

Epilogue

People have often asked me why I was fired. And until I was halfway through writing the previous chapter, I really didn't know. I was never to learn what was said at the trustee meeting about why it was necessary to terminate me so immediately — a decision I still feel was a poor and ill-considered one. While researching and writing this book, though, and in particular the final chapter, I began to gain some insight into how this happened. It seems during my last year of service, I was oblivious to the signs I now see in the record. And it seems Jack was right to tell me the trustees didn't feel I could adjust to the changes that were going to take place in NA. I didn't understand it that day, but I was the obstacle in the way of the trustees taking control of the fellowship by implementing the one board concept in practice, without actually changing the service structure. Had I understood that, as I do now, yes, I would have fought against it until I was removed.

The problem the trustees had with me was that I had not changed. I was still doing the job the way I had started out: listening to what I heard from the fellowship at large, listening to what the trusted servants were saying, and examining my own heart to determine what was right and wrong. When my heart said something was wrong, I didn't rush forward and support it. When my heart said something was right, it got my full support. But in all cases, since I worked for the fellowship through the authority of the directors, I did whatever the directors wanted.

From my first day the directors were the boss. Between meetings, I consulted with them and went by what the chairperson of the board said. And there were times when I disagreed with what they said. The removal of Ginni is undoubtedly the most notable example. The directors were steady and didn't change. Even when board members left and others took their places over the years, they were basically the same. They examined everything I or the staff gave them, and asked questions about everything — and then asked questions about things we might not have remembered.

There was a kind of unofficial division of labor within the board. Each member concentrated on one or two areas and became a specialist. Martin C. and Kevin F. were always particular about the budget, finance reports and accounting. And when Robert McD. came along he took that role too. Stu, Bill W. and Martin knew personnel practices, policy and management, so every time something came up on these subjects, others listened and often used their judgment as the basis for decisions. Bob R. from Missouri and Bob K. from Ten-

nessee became the resource on legal matters, contracts and precise wording of letters, motions and reports. Chuck G., Steve B., Jim W., and Donna M. were always on top of production matters, whether it was the Basic Text or pamphlets. Jamie S-H and Oliver S. were both very determined that non-US matters were clearly thought out and dealt with fairly. Sally E., Randy J., Bob R. from California, Mark D. from North Dakota and Mark D. from Maryland, were always watching our relationship with the fellowship to be sure we were open and responsible without being in the way or controlling. Chuck G., Don D., Kevin F., Gerrie D., George K. and Mac M. were very basic in their analysis of what was right and wrong — everything was measured against basic principles. In their eyes, we did things because it was right and not simply because we could do it, and if something was wrong in principle, then we couldn't do it.

The board evolved a collective vision of what the office should be doing in a growing fellowship. They wanted us to be responsive to the conference, since they were the body that represented the fellowship and were truly the boss of the office. They wanted the office to be efficient and responsible for keeping the fellowship supplied with literature and information. They demanded, and got, open and complete reports on finances, inventory, and whatever else they wanted. They felt the office should be, "out there" with the fellowship, searching for solutions to fellowship problems or concerns within the scope of the duties we were assigned. Additionally, the board knew the office was the central point in the fellowship for the exchange of information and problem-solving. They wanted the staff to be helpful to all groups, committees and boards, without being commanding or domineering.

At the same time, the board gave me and the office a lot of freedom and latitude. They didn't demand to read every letter or get a report on every phone call. They took their job to be a board rather than quasi-staff who wanted to be in the chair of the Executive Director. They didn't take opportunities to exercise more and more power or authority. And they remained consistent in their interpretation of what the office staff was supposed to do.

But what did happen was a major power shift outside the office. While Bob R., George, Leah, Chuck and Bob H. were successively chairperson of the conference, the office took them to be the representative of the fellowship at large. And I believe each exercised that duty with determination, objectivity and devotion. They each looked at the WSO board and the trustees as companion agencies of the fellowship, but that each was subordinate to the will of the conference. Yet each of them felt they did not, as chairperson of the conference, have authority to dictate to the trustees or WSO. Each, I believe, felt

their duty was to find consensus with the trustees and WSO on matters that came up between the annual meetings of the conference. And the trustees under Sally E., Jack B. (during his 1985-87 terms), and Bob R. acted in the same manner.

But as the record shows, a change started at the beginning of Bob R's second term as trustee chairperson. But his plans suffered a major blow when three experienced trustees (Sydney R., Dutch H. and Bo S.) were not re-elected and Mike B., the only non-addict trustee, decided not to run for re-election. These were replaced by three others, most with less maturity and wisdom. But Bob moved forward to take an ineffective group of trustees and attempt to make them a productive working unit. And he was successful in starting the board on that track.

