back a post card. A nice post card. It said, okay kid, things are fine, keep the faith baby, like, you know, I think sometimes people in World Service just think they are dealing with little children, and with my back ground and all, you know, somehow I just happened to be on this Delta flying west for the World convention you know, coincidentally of course. You know, they were like knocked back that somebody was there from the east coast, me and Tommy Burcham, that we actually flew in for the world convention, they kept expecting that we flew in to visit family or out there on business or why are you here? For the convention. They would yell out across the room, hey, there is somebody here for the convention all the way from Georgia and the next thing, was, there I am at the world Convention, at the Jack Tar, in San Fransisco, walking around, just enormous numbers of possibly clean addicts who still looked pretty weird and a little bit street-hard, but nevertheless I had every reason to suppose they were clean, whatever stage of recovery they might be in, and there wasn't much on the program that year about the Basic Text of Narcotics Anonymous, and there wasn't much in the little display room about where the early meetings were held, we was working on our little book, and I literally went through about a dozen people saying things like, nice weather, it's really pretty out here, who's working on our book? You know, it's like, I had to begin with a couple of lame lead sentences and then I'd immediately get to that other sentence, and then it was simple navigation, you know, they'd say like, go over there, and I'd go over there, and they'd say go over there, and I'd go over there, and I kept zinging back, homing in on the registration desk, they could have just told me at the gate, that's where I wound up, and within about five minutes I met Jack Whalen, Jimmy Kinnon and Greg Pierce, Bob Barret and Chuck Skinner and all these guys hanging around this desk. That was in a way, a big way, an effectively world services, I didn't meet any Magdalanos that time, and there were other people around, as far as the people who were active at that point and I can still recall the names that played a significant major roll, like Jimmy really did do some early work, Jimmy really did pick up the fire, and carry the banner after the early efforts of NA on the east died out, and did manage to be there and sit there with that one shuddering newcomer and not give up, and off, on, maybe, maybe he did it because he is a great man, maybe it was an ego trip, it don't much matter how he did it, and that does count for something here as elsewhere and there had been early efforts in literature, the White Book and so on, it just seemed like they all took forever, a lot of time passed before progress started happening, so anyway, I'm asking these people who's working our book? when I'm still getting zinged but the space across which I'm getting zinged is getting shorter and then I meet ole Greg, and I mean that was the weirdest thing, because now I'm meeting an NA old-timer who is young, a young NA old timer who is also the chairman of the board of trustees. And like on the outside I'm going, yup, yup, and on the inside I'm going, oh goody! You know? I wasn't being very indirect, I mean I was asking pretty straight forward questions for me, not very objective at all, I'm making jokes, I get criticized for being objective and indirect and all that, and really I got knocked back for asking so hard that I guess I still am in difficult situations where I'm trying to be nice and then I wind up being criticized for being indirect and objective when really it my only way of handling very difficult situations, so I'll stop laughing at them and waisting all this time and get back to this story, and I do love them, but it's hard, but, so me and Greg is talking and the funniest thing happens is that I stopped zinging because he had to go do something so I tagged along and I had to do something and was amazed to find him tagging along? wait a minute, he's supposed to be real busy and say yeah, check with me later, go see so and so, suddenly I ain't zinging, plus were talking about mutual interests and so like I was, whatever it was, check on my luggage or something like that I hadn't really had to do it, and then it got done I went wherever he was going and we wound up

