

Chapter Twelve

A New Beginning

In ninety days we were able to transform the office from a volunteer operation that was failing into a moderately successful business venture. The fellowship needed a business office and expected it to be run efficiently. This we were able to accomplish. We hired more workers, initiated new systems and controls, and paved the way for serving an ever-growing fellowship. There was a lot we couldn't accomplish in ninety days, but we went a long way to lay the foundation for what was to come. A willing Board of Directors, along with support from the trustees and conference leadership, made it all possible.

Chuck called the office board meeting to order at 6:00 PM on Saturday, June 11, 1983, and most of the directors were there. As he led the board through the agenda, I listened as they addressed one item after another, discussing and then making decisions. They started with an expansion of the board to include thirteen members in accordance with the number that had been elected. Immediately following was the election of officers. Chuck was re-elected as President, Kevin F. as vice-president, Vivian L., secretary, and Martin C., treasurer.

A detailed report was given by Vivian on publication of pamphlets and the Basic Text. She had been engaged in the printing trade for several years, and the board appeared to have confidence in her printing judgment. Vivian had done considerable work since the conference and was prepared to offer a number of motions, most of which would be adopted. They included details about the book cover material and color, paper quality, print size, style and quality. She requested that the typesetting be done in San Francisco, where she could maintain close supervision. She presented four bids along with her own recommendation that they choose Publishers Press in Salt Lake City. After some discussion, it was decided to go with them, subject to a visit to the plant by two directors.

Vivian was organized and quite methodical. She tended to be strongly opinionated and resistant to changing her views, but she knew what she was talking about, or did a good job of bluffing. Most of her publication suggestions were adopted, and she continued for

more than a year to have a strong say about printing plans and policy. At first it was good to have someone besides myself who knew printing, but later on we would have disagreements.

When the office manager item was taken into consideration, I presented my proposal for a ninety-day contract. The board unanimously adopted it while setting monthly compensation at \$1,667 and directed me to prepare a written contract. Following this, they decided to immediately take over the printing and distribution of the *NA Way* magazine since the conference had given the responsibility to the office. They also raised the price to \$1.25 per issue.

Before ending the meeting, they unanimously adopted a motion to "make Jimmy K. an Honorary Life Member of the Board of Directors." It was left to Chuck to convey this honor to Jimmy at his convenience. After nearly three hours of constant work, we retired to a restaurant for dinner. Upon returning, I was given a set of keys and told to start work on Monday. There had been few instructions about what I was to do, how I was to do it and what I could or should not do.

About two o'clock the following afternoon I let myself into the office and began carefully looking at what I had gotten myself into. I knew that regardless of what I did, it would be a new beginning for the office and for the fellowship as a whole. In about an hour, I concluded I had gotten myself into one hell of a mess! There were strange things about this office I had never seen before, and these became the first targets for my list of initial objectives. I selected the desk I wanted to work on (one of many army surplus metal gray desks) and moved it to where I wanted to be.

I then began to bring over to the desk the piles of paper I was immediately concerned about. Upon closer examination of these papers, to put it in blunt terms, I was shocked! Around the office, in different locations, were piles of literature orders with the checks or money orders still attached. There were literally hundreds of orders in different piles with checks dating back weeks and months. I thought this was crazy! No company leaves checks attached to orders in loose piles for months scattered all over!

Careful examination revealed that each pile of orders was matched with some item on the order form that was out of stock. However, a little addition revealed there were orders for more of everything than we had quantities with which to fill them. It was no wonder that people complained about never getting their literature. Only months later when I listened to Jimmy share at the New York World convention did I really understand why this happened. Jimmy was a very ethical and honest man. That, combined with his Irish sense of order, forced him to delay depositing the checks or money orders until he packaged the order for shipment. Unfortunately there

was never enough money in the bank to pay for ordering large enough quantities of literature to be able to fill orders immediately when they came in.

Another strange thing I discovered that afternoon were notes taped to each desk and on the wall in several places. There were lots of notes, but one note was in about six places. It was identified as the IRS number and looked like the tax identification number assigned to a business. Knowing that was not information you leave hanging on your office wall, I took down all the notes containing that number and threw them away.

I was in at nine Monday morning and met with Jodi to talk about the changes I intended to make. I wanted her to answer the phone for a few days and keep calls from me unless it was one of a few people I wanted to talk to. I needed to get all those checks and money orders into the bank, to order more of everything to build up the inventory, and to get the place better organized before I was sidetracked into lots of phone calls.

After a while I went to the post office to get the mail. While I was gone Jimmy came by. As Jodi related it upon my return, Jimmy walked in the door saw the desks re-arranged and said to Jodi, "I guess they don't want me around any more." He put down the papers he brought, turned and left. Until we moved some months later, he visited the office about a dozen times. I was very sad that he took my Sunday efforts as an affront. But he never said a word about it in any of the conversations we later had.

I could not find a ledger book, so a little later I called Jimmy. He told me where to find the mimeograph forms he had prepared and used for recording financial information. They were home made, single line work sheets on which he recorded the date, the person's name and address, and the amount of payment. That was all. There was no chart of accounts for income or expense and no order reference system to match order forms with entries of payments received. In fact there wasn't even a page that listed all the checks or cash expenditures, there was only a checkbook for that. I had to start from scratch and develop these and other financial tools.