At the end of his second year as trustee chairperson, he was not re-elected nor was John F., his vice-chairperson. And equally important, Sally E. and Bob B. left the board without seeking re-election. So from April of 1988 to April of 1989, eight of eleven trustees were replaced — a seventy-five percent turnover in membership. The board lost members who had each served five or more years and got as replacements people much younger in recovery and maturity.

The new crop of trustees, on average, were ambitious, assertive, and interested in changing the trustees into the power-house that some imagined the fellowship considered them to be. The change was dramatic. Gone were the days when consensus was a watchword of trustee leadership. Gone were the days when the office board and conference chairperson were equal partners in service. Gone was the balance of power that had existed and was built into the *Service Manual*. It was their determination that the trustees were to supervise the staff, have first priority over spending, establish the agenda for world services and have authority over nearly everything.

While gathering information from the written record to write Chapter Nineteen, I was struck by realizing that the conference leadership, the office board, the staff, and myself were each working under the old assumptions and trying to adjust to the change going on, but not understanding it. As the year progressed, the record shows the trustees became more aggressive and expansionist, and this put me out of step with the new order.

In 1994, I was told through a second party that some of the trustees didn't understand why I hadn't understood why they had removed me, "as I surely had seen the signs along the way in my last six months there!" No, I didn't see the signs, nor would I have wanted to change to serve this new type of master, when I believed the group conscience of the fellowship was already in place. I opposed the one board concept when it was being drafted into the *Guide to*

Service and had I realized that it was being put into place, in practice, through changes by the trustees, I would have opposed it. Apparently some of the trustees had better vision than I had and were surprised I couldn't see.

If NA abides by the spiritual foundation embodied within the Steps and Traditions, such ruthless actions should be unthinkable, much less actually take place. But over the years I saw this same sudden termination of relationship among many world-level trusted servants over and over again. And frankly I should not have been surprised by it.

Looking back, there were obvious examples to have been guided by. The rift between Jimmy and Greg was almost unfathomable based on their close and lengthy personal relationship. Yet it happened and had not been healed when Jimmy died. And Jimmy had been close to many others who turned their backs on him during those tumultuous years before the conference in 1983. Chuck S. had even been friends with Jimmy, but in the end had very little good to say about him except for his determination.

Many times sponsors would cut loose their favorite sponsees (and vice versa) and become implacable adversaries. I remember sitting for hours with friends like Chuck S., Hank M., Kevin F., Bob R. and Steve B., and pondering this, never finding an answer. Greg P. came as close as any, I guess, to understanding why this happens. In 1994 he told me that there is likely a recess in the personality of most addicts where they quickly jump to when they are faced with having to terminate a long-standing, close personal relationship. And rather than ending the relationship with a show of affection, esteem or honor, this recess takes them back to their using personality, and it's like "kissing off a using buddy who took your dope and turned you in." This recess seems to require an immediate suspension of feeling and an almost complete repudiation that there ever was a close relationship. This, he said, appears to happen regardless of how close they were or how long they have worked a program or how spiritual they are in other matters. I tend to think he is pretty near right.

An interesting yet unfortunate truth is that nearly all world-level trusted servants are cast aside when their last day in office ends. Trustees, office directors and conference leadership have all had their day in service and then seemingly fell off the face of the earth. There is no provision in the system to acknowledge their participation and sacrifice. Truly I understand the application of the Twelfth Tradition in such matters — that spiritual anonymity is the basis upon which we work — yet there is a difference between spiritual anonymity and "kissing off" the departed.

There is much to learn from all of this. The important lessons are that we do need to treat people with loving respect, even when we have to part company. And the principles of the program should be lived in such a way that people who have given faithful and dedicated service to the fellowship are awarded comfort and affection when they leave service.

I believe it is appropriate for the fellowship to acknowledge, in an appropriate manner, the service that others have provided. Without those who came along before us and had the strength and wisdom to keep NA on the right track, NA would have died. It is important to keep the welcome mat at the door of every meeting for those who carried the burden, in their early days of recovery, the duty of making NA successful. I would like to express my admiration for a number of people who, I believe, made it possible for those just coming through the doors today, to find recovery in NA. But truly there are not enough pages to list even their names, much less write about what they did.

I have attempted on these pages to give a factually-based account of what I have discovered about NA and the people who were part of it along the way. Although this book seems long, it would be twice its volume if every person and fact were fully reported. By necessity I have had to be selective, but tried to be fair and representative in covering events and the people involved in them.