going around the building and somehow we weren't too good at catching on that day but the inevitable happened we went up to his room and he pulled out some cases with some documents in it and started going through paperwork like we were going through till five thirty last night, and see? once an addict, always an addict, right? Love that paper work. I liked it because I thought it was cool stuff but I also thought back home because see, they're had no way of going to themselves and this was the way to take home something pieces of it away and let them know that it was really and because without the evidence in those days, I mean copy was a valuable instrument because it was a way to about members San Fransisco and give happening a photolet the people back home get encouragement and hope and it's really happening and here look at this and look at that and let them know the whole goddam thing was real because back then, you know, you'd hear things about the sister fellowship thinking it's bigger than we are and better off and more meetings and all that, I mean it was hell back then and we needed the evidence bad, they did know for real that our program worked, that our traditions meant something that the twelve steps were valid principles of recovery as practiced by NA members in NA meetings, I mean all that of, by, for, NA stuff, a lot of that has become reality in the last ten or fifteen years. It didn't come easy, it took low blows, you know, within the fellowship and from external forces, and I guess what's happening is like it's easier to come out front and just talk about this because now, you're all Narcotics Anonymous okay, the days in which we got clean ten percent of the room might be real NA members so we had to watch our step, think about that, I mean it was fucked! and it was hard to do something about it, and there was no way to judge them, there was no way even if I got to talk to you or you or you or spend time with you I couldn't really tell because you'd lie to me, you probably wouldn't even half know. You might act and talk and express things to where you're not and then ten years later here you still are and then there are a lot of people that seem like they're NA members but they wouldn't do nothing for the fellowship they were supposed to love and care about so much. Let somebody else do it was their philosophy, you know one of the best tributes to the disease of addiction something like eight or nine-years ago and this is the first time I had a place where I could pass on that material by request because of people asking for it so it might have been never, but it wasn't it was today, thank you.

[Back To The Top Of Page](#)

Joe P.: I'm an addict from Memphis, my name is Joseph, Hi yall, I don't really know what's going on, I always walk in on Bo it seems like and I can never figure out what's going on but, of course my mind picked up on the sonsabitches, and thieves and assholes that are around the program, that's certainly true, I sometimes get caught up in the negative and isn't and who's not doing what and first one thing then the other but I take it that from what Ed told me that we were kinda sharing about how some of us got involved in how the book was born and got evolved that and to add to what Bo said and what Jim said is I got clean in June of 79, I got clean over the phone, there was no Narcotics Anonymous in Memphis and I found the number of the World Service Office in the public library there, it was in Sun Valley, so I called collect and talked to Jimmy Kinnon, one of the cofounders and called collect every day for a while and he sent literature and said start meetings and don't do any dope and try to care about yourself and everybody else and give hugs unconditionally and that was in June of 79 and then he sent a flyer about the world convention that was coming up in Atlanta that year he said somehow you got to get down there and meet some of these other folks, that he wouldn't be there but Bo would be there and Greg and Chuck Skinner and so like, Bo when he went to San Francisco a couple of years before that, I walked in and it looked whatever the term used, looked pretty street rough, people were all around that hotel in Atlanta and they were hugging and laying on the floor and it was pretty, that's the first clean addicts I'd been around and I wasn't sure these people were clean, so I spent a lot of my time up in the room pacing around. At that time I used nicotine, so I inhaled a few packs of nicotine and just wondered what the hell was going on, somebody'd hug you and they wouldn't let go of you and I'd go back up to my room and freakout. I didn't know what I'd gotten myself into, but I roamed around and found Bo and found Greg and sit back and listened, I asked about the same questions and they asked my how long I'd been clean about 3 or 4 years? I didn't say anything I just said yeah, of course it had only been a couple months at that time but I didn't want to feel not a part of or that these guys wouldn't talk to me and wouldn't share with me, I just kinda went along with it. Down there I'd heard about the book being talked about and that these fellows were working on it and that was where I wanted to get involved because there was no literature, just these five pamphlets and