I began to prepare the checks and money orders for deposit in the bank. There were so many that it actually took me until Thursday afternoon to get them separated from the orders and the money deposited. There had been over \$13,000 in checks and money orders laying around the office!

Jeanie came into the office On Tuesday afternoon, introduced herself, and said she was here to deliver five thousand White Booklets. As we unloaded her truck we talked. She said her bindery company was placing all the printing orders for the pamphlets since the

work was taken from Thought Process printers. She parceled the work out to different printers who could get the work done right away or offered a lower price and also gave us the "overs" without additional cost. This meant we got a few hundred extra pamphlets when we ordered, say 5,000, but we didn't pay for the overage.

I instructed her to triple the normal quantity she ordered and to make a rush order today, as I was pushing through a large stack of orders and we would need the pamphlets. We also talked about the new pamphlets being typeset in San Francisco along with the book. I expected them soon and would need rush orders for them also. She called me about two hours later to tell me the orders had been placed and we would have the pamphlets within ten days.

That afternoon a man named Greg R. came into the office and announced he was the part-time shipper. Jodi had told me about him shortly beforehand. Greg turned out to be the most valuable asset in the first months of my work at the office. His dedication and loyalty to NA really paid off. He was a full-time college student and worked twelve to twenty hours a week filling orders. He was very quick and precise. I explained that we needed to get every order filled, and I was, by then, passing over to him a large stack of orders I had taken checks from. He was pleased with this change in events and went right to work. And as he did, we would talk, carrying on a conversation from across the room. In time we became friends.

Chuck also came in later in the day. I showed him what I had been doing and laid out my plans for the week. He was satisfied and indicated he would stop by on Friday afternoon, as was his habit, to read letters from the fellowship and write responses when they required it. I was glad for that, as I had discovered a large pile of letters that needed replies that I couldn't supply.

On Wednesday, Jodi answered a phone call and after looking for one of those notes I had taken down, asked what I had done with the IRS number. I asked her why she needed it and was told the caller wanted to open an NA bank account in Florida and needed that number to give to their bank. I was shocked again! After a brief debate with her I relented and allowed her to give out the number. She told me they gave the number out every day and that hundreds of people used that number. I quickly concluded we were in a mess over this already and a few more accounts using the number wouldn't make it any worse, at least for a few days.

By Thursday afternoon I finally got the last of the checks into the ledger and deposited in the bank. Some of the checks were two or three months old and I was not sure they were all still valid, but I put them in anyway. In addition to checks piled around the office, I found several folders in a file cabinet with checks attached to orders. I

made some phone calls to the people who had sent them and a few calls to the banks the checks were issued on. Most of the customers still wanted the literature, so I added these to the growing pile for shipping. Altogether, there were over four hundred orders. It took us weeks to get all we had in stock shipped, and place the rest on back order while we waited for more to come back from the printer.

Bob R., the World Service Conference Chairperson called Thursday to see how things were going. I gave him many of the details but he wasn't really surprised. He said he suspected the problem about unfilled orders, was pleased I had taken such direct action to get the money in the bank and fill the orders. He volunteered to help, an offer I accepted, but suggested he put off coming in for a week until I was better organized. Bob and George, his vice-chairperson had been at the board meeting and talked with each other by phone almost daily. In the months ahead, one or the other was in contact with me every few days.

The office had one old typewriter that didn't work very well, so I brought my own which worked okay. Although we then had the office typewriter serviced, it was beyond help and soon broke down again. So we used my typewriter until the fall when we purchased a new one, but by then we needed more than just two typewriters. The photocopy machine situation was about the same. It was awful!

I got to know Jodi a little better during the week, which was both good and bad. Her emotions seemed to change several times each day, and she always looked like she never got any sleep. She was often short-tempered about little things, and was always looking for some paper she had carried to another place in the office and forgot where she put it. Jodi had been hired only a few months before. She said she had about six months clean time and went to meetings every night. I asked her to change how she answered the phone and told her what to say about orders when people called. By the end of the week I was sure we could get along. I had her packing orders and answering the phone. We all helped in some way in getting out orders; that was our first priority.

We had a few visitors come by to purchase literature or just say hello. Most were curious, as word about me was getting around through local fellowship. Two visitors came by to "get in my face" and question my integrity over what they believed was my role in kicking Jimmy out of the office. Regardless of what I said, there was going to be no reconciliation with a few people who were very close to Jimmy.

Chuck came in on Friday, and we went over what had been done during the week. He was amazed at the amount of money that we put into the bank. We visited the bank and changed the signature cards so I would be added to the list of signers on the accounts. He

went through some of the correspondence, a pile about eight inches high. He wrote a few letters to people needing help. Chuck continued to come to the office on Fridays for a long time to answer correspondence, discuss what had taken place, and plan for the next week.