the little white book that was in the starter kit at that time in 79. I still today don't do very well transferring my thoughts in to paper but I knew I could help out and be a part of somehow by just being there and I was told about the first World Literature Conference that was coming up a few months later that was coming up in Kansas? Up in Kansas. I'd arranged for Bo to come through Memphis to pick me up and go up there, I didn't know what it was going to be about and on the way talked about a lot of things and we talked about we were going to write this we book and we got up there and I like to fool with the copy machine and go out and get people food and clean up ashtrays and things like that, that's the kind of role that I could do in my diseased mind and my emotional debilitating self and they kept talking about for days about this we book we were going to write and all this information that Greg had and other people had getting piles, and the copy machine was running and I couldn't figure out how they were going to get all this material in a small book and it went on and on and on and what I finally figured out after that convention was that the We book, is that, we, together, and not small, but I never asked, that's where I was, but about this clean time and about this we book we were going to have and how small it was going to be so I just kind of hung around and did what I could and volunteered and at the end of that World Literature Conference, the first one, they were going to set up a time to have the next one and of course me being the assertive self good controlling addict that I was, I wanted to volunteer Memphis and so I did of course I was the only clean member in Memphis. But things worked out, we had that Literature Conference at the, the Grey Book came out of, is that correct Bo? If I remember way back then, what's that, eleven years? Yeah, a year and a half after Witchita, and ended up being about a eight or ten day conference and then people left and people like Jim and others came back and Bo stayed on and we finally, I think Bo's got all the tapes of that whole, we taped the whole conference that year and all the group conscious's and like he says he wanted to know what the address was of the group conscious was and what the phone was and at that conference we really started to develop what, in our mind, what was spiritually attuned to what we thought group conscious was is writing in committee and writing in groups and letting everybody who wanted to be a part of and not limiting anyone's participating for any reason and it seemed to work, I think that grey book came out it was, we mailed it; I think we printed twelve hundred of them and we didn't have that many addresses of groups and areas and individual members around the country, I think we had a total of about seven hundred addresses of addicts or groups or churches that NA used to be at all around the world. How many? 663? okay. Close, and we mailed them out and got a lot of them back and Jim took a lot of pictures of that conference I don't know if he's got a set of them but I brought a set of them with me, it's pretty interesting seeing all these addicts sitting around and laying around. There is a few in the pictures that aren't with us today, Roger T, who has since died of aids, was a big help, he typed about ten days straight without rest, he could type about hundred and forty words a minute accurately and he was a member of the other fellowship, he just happened to be at the state university where we had the conference and wandered into it and became addicted to NA and recovery and writing the book and his thing was typing and so he played a big part in this book being written and developed, and there were others, Gina H from Nashville, who is not here today that's since died of aids also, she was one of the early members of NA in Tennessee, I think with fourteen years clean she died, and one of the phrases that made it through all the processes of the book that I really liked, was part of her words, was everything is subject to revision especially what we know of the truth and that continues to be the true for me of what changes of what I think today or what I thought three months ago or three years ago and about myself about life about recovery about other addicts about the world and how I used and live the steps in my life today and try to apply the principles on a moment to moment basis, and like Bo said, I too have a difficult time today, seems like more difficult today than the past in dealing with personalities within the fellowship, particularly when it comes to our literature and the Basic Text as it is today and the other literature that is coming out and such as that is what's going on. So I've been involved, and all my recovery has been in Narcotics Anonymous since June of 79 and I've started meetings and I've shared and do what the next thing is to do. I guess that's all I have to put it in a little nut shell. Thanks a lot.