I worked most of that first Saturday, but went sailing on Sunday. On Monday morning I began to accept phone calls for inquiries of all types and to return calls I had not accepted the previous week. Most calls were about orders. A few were from people wanting to get acquainted with the new office manager, but some were requests for help on problems their group or area were facing. I took notes about the requests for help, and began calling board members to ask them to return the calls. I spent a lot of time filling orders, and the pile was getting smaller.

Our supply of "welcome" key tags ran out on Tuesday. I called the supplier and discussed the situation. He told me there was a thirty-day turnaround time from the date we placed an order. I nearly went crazy! "What do you mean a thirty-day delivery time? I've got orders piled to the roof and no key tags. You've got to get me key tags of all colors immediately." Well, he promised to rush the order, but it would still take thirty days.

The next time Jeanie came in, we talked about the key tag situation and I sought her help. A few days later she called to tell me she had found a plastics manufacturer in Rhode Island that offered to make our key tags more quickly and at a lower unit cost. I reported this to the board in the next weekly report, and working through Jeanie, I had a typesetter make the proper art work to be sent to the company. It took five weeks but we began getting the key tags in much larger quantities and we saved six cents on each one! That company made the key tags until 1991, still at a lower price than the original supplier nine years earlier. By finding this direct supplier, Jeanie saved the WSO about a quarter million dollars over the seven years I was with the office. We also reduced the price.

We were out of stock on the blue or regular edition of the Text as all of them had been sold or shipped before the board meeting. We started a back order system and sent letters to each person who ordered them explaining the delay. Since the typesetting was not even done, the books would not arrive for many months.

We were also out of a few other things for a few days or weeks during the first months. It took a while to get adequate quantities in stock sufficient to meet the demand. The back order problem was not caused by a lack of money. At the end of June there was over \$51,700 in funds in savings or checking accounts. The problem was these assets had simply not been turned into inventory yet.

I soon had to turn my attention to tackling another big problem. When the Text had been delivered during the conference, boxes and boxes of them were given to individuals on consignment. There was no accounts receivable system, so no follow up on those sales existed. I spent a lot of time on this matter, sending letters and making phone calls. There was over \$22,000 in orders for books that had been taken or shipped. Within a few days of when I reported this to the board, I found a folder with another \$16,000 in literature orders that had been shipped, again with no payments received. Over the next six months we were successful in collecting \$35,400 of the nearly \$38,000 in accounts receivable due when I started.

On Wednesday evening, I wrote a letter to the Board of Directors giving details of the first ten days. This was the beginning of my reports to the board I called the Monday Morning Report. I tried to write and mail them by Friday each week, so that some might arrive in the Monday mail. For the next few months these reports went out nearly every week so the board would know the problems I encountered, what I was doing about them, and any suggestions I had for them to consider at the next meeting. Copies were also mailed to Sally and the Administrative Committee.

Another issue had been on my mind since the first day. The order form did not include a charge for sales tax to California customers. I knew we were required to charge and collect sales tax. Just to make it official I verified that we were required by California law to do so on sales to California buyers. I informed the board and suggested we apply for a sales tax permit, even though we might be required to pay a penalty for not collecting taxes on sales made in all of the previous years.

With so many serious things going on that impacted the office financially and operationally, I grew concerned that the members and groups across the country should also become informed. I decided to initiate a monthly report to the fellowship on the problems and plans related specifically to the office. Using the recent report to the board as a basis, I started gathering information. Jodi put together a list on gummed labels of all the conference participants, region and area committees, large literature customers and a host of other names to use as our mail list. That took her several days to accomplish and I used the time to complete the *Newsline*. It wasn't very pretty, but it was not intended to be. I just wanted to get information out to the fellowship.

We mailed the First Edition of the *Newsline* on June twentieth, 622 copies in all, folded, stapled and mailed manually by the WSO staff. I felt it was important to show the fellowship that real changes were being made and that we were interested in sharing information

about the office. The positive reception showed it was a good idea, and the board was quite pleased. It began a process of reconciliation that helped heal the wounds of years of antagonism. I made one unfortunate error with that mailing. I was called a few days later by a member in Memphis who complained, rightly, that the *Newsline* was not enclosed in an envelope, and his postal carrier probably now knew he received information from Narcotics Anonymous. I felt terrible. But I didn't make that mistake again. Thereafter, I was always conscious of preserving anonymity of our members, and tried to do so in every way.

Jimmy and I had a long discussion in his kitchen in late June. I outlined a number of things I felt he could and should be involved in that the fellowship needed. I stressed the need for him to write about the early history of NA and travel across the fellowship to speak and share his recovery in person. I expressed the conviction that the board would come up with the money for both ventures. As I later reported to the board, he responded that he would like to do some of those things, but he needed a rest for a while and to work around the house. Unfortunately Jimmy didn't get involved again.

As the third week came to a close, I prepared another report for the board. It reflected progress, but it also pointed to a new supply of issues we were working on, particularly groups using the office ID number to open checking accounts. I advised the board that this practice had to stop and an alternative solution found. We were still not getting orders shipped as promptly as we needed to, but we were making progress. I was working twelve hours a day and getting great support from Jodi, Greg and the board, as well as everyone that called or came by. But the mountain of work never seemed to get smaller.

In late June, Bob R. and Vivian went to Salt Lake City to inspect the printing plant. Their report was very favorable, and an agreement with Publishers Press for producing the Text was approved at the July board meeting. They had the kind of printing machinery that used huge rolls of paper, like newspapers are printed on — a far cry from the equipment of *Though Process Printers*. The actual printing would take only a day, but the various elements of pre-printing preparation and then assembly after the printing takes a long time. They promised delivery of the books within sixty days of receipt of the typeset galleys.

When the typesetting was complete, a proofreading session was held in San Francisco. Ginni S., the new conference literature chairperson, Bud K., her vice-chairperson, Sally E., Bob R., and Vivian from the board got together and carefully examined each page of the Basic Text, marking corrections that needed to be made. These corrections were verified after being re-typeset. This process took sev-

eral weeks, and the finalized typeset galley was sent to the printer on July sixteenth.

As June was ending, we sent a letter to Bob R. and Sally explaining that we had been trying to get copyright release forms signed by originators of six stories that were to be printed in the Text. If we didn't get them, we wrote, the stories would have to be omitted. Sally and Bob sent letters to the fellowship at large and we didn't have difficulty with the fact the stories were left out.

As the July board meeting approached, I developed and mailed to the board a package of information. It included an agenda for the meeting, minutes of the June meeting, a financial report and an inventory report. This set in motion a practice of sending the agenda and minutes in advance and keeping the board informed with written monthly financial and inventory reports.

Just before the end of June, Chuck called and asked me to make a check out to Jimmy. When he came by to pick it up he explained the old board had voted to pay Jimmy two hundred dollars a month as a storage fee for all the boxes and office stuff at his home and for his expenses as office manager. I brought this up at the July board meeting and they decided to approve the payment as a continuing expense. We paid this stipend monthly until Jimmy died two years later. At the time Jimmy died, Chuck was no longer on the board, so when I discussed continuing this payment to Betty, it failed to get enough support with the board. I considered it an unfortunate decision, and the office never got the records that had been in the house. And no one was really gutsy enough to discuss ownership of those records anyway.

A lot was accomplished at the July board meeting. Twenty-three motions were approved covering a variety of issues, including selecting paper stock and cover material for the book, requiring copyright releases for stories to be included in the book, approving the Basic Text printing contract, purchasing a computer, decreasing the price on key tags from \$.30 to \$.25, authorizing me to go to the World Convention, and taking action on the sales tax problem, just to name a few. The meeting started at 5:50 PM on Saturday, later recessed an hour for dinner and adjourned at 2:34 AM. It had been a long meeting, and we were all exhausted.

Another problem that kept nagging at me during the first month was the *World Directory*. A *World Directory* had not been printed in two years, and everyone wanted it done. An attempt had been started the previous summer, but much of the data had been lost because of a malfunction in the word processor. The word processor had been purchased in 1982, but it was so old at the time (about ten years) that we couldn't get the right kind of recording tapes for it. There

was no instruction manual, and simply put, it was a crummy machine. The information was recorded on a tape cassette but there was no screen, like computers have, so we could never tell what we had unless we printed it.

Two women had been working on it on a part-time basis several evenings a week for almost a year. At the July meeting, the board voted to continue the project and publish the directory as soon as possible. Work was resumed, but it was not ready for printing until October. In August we sent a draft of the information to the RSR or other significant people in each state asking for their corrections and input. These were returned with many corrections that had to be entered. After much delay the directory was completed and eventually sent to the printers.

A good part of every day was spent on the phone talking with people on all kinds of issues. Board members called, or I called them, a few trustees called and there were a growing number of calls to Bob R. and the conference committees. One of the regular calls was with Robin H., editor of the *NA Way* magazine. I knew her from the conference. She was talented, capable and friendly. She was a dedicated member and believed in the magazine's ability to share recovery. Unfortunately I was in an awkward situation, as I knew more than a few of the directors didn't like the magazine and wanted to kill it. There were problems to contend with, and the directors were not quite as flexible as Robin wanted them to be.

From time to time I needed to ask Jimmy about things he would know that I did not. I simply called him and we talked. He was always friendly and helpful. Also, members continued to send letters to him and call the office to simply talk. Jodi or I would pass these messages to him by phone or go over to his house.

As things got busier in July, I knew it was time to hire some additional help. I mentioned this to the board at their meeting and obtained authority to hire additional workers. The following week I told Jodi that I had obtained permission to hire an additional worker and asked if she had any ideas about members willing to work for us. She said she did.

The following day two women came in to apply for the job. Both were members with a year or more clean time. One had worked for Jack B. at his treatment center and the other had been through Jack's treatment program. I hired both as typists with a thirty day probation period. These were Cathy M., who stayed with us for about eight months, and Sherry B., who worked at the office for three years and became my most trusted subordinate for a long time.

On July fifteenth, we mailed the second *Newsline* to the fellowship — over eight hundred copies this time. Since the *Newsline*

was prepared in the week following the board meeting, it contained a lot of information about board decisions. This edition got even better reviews than the first one.