[Back To The Top Of Page](#)

You know that one of the things that Joe has opened up the door is the different talents, it was so amazing to just show up at one of the conferences, my self worth was at the level that what basically I could do was tote tables and give back rubs and I believe at the second one they, that I showed up at the real treat for me

was getting to do what all the other people had got to do in kindergarten that I didn't get to do cause I didn't get to go to kindergarten was little bitty scissors cut up little pieces of paper and get to paste stick them on the back and paste it on another piece of paper and the kid in me just went berserk, you know, hotdiggedy doggy dum! twelve hours of this, you know, it's like somebody'd walk up and start rubbing your back and all this and one of the things that did happen in Memphis was, how long was the conversation with the phone call? Two calls totaling over nine hours and a little gal sitting there and they take turns typing, you know, one person would hold the phone to their ear and they would type and another person would rub their back so they wouldn't cramp up and just over and over and over times again the selflessness. People said how did you learn to give like you give and it was through the conferences and watching time after time after time and you know, just stepping out thinking you know, well, I really don't have the money to go, but I'm fucking going anyway and called the boss up and said I got to have two weeks off next week and if you want to fire me you can. And the boss saying, okay, you can go, come back when you get back in town, come back to work. Alright, and leave running and you know the encompassing the coming to believe process you know where the phrase of this is one family goes to the bone. You break the bread and you cry and you suffer and you sit and wonder why and how and as Bo mentioned why did they say that or you know, why did they do that and you know, don't they love NA and yes, maybe they do and you try to be open-minded and all that stuff because really I got tired of being run out of the institutions because I didn't have the proper credentials. It was like well, we'll go get some tell me I can't get it, you're in trouble. I got tired of seeing people dying for lack of hope, you know come in and try it and we offer them a white book and this was there more? Well, if you got time to listen we can talk to you and then the joy of getting the chance to, yeah theres a little bit more over here and pull out a book and give it to them and watch the life come back and to some people that's not valuable but to me it is. We Ire going go on a little bit more about the conferences and maybe share some some overcomings, I know we got this, if you havent gotten in the room at one thirty maybe after this you can go there and look at some of the stuff and it will tie it too, there is some of it laying up here and you know because it is hard to conceive sometimes. why do I get tears in my eyes when I see this flyer? Five years worth, that's why. and the othrer people this flyer said yeah, okay big deal, so they didn't know how to do it artictically then. Which ever one of the gentlemen wanted to go next?

[Back To The Top Of Page](#)

Greg P.: My name is Greg and I'm an addict, and I don't know I look around and we're all a little teary eyed, maybe that's from a lack of sleep we'd been there before. For me, part of what was such a big impact for me you know, this is the first time we all sat down together in years. This is certainly the first time the four of us, the five of us have ever done this and that's amazing because you see we were really part of each others lives for a long time and I think that some of that stuff is the stuff that never gets talked about, that it wasn't just work, it was sharing each others lives, we used to ride busses across the country. Joseph visited me in Oregon on a Greyhound, twice from Memphis. I visited Joseph in Memphis an a Greyhound then swung up and rode from Memphis to Pittsburgh and Jim picked me up and went to the farm and went to Warren for the Lit Conference and then, Oh, we went, drove across Pennslyvania to New Jersey so I could talk at the East Coast then we came back and went to Warren for the Lit Conference and somewhere in the middle of that we went up to start the Ohio region, I mean we lived with each other this was not just about getting together to put together a book. One of the things, an awareness that I've come about really in the last month or two, one of the things that is very very real, the process is part of the magic. The only way we could learn about recovery, particularly the folks who are here, was through involvment in service. There wasn't any place to go there wasn't oldtimers. Particularly in the east, and the way you learned about living clean was by getting involved in service and traveling from Ohio to Georgia on a wing and a prayer and putting up with some crazy, I mean we put him in the back of the truck that didn't run and drove him to the airport. I remember you know, or traveling to here or there or wherever and showing up and becoming part of the process and the process and the process was about stretching the limits of knowledge of recovery. I really believe when people started discussing the Basic Text, it's obsolete because the awareness is grown and the awarness grew. A lot of, I believe the way NA is perceived today grows right out of the process of the Basic Text and discussions, it's obsolete now, the awareness of recovery and the fellowship in NA has moved past the Basic Text, it's one of the reasons we originally talked about, never wanting

anything that became a You know, this is the Bible, sort of thing. We wanted something that would be reviewed every five years and updated as our understanding and awareness recovery grew. I think the actual process started, in this attempt, in San Francisco, the things that led up to that, the writing letters, the looking to people, encouraging people the phone calls and everything else, those were all setting the stage. I really believe the actual process started in San Francisco in 1777 at the 7th World Convention. And it grew from there. I want to read a letter that I think is real indicative of, that Bo sent me. In December of 1977, this follows when we first met at the World Convention in San Francisco, Bo came down with me and spent a few days at the house, several of you have done that, I visited the fellowship in Marietta, I'd been in a situation where I was in Washington, you see I used to do triangle flights, I started travelling in NA in 1976 wherever there was some groups and when I did some business, what I'd do I don't think you can do it any more, they used to be able to tack on another leg for like 30 or 40 dollars so if I was doing business or something from LA to Washington, what I would maybe, in fact -this is a real trip that happened, instead of flying, I had business in well, Bethesda actually, just outside of Washington, what I did was fly from LA to Washington, go to an NA meeting, meet an NA member, have them drive me to Washington, take care of my business, run around Pennsylvania for a couple of days, end up back in Philadelphia and then fly to Atlanta and then back to LA. Or another trip was, there was one I was setting up a plant in Toronto and I flew from LA, there was a stop, there was a change of planes in Chicago so I stayed overnight and went to a meeting in Chicago in 77, had pizza and went on to Toronto and on the way back I worked it out where I could stop in Wichita and visit with some of those folks on my way back to LA and that was the way I traveled, that was the way I traveled, I'd almost built that in and for very little money you could add a leg to a flight and I was travelling and so on one of those trips, coincidentally, Bo chuckles about it and says, coincidentally two months later Greg dropped in on my local meeting and you know, but that's the way, I mean, that was not anything bizarre. That's a description of the nature of the relationship. We participated in each others lives to a much greater degree than we have since, you know, we were part of each other, and I was struck to, on how well we complimented each other because we all got different strengths. I could not have done what Joseph or Bo or Jim did. Bo could not have done what Joseph or I or Jim did, Joseph could not have done what Bo or I or Jim did, Jim could not have done what Bo or I or Joseph did we each had our own strengths, and that's something really we haven't I don't think we ever really looked at, but it's true, it's really true. I don't really know what they really are, but they were very real, anyway after that trip, and when I'd dropped in and I don't know, sometime in 77, here's the letter, and I think the letter really speaks to some of the spirit of the Basic Text of the process. I also think NA grew as much from the process as it did from the product see, because an example of that, now Jim mentioned coming down to Atlanta in 1977, and then he went back, there really wasn't any NA, he started an NA meeting. In 1980 there was like 1 or 2 meetings. In 1981 there were 100 meetings in Ohio. You know, that's the sort of things that happened and that was because the process and because of the awareness. The moving to a higher level Of conscious because of awareness that took place in the process. Dear Greg, well we all wear glasses now, do you wear glasses? Did any of us wear glasses before? My first pair of glasses! I don't think any of us wore glasses, that was like one of those weird a, yeah, nun of us needed to we all have to now. I don't know. That was one of those weird things, well I can remember at Warren, the 4th the 5th, whatever, World Lit Conference, the 5th, one of the things that struck me was the percentage of people with light colored eyes, I don't know why that struck me, but there was something there. Anyway dear Greg, guess who bought a typewriter? I hope you have a nice Christmas, this is December 16th 1977, please say hi to Lois and the baby, hope to see you next year, I've gotten off to a rolling start with the writing. I've started umpteen pamphlets and a few notes for the NA book. My friends here know of my efforts and I hope to get a few of them together real soon for input and discussion. Hopefully this will take place here and elsewhere. Thank God it's begun. At this point I feel we have to involve as many as possible to make sure we cover all points of view. Involving people might struggle the effort and controversy but I really trust the spirit and believe we'd be poor servants if we leave them out. Somehow if we could get our best minds working on this in harmony I just know it would strengthen the gut of the program. In my thinking it has occurred to me what we're up against, is NA a cure for addiction, how to help doctors treat or react to addiction. We would hate to see any valid point of view left out, also I would hate to see any great length of time elapse without some progress, please write to me my friend, your friend Bo. I didn't get to attend the first World Lit Conference in 79, that and I'm sure Bo will talk more about that, or somebody, that was about planing the plan. We always planed from a, you always plan the work and work the plan process. That was a rule of