Several times during July, I met with the office attorney. The board needed legal advice on three issues; investigation of the possibility of suing Thought Process Printers to recover some of the money paid to them, pending changes to the bylaws, and the problems that might come from having allowed the fellowship to use the IRS number assigned to the office. In an early August report, the attorney advised us that a good case could be made against Thought Process Printers. The board eventually elected to terminate the case when further investigation revealed the owner had filed for bankruptcy and the possibility of receiving any money was extremely remote. This report was given wide distribution within the fellowship and the matter was dropped.

I searched the office in mid-July for any information about CARENA, as we had promised at the conference. I examined this material carefully and spoke to Jimmy and others about it. I then drafted a report for the board, explaining that the WSO had been using the acronym CARENA under the misguided presumption that it was a better way to publish the literature than under the actual name of the office. They had reasoned that by using a fictitious business name, it was a protection for the fellowship. In truth, it didn't provide any protection. I recommended that all literature forthwith carry the name World Service office, Inc., as publisher and never use CARENA again. The board adopted that philosophy later, and we gradually made the transition.

Another concern was whether, by using CARENA, the ownership of the copyright had been vested in some body other than the World Service Office. It did not. I reported the business name CARENA was registered as being owned by the corporation, and no individual or group was getting a share of the proceeds from each item sold under that publishing name. I was able to declare that no one was paid anything in connection to CARENA being used on the literature. I suspected that might not end the controversy, and it did not.

The New York World Convention Committee (WCNA 13) requested we send literature on consignment so they could sell it at the convention. In the early eighties, conventions were a principal place where members and committees were able to purchase literature. Conventions seemed to have had better success at getting literature from the office than regular groups or individuals. A number of phone calls were exchanged between the convention chairperson, Tony D., myself and Bob R. There was worry that the convention might actually lose money, and that income from literature sales

might be used to help pay for the loss. In this way the office might never get paid for the literature. It was eventually decided that literature would be sent, but I had to go to the convention and handle the sales myself.

George, the conference vice-chairperson, had been working closely with Martin C. and his Finance Committee on the development of the finance handbook. George was also in close contact with both John L., on the H&I Committee activities, and Charles K., about PI Committee work. However, both were stymied over the lack of operating funds. Both worked, but could not, of their own funds, pay for the expenses of their committees. As time drew near for mailing the *Fellowship Report*, George had to call each committee chairperson to hustle their reports along.

Near the end of the month, we helped Bob R. and Carol K. assemble and mail the quarterly *Fellowship Report*. It contained reports from each World Service Conference committee and the Board of Trustees. This was the first joint effort of the office and Conference Administrative Committee in a long time. Bob and I hoped it was a clear signal to the fellowship that things were indeed changing. Carol and I spoke with each other often, so getting everything done was easy. The report showed the committees to be very busy since the conference ended. Susan C. presented another detailed financial report showing a balance on hand of nearly \$3,610 as of July 6, 1983.

Policy Committee chairperson John F. outlined a schedule for revising the *Service Manual*. The first workshop held on June twenty-fifth at the fourth East Coast Convention drew about fifty people, and a lot of information was exchanged. John visited the Los Angeles area in the summer and held a meeting there too. Other workshops were scheduled for the World Convention and the Volunteer Regional Convention in November.

Ginni S., the Literature Committee chairperson, showed again how organized she was and outlined the full range of projects. She reported on projects assigned to various regional committees: *The Twelve and Twelve* (its working title at the time), *Living Clean*, NA history, revision to the *Literature Committee Handbook* and *Newsletter Handbook*, *Just For Today* (daily meditation book), White Booklet revisions, *Coping with Crisis*, *Daily-Weekly Meditation Guide*, *4th Step Guide*, plus a pamphlet *Women In Prison*. Perhaps it was just her nature, or she was conscious of the criticisms of her predecessors, but she provided a complete financial report. She continued to do this regularly while she was in charge of the committee.

She announced that a fall literature conference would be held, but didn't give the location or date. She had earlier put the word out that the WLC needed a local committee to host the conference. In

late July a committee started meeting in Philadelphia intent on becoming the hosting committee. Although others were also setting up bid proposals, this was likely the most organized and determined. In the end, they were selected, and the November meeting was held at Camp Neuman, a facility not far from Philadelphia.

Gary J., in his Finance Committee report, reminded everyone that each RSR had been given a copy of the draft guidelines at the conference along with instructions to copy and distribute them. The thrust of this first report was to ask for participation and input on the draft.

H&I chairperson John L. submitted a lengthy report. It began with a memorandum on how and why the "H&I Can" system should work, followed by the minutes of a meeting held in Ft. Lauderdale in early July. The minutes outlined an ambitious list of projects. It started with an attempt to get the WSO to sell literature to H&I at a discount and be charged only for actual shipping cost, based on weight of each package, rather than charging the usual ten percent shipping fee. Other projects included a plan to create a directory of H&I meetings, a list of "Do's and Don'ts" for H&I participation, a world H&I fundraiser and possibly a newsletter.

He also showed which regional committees were working on which projects: Florida/Georgia (*Do's and Don'ts*), Ohio region was asked to help Chesapeake/Potomac region on *Sponsorship and the Institutionalized Addict*, Ohio region was working on the H&I meeting directory and Northern California had been asked to work on an information package for H&I.

Public Information Committee chairperson, Charles K., reported sending out a questionnaire to regions and asking for clippings about NA in newspapers and magazines. He reported the committee was working on guidelines and had talked with several major print media publications (*Good Housekeeping*, *New York Times*, *New York Post*). Although he didn't mention it in the report, his committee was also working to produce a public service video about NA. Another project he and the committee were working on was an expansion of the existing PI handbook. From the results he got from the questionnaire, he was able to pinpoint critical PI problems.

From the office board, we included a report from Chuck G. that, among other things, told about the events in May relating to Jimmy. He wrote about the lack of communication with Jimmy between the end of the conference and the WSO board meeting concerning the conference's motion to hire me. He explained that he had told Jimmy that the conference had decided to hire a full-time manager soon after the conference. He later asked Jimmy if he felt he could work with me, and Jimmy said yes. Chuck then arranged a meeting with the

three of us at which we discussed some of the ideas about the office. But it was not made clear then that Jimmy was being replaced.

Chuck had hoped that Jimmy would gather that he was being replaced without having to put it into words. As Chuck wrote in his report, "But I know now after talking with Jimmy that he still thought he would be the WSO Manager." Chuck expressed his regret over how it came about because it hurt his friend Jimmy. This was another signal of the spiritual strength that Chuck possessed. Personally I felt it was unfair to have blamed Chuck for the miscommunications with Jimmy. I've believe the conference should have done a better job in making these decisions and communicating them to Jimmy and the fellowship at large.

We also included my report on the CARENA matter, copies of my reports to the board, and minutes of the board meetings. We felt that if the volume of information about the office didn't satisfy old antagonists, nothing would.

The August board meeting was another long one. The agenda covered matters of printing, inventory levels, prices, credit policy, money collected for orders shipped months before, and more. About a week after the board meeting, I got a call from a place called Hazelden. They asked about getting a publishing industry discount rate on the Basic Text, as they wanted to buy large quantities and include it in their catalog. I didn't know who they were, but discussed it with Chuck and Bob R. Both were encouraged by the call, but worried because the discount rate they were asking for was equal to about forty percent of the sales price.

Early in August, we shipped thirteen boxes of literature, key tags and books to New York for the convention. We sent a large quantity of the Special Edition Texts, as we didn't have any of the blue covered regular Texts. In mid-month I managed to find time to draft policies for personnel management and office administration. These were sent to the board for their consideration at a later meeting.

About the tenth of the month, Kevin and I went to the local office of the California Franchise Tax Board, to file the papers necessary to begin collecting sales tax. Since the June board meeting this had been discussed and funds set aside to pay fines and back taxes if that was required. On the appointed day we went to the tax office, completed the form and turned it in. We were interviewed by one of their agents who went over the form. When she noticed the organization had been in existence for seven years, she asked why an application had not been filed earlier and if sales had taken place during those years?

I responded that I had just taken over the management of the office and I didn't know the reason an earlier application had not been

made. Further, I said, I knew sales had taken place in earlier years, but that the records were so confusing, I was not sure we could really figure out how much the sales had been. A moment of silence followed, then she marked a box on the form and said, "it looks like this is prompt enough application. Just collect and report sales taxes from this date forward."

Kevin and I were nearly screaming with joy as we hurried out of the building and drove back to the office. We both felt like we just got all the cookies out of the jar without getting in trouble. We told the truth and it didn't hurt. The board was very happy when we reported this. The California fellowship was not so happy when we told them we were going to collect sales tax on their purchases from now on. But they paid it.

The staff now consisted of four full-time employees and Greg who still worked part time. We all spent lots of time doing shipping, and it diverted us from other essential work. I announced to the staff one day that I wanted to hire a full-time shipper and any suggestions would be considered. Cathy said she knew of a prospect who was perfect for the job and volunteered to have her come in the next day.

Well, the following morning about ten, I walked Cathy's "perfect suggestion." Coming in the door was a woman, barely five feet tall, about ten years older than me, wearing a skin tight red dress (which revealed a formidable figure) and red high heels. Cathy introduced her as Vida M., and said she had almost five years clean time. We had a pleasant chat, and I outlined that I needed a shipper who could lift heavy boxes and pack orders eight hours a day, so I wouldn't be encumbered by that work.

I was not the kind of person who discriminated against others (although an older lady in a tight dress and red heels applying to be a shipper seemed bizarre), but I seriously considered flatly rejecting her application. On the other hand I really needed an extra pair of hands to do shipping so I hired her. Vida packed orders for about three months and then I hired a replacement shipper who was much younger, stronger and faster.

Vida is now the most senior of the office employees as all earlier employees have moved on to other pursuits. Vida proved to be one of the most valuable employees I ever hired. Although it took a while to find the right job for her to do, it was well worth the wait. When she took over management of literature ordering and customer services, she began to prove she had the ability to contribute more than most employees. She, like Jimmy, had that special knack of wanting to help every addict, and like him she had a message that got through to addicts around the world. In time she became a valuable link in the communications between the office and the fellowship at large. Most

of our success in responding to problems with literature orders or unhappy customers came from Vida's loving and considerate voice.