thumb. You plan the work and then you work the plan and you review the plan, you probably do it over 2 or 3 times. You plan the work and work the plan and Wichita was about developing the Literature process, writing the directions, stuff that had never been tried before, I can remember a lot of phone calls and a lot of letters. We were going now what the hell should we do next? We checked things out with each other we were in real close communication. I think it really began for me in Wichita, in Lincoln, after the 10th World Convention in Wichita. Kermit brought a mug from that convention, he's sitting in the room over there. The following week was the second World Lit Conference just a state away. We didn't think nothing about it's just a state away from the 10th World Convention was the second World Lit Conference and that's where the work on the book began. There'd been writing before that, there'd been input put in, there'd been a number of people who sent stuff in. There was old stuff drug out of boxes and closets and other people's closets. From World Service office and wherever. There was these stacks of paper and I didn't know what to do with it. Some of the things that happened at that Lit Conference, we talked about what had happened before that, the history up till then and that would be a very interesting thing. That tape exists. We made a decision and one of the basic premises we worked on the text from was that all the significant points that needed to be included in the Basic Text, were included in an outline called the White Booklet. The White Booklet would serve as the outline for the Basic Text. We actually wrote a different outline, and we cut up material, Ed was talking about the 12 hour sessions with the scissors. What he didn't tell you was when you get done with the twelve hours of scissors you go somewhere and crash for an hour or two and you come back and do it again. You sit in a session with everybody involved doing all these different tasks and you read and people cry and you can feel something happening, you can feel the process, you can participate in the process. I want to read a little bit of that first cut and paste. I don't know how much but it started out As addicts we have a common bond, we have all felt pain, we felt the numbness, gnawing inadequacy, aching loneliness, separateness from our fellows and feelings of uselessness and self pity. We've surly had enough of self-destruction. Somehow in a moment of clarity we were able to look at the whole scene and all it's insanity. We stopped fighting and something inside of us said no more. We lacked real information on what addiction is, what recovery could mean to us. We were in a poor position to judge whether or not we were addicts, each of us faced a dilemma. We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before considering the possibility the possible connection between drugs and misery. Eventually drugs ceased to make us feel good. We tottered on the brink of self-destruction. All our attempts to stay clean failed. In our isolation we had lost the things in our lives that were most important to us. We lost all hope and freedom. We were sick and tired of being sick and tired. From the start, the theme of NA meetings was recovery. We all knew how to use drugs. We knew the effect they had on us. The primary thing we were interested in was how to stay clean, how to cope with life without drugs. How to handle unpleasant feelings and emotions, in other words, how to recover. This is why we suggest attending meetings, the same way we used drugs, as often as possible. Going to NA meetings provides a period of time where we could talk to other addicts about the nature of our addiction. The addict and recovery, we learn we're not alone. Few of us set out to become addicts, it seems that we were born that way or at some point in our using crossed an invisible line in to addiction expressing itself in our obsessions, compulsions and preoccupations. Our addiction overrides reason, experience and perception. We can see a little of our self in every addict. Addicts are scared, they feel they must be something they are not. They can't stand the future, they can't stand the past and they can't stand still. It is the addict's nature to perceive and precipitate crisis, adopt a style of living from crisis to crisis. Many of us are dependent upon people to carry us emotionally through life, we are often disappointed and hurt when such contacts have other interests, friends and loved ones. Addiction is a disease not a moral issue. The addict reacts to drugs in a distorted behavior and compulsively seeks more. The addict is past the point of no return and must have help in order to gain a normal life without drugs. I can remember the first time I heard that read, which was at the close at the Lincoln Lit Conference and there were fifty people there crying because, you see, this was real. This had some cohesiveness. This was the beginnings for a book, you could touch it, you could hear it, you could see it, you could read it, it was real. Before that it may have been just stacks of paper, bits and pieces that didn't make any sense. Maybe the biggest thing that happened for me in Lincoln, was that I began to believe that it could work. I think I'll cut it off there and let other people share about those first couple Lit Conferences. The one after Lincoln was Memphis and maybe this go round should be through Memphis.