As the month neared its end, I prepared the last Monday Morning Report for August. In it I addressed the problems we were having with the old word processor, enclosed a copy of the next *Newsline*, and announced that I had, as directed by the board, begun to look for a new office location. I also included the proposed revision in the by-laws they had requested.

On Tuesday, the day before I left for the World Convention, we mailed over 1,200 copies of the August *Newsline*. It contained updates on the *World Directory* project, requests for information on people who had orders that were returned, information on getting extra book covers ordered by the conference, problems with locating authors of stories that would be left out of the Basic Text unless we received copyright releases, and a few other items.

As the September board meeting approached, I had to make a decision about the conclusion of my contract. The office was nowhere near ready to turn over to someone, nor were we ready to conduct a proper search for a replacement. At the same time I had found so much satisfaction from getting the place organized, and I really enjoyed the people (well, most of them), so I talked with Chuck about staying for an additional nine months if the board was interested. Chuck was more than happy with the idea, and assured me the board felt the same.

Having done my best to get the place organized over the past three months, I was going to expose my work to the ultimate test. I was going to be away from the office for almost a week. On a Wednesday morning I took my scheduled flight and arrived at Kennedy Airport that evening. I had never been to New York on my own, so this was an adventure.

I arrived at the hotel, got my room, unpacked, went down stairs to the NA registration area, and signed in. When I gave my name, it seemed to have set off an alarm as people began buzzing around looking for Tony D. Meanwhile, people were hugging me and shaking my hand. They said who they were, where they were from, and asked questions, questions and more questions. I loved it, but was also quite intimidated. I had no idea I would become the center of such attention.

Tony arrived and introduced himself. He sounded and looked like a movie Mafia "Godfather" should. But he was very friendly, helpful and considerate. I was shown where I would set up shop the following day and he asked if there was anything he could do to help make my job easier. "I only needed the literature boxes sent to my room," I said. He barked orders to some people I didn't know and

they got right to it. Later I had phone calls and visitors from people I didn't know who wanted to get acquainted. Occasionally one of the conference participants I had previously met called or came to see me. I got to bed quite late that night.

With the theme of, "Impossible Dream" the Thirteenth World Convention was being held in the Vista Hotel at the World Trade Center in New York City. The Thursday evening meeting featured John C. (Ireland), and Laura M. (England) as speakers.

The following morning I had some of the boxes brought down to the literature table and set up shop. And thus began a blur of greetings, questions, sales, cigarette smoke, photographs, hugs, hugs and more hugs. There were so many people, so much motion and not one moment of peace. Nearly everyone had at least one special question for me, and often before I could really get an answer out, another person was giving me a hug and talking in my other ear. People wanted to know about every decision that had been made or was yet to be made. This constant activity was so confusing I lost the ability to remember what I said or who I said it to. Years later people would remind me we had met at the literature table at the World Convention in 1983, but my memory frequently drew a blank.

After lunch on Thursday, I called the office to see how things were going in my absence. I talked with Vida, Cathy and Sherry. All three gave me their versions of the confrontation that had occurred earlier that day as they all believed that Jodi had come to work loaded. There was no way I could verify or challenge that assertion from so far away. Nevertheless I could not permit a using addict to remain as an employee. I told them to get her key to the office and tell her she was fired. This was done, and the following week I sent her a final paycheck. I did not see Jodi again, though several years later I heard she had moved to another state, had come back to NA and had a few years clean. I was glad.

A meeting with members of the international fellowship had been organized, and I arranged to be there to ask questions and answer any that I could. They talked about the need for translations and less expensive literature, the high cost of converting money into US dollars, and the excessive shipping costs. I didn't have answers. I only remembered three people from that meeting, other than Roger T., and they all spoke with Irish accents.

The trustees held a meeting during the convention as previously planned. It was a busy meeting, and they probably acted on more issues at this meeting than at any previous meeting in their history. Eight members were present, Mike B., Bo S., Sally E., Bob B., Jack B., Carl B., Dutch H., and Sydney R. Three resignations were noted,

James D., David C., and Jim N. Four members were absent. They began by electing Jack B. as vice-chairperson.

The trustees reviewed some of the major issues the office had been wrestling with and later offered some of their ideas. They decided to initiate a series of articles to be published in the *Newsline* and/or *Fellowship Report*. Inappropriate use of and profiteering on the NA logo was discussed; the consensus was that conventions should make such decisions prudently. The draft of *Living Clean* was discussed and a number of Tradition violations were noticed; they decided to concentrate on review of this project. On the subject of trustee guidelines, they decided to establish a committee to review and offer improvements in them.

The Finance and H&I Committees also met at the convention. The Finance Committee concentrated on the use of the WSO tax identification number; agreeing that it should not be used. The H&I Committee asked the Southern California regional H&I Committee to work with the *H&I Handbook* and the pamphlet on sponsorship and the institutionalized addict.