Jim M.: Hi, I'm Jim and I'm an addict, Maybe it should be through Memphis, What I feel like is that Memphis is where I really got started, where I really got involved that first time. When I come to something like this I've a tendency to stand up here and do my best to put me back there and say well how did you feel? Okay? probably less so now then 5-6 years ago. How I would have felt back there is hey, lets get at it. I want to hear about this history right now, all of it. So put it down, so tell me point by point what happened. Let's not any more of this cosmic bullshit, let's hear it. I think we learned about three things in our literature committee experience as a fellowship, if we communicate and are inclusive, if we let everybody know what's going on and we're willing to take everybody in, something really special can happen, and that was what happened, I'd seen that and wouldn't go, but then somebody came out with one that was good enough for me, these guys finally stumbled along and came up with one good enough for my standards. They discovered that there was something called an offset machine and they could I got on a plane, I'd read this and hammered everyone around me to do it and hadn't done it myself and on the plane down there I did it wrote my story. That was the first time I wrote anything. I was harranged, I was challenged into participating, I wasn't kept away, I wasn't excluded, I was included, that's really important. I had something to offer. I think spirit of recovery picks the very sickest, the most objectionable of us to share some of the deepest parts of the message, to teach the rest of us about anonymity so if we need the message we ignore the messenger, we don't consider the vehicle, but what's being carried in it and I'm pretty objectionable. I'm pretty pedantic, I'm pretty hard, it's hard to hear what I have to say because of who I am. Because of how I act. Anyway I think that we learn about anonymity, not let that get in our way. I think we learn that if the spiritual purpose of a project is right the talent and the money is always going to be there. Always. If we do something for NA, and our purpose is right, everything that we need is going to be there. What we did was acceptable to the fellowship, it got approved by the fellowship because we were inclusive we practiced functional anonymity and the fellowship did it, we didn't do it, we're nothing, we don't mean a dam thing. The fellowship wrote the book. We didn't write the book and don't every accuse me of being part of writing any book because I didn't you did. The third thing is that the biggest part of that which is what happened among us was much more than the sum of our talents. You couldn't take our credentials, everybody that ever participated in it and add those up and say that this could have been the result of that, it couldn't have been possible. There was something more that happened. Now I'll get cosmic, I sat down after 18 hours of no sleep, sitting in a group and I saw my hand move without any effort of my own. I even questioned that. Something happens. Memphis, I went down and Bo taught me how to work with him for about three days ahead of that and we delivered an order so we could get there and learn how to work together. it was great, he never got paid for it because he let us work an it. It was shit, Bo was donev But we went to Memphis and sat down and we had our first group conscience. I read this. I didn't know about five other people in the world who could read. It says addict in here. It doesn't say drug addict or alcoholic. It says recovery in here. We went around the room and introduced ourselves and everybody was different. I got angry and slammed my fist on the table. Wanted to anyway. Somebody had to be the son of a bitch to talk about getting the words right and because of my background and a lot of real sick shit about me I took that role, it was extremely important to me that the words were as very precise as they could be. It's a good thing that there was somebody there like that. For the very first time in the world mankind addressed recovery from addiction. In the written form starting in Memphis. Mankind addressed the topic of recovery from addiction for the very first time ever. I thought t(hat) No matter what else had been written with modifiers on i hat was kind of important because I couldn't, when you said you were a drug addict I couldn't hear you. When you said you were an alcoholic I couldn't hear you. when you said you were powerless over a chemical I couldn't hear you. Because I knew that you didn't know. When you called recovery sobriety, and used the terms interchangeably I couldn't hear you because I knew you didn't know. I knew you didn't understand, I knew you couldn't understand. Its not that I rejected you, I didn't reject you, your recovery was just fine whatever you had was just fine it just wasn't recovery.