Robin H. brought some *NA Way* magazine sweatshirts and T-shirts along with copies of the magazine for us to sell. Between us we spread everything out and proceeded to sell nearly everything in sight. Robin, Bob K. (RSR-Volunteer Region), Jerry P. (a board member), and Brian P. (a local volunteer), all helped at the table; they often handled it alone while I was away for some conversation or meetings. The pamphlets and most of the Basic Texts were sold by Saturday. I took orders for the regular edition Basic Texts and other things we ran out of. By Sunday there was little left but the Basic Texts, key tags and some clothing. I had these shipped back to the office before I left.

Robin and I spent a lot of time together and worked out a reasonable plan for getting the magazine published. We decided the office would take over all the financial tasks, including the remaining inventory of magazines and clothing, and I agreed to allow her to continue printing in the East for a while. I agreed however, that we would take her draft input and get it prepared for printing. I also promised to attempt to obtain the subscription money that had disappeared the previous year.

My attendance at the convention proved valuable to me and important to reconciliation with the disenchanting members on the East Coast. Reasonable people and those who had simply been misinformed were now getting straight answers to their questions. People who had a hidden agenda got to have their say, even if they didn't care to hear any reply I offered.

Bill H. (Florida) had a table full of merchandise a short distance from the literature table and we had several discussions. I recall even now that he acknowledged the jewelry he was selling that contained the NA logo was a practice he would give up if ordered to do so by the fellowship. But he would continue to make and sell the stuff until then, he said. He asked if there was discussion within the board about developing a policy about jewelry, or any plans to give vendors like himself a license to use the logo. I admitted my ignorance of the matter and told him the board had not adequately discussed it. This issue was to eventually rise to the forefront of my attention several years later.

On Friday night I got to attend my first recovery meeting at a convention. An enthusiastic crowd listened to Dorine P. (Washington DC), and Jerry H. (California). Afterward I spent a few minutes at the dance that followed. I was so exhausted by then that I quickly left.

Late Saturday afternoon we closed the literature table so the area could be used as the banquet assembly area. When I returned for the banquet, I was amazed at the transformation that had taken place in the attire of so many people. This dinner was a dress up affair after all.

Since this was my first NA banquet, I was not prepared for the rambunctious behavior. I was not accustomed to people shouting so much or having such a good time. It was deafening. The countdown was exciting and when the newcomers were identified and walked to the front of the room, the roof seemed in danger of crashing down. The noise got so loud that everything in the room vibrated. I was sure the newcomers who walked to the front of the room were terrified. More than 900 had dinner at the banquet, and when the doors were opened afterward for the meeting, hundreds more came in.

Jimmy was the main speaker, delivering his message to at least 1,500 addicts. We learned a lot about Jimmy that night. He shared about how his convictions were formed, why he felt different from other kids when he was young, and the struggle he had with finding recovery. He talked about coming to America by boat, and about the fear-filled wait on Ellis Island while their papers were processed. His family was in the entertainment business — the theater — which, along with his Irish blood, had him constantly in one fist fight or another. He struggled all his life, and from those struggles he learned determination. It was his determination that came through when he fought against his addiction, and it was God and determination that kept him "clean and sober," as he said in the common parlance of the day among people with substantial clean time. We learned about his hatred of addiction, and how even after so many years in recovery, he

kept a daily and personal enmity against it. I felt privileged to have been there in person to listen.

Sunday morning, Father Dan Egan, still known as the "Junkie Priest" for his long work with recovering addicts, shared the podium with Nona B. (California). About an hour after the Sunday meeting, I found Jimmy in the lobby, amongst the flood of people, looking for someone from the host committee. He had been told they were going to take him to the airport in time to catch his early flight, which was hardly an hour away at that moment. After fruitlessly searching we gave up; I got a cab and we went to the airport together. It was a good ride; we talked about his days as a kid growing up.

The convention had been a tremendous success. Although I don't remember receiving a financial report later, the committee made large donations to the office, the conference, the Chicago Convention Committee and their new regional committee, who used about \$3,000 to purchase literature from the office.

Tuesday morning I took a cab over to the AA General Service Office. I had called about a month earlier and asked for an appointment with their Executive Director for a short visit. I was warmly received, given a grand tour, and asked as many questions about NA as I asked about them. It was a good learning experience, and helpful to have such a positive exchange. After two hours, I left for the airport and back to LA.

On the flight back to California, I had time to think about the past few days and about what I had gotten myself into. Like members who came to the convention, I was leaving with an emotional charge that was translated into more enthusiasm and dedication. Before the convention, the size of the fellowship, to me, was measured in numbers of meetings in the directory and increasing literature orders. But now there were faces of friendly and determined members that made those numbers come to life. It had been one thing to talk on the phone or pack literature orders, but it was another to meet the people who made the calls and wanted the literature.

I came away from the convention with a much clearer understanding of what the office needed to do. There was a desperate need for the office to get its job done all the time and to truly serve the needs of a worldwide fellowship. In those few days, I had been given the emotional charge necessary to work harder and be inventive rather than reactive. I came home convinced this was the "cause" that my entire life had trained me to be part of.

There was little doubt in my mind that if we could assemble a strong staff, and if we could get world services to work as a team, fellowship growth would skyrocket. I came back to LA determined to

develop the kind of consensus, and to promote the kind of teamwork, that would enable NA to rise above the kinds of fights that had embroiled Jimmy and the office before I arrived.