I have tried to restrain my prejudices, such as they are, and present the facts as I see them. Some events were omitted and some names were not included when to do so would have caused embarrassment or possible harm. Even when writing the history of NA, it is critical to be concerned about the ongoing recovery of people who may have been part of those events. And there are a few individuals whose efforts were, in my opinion, counterproductive to the health and well-being of the fellowship. Rather than blame such individuals, such activities were portrayed without giving their names.

There are a number of people whose service to the fellowship deserve special recognition. These are people whose contribution were critical to the very existence of Narcotics Anonymous. I have selected six such individuals as heroes of the fellowship, as I believe their contributions were particularly valuable. These are people who have made it possible for NA to have existed, grown, or moved in a positive direction. Without the efforts of these heroes, NA could have died or been much less than it is.

The first hero is Houston S., who got the doctors at the US Public Hospital at Lexington to try the AA concept with their patients. Houston came to the meeting every week until 1963, when he turned his duties over to another AA member. Many addicts, having found

the message in this meeting, returned to their homes and joined AA. Many of them would eventually help NA when it started in their towns from coast to coast. From this came the New York fellowship and also the foundation for NA in California.

The second hero, of course, is Jimmy. He was part of the birth of NA as we know it today. He was its first "Traditions" conscience and chose to insist that "addiction" was the disease and not a specific substance. Without his determination, vision and hard work, NA would not have survived the 1959 lapse. His strength carried NA along until others were there long enough to help with the burden. And it was his service in the late 1970's when he truly established the office, that made it possible for addicts around the world to have a place to call when they knew they needed recovery from addiction. And while it may not be proper to call any member a hero for simply sharing their personal recovery, it cannot go unmentioned that Jimmy did this by phone and in person, any time of the day or night, for struggling addicts and struggling new NA communities all around the world.

Bob B., whose awakening in Tehachapi led him to become the quiet, reliable, consistent force behind NA, is a true hero. While Jimmy was ill, it was Bob who stepped in and carried the burden of leadership and responsibility for the office. His soft but nurturing personality brought comfort and resolve to others. And his long service as a trustee — nearly twenty-five years — was the basis for mature decisions and sound spiritual guidance.

Greg P. is another hero. His vision, his skill with words, and his persuasiveness were to set the framework upon which NA came of age. His early writing of the service structure, though it never materialized in quite that way, made it possible for NA to organize itself and express a true fellowshipwide group conscience. The sacrifice he endured to help fellowships across the country is legendary. His support for the development of the Basic Text, although at personal cost, was key to preserving a unified fellowship and keeping the book project alive.

Bo S. is an important hero of the fellowship. Despite the calamity that his service made of his personal life, his determination made it possible for NA to have a book on recovery. Without the book, the message of NA would have become fragmented, and the fellowship would have been eclipsed by other recovery movements. And without the book, NA would not have had the financial resources to meet the challenges that growth in the eighties afforded.

Bob R. from Los Angeles is also a hero. His vision of what NA could and should be was the driving force behind the way the office grew and responded to expansion in the 1980's. Under his leadership, the conference came into its own and began to produce the tools a dy-

amic fellowship needed. His selfless devotion drove him to spend countless hours offering guidance and inspiration when NA needed it most. Much of what happened in world services, especially at the office between 1983 and 1990, came as a result of his vision and character.

The seventh hero is actually a body of people rather than one person. These heroes are the trusted servants and special workers who have carried on with the daily tasks of NA service. Without each office worker or manager, without each committee member or leader, and without every group representative and secretary, NA could have dwindled and faded into oblivion.

There are many whose combined efforts, ideas, leadership and recovery provided the spiritual guidance which has enabled NA to truly carry the message of recovery throughout the world. Those of us whose lives have been touched by NA, and all those suffering addicts yet to discover NA and find freedom, owe a deep debt of gratitude to these pioneering members, and to the Higher Power of our individual understanding.

A HISTORY OF N.A.

by Bob Stone

Why a history of NA written by a non-addict, published separately from NA's own publishing arm? Bob Stone knew that he was in a unique position, being the non-addict and non-member of NA who had perhaps as deep a personal experience and involvement with NA world services as any non-addict is ever likely to have. He shares his own experiences and reflections about NA's development for the nine year period he served as the World Service Office's Executive Director. He also performed an exhaustive research project on the early history of NA – both the current NA fellowship which began in California in 1953 and the other similar movements which had their roots in Lexington, Kentucky and New York City as early as the 1940's.

Bob attempts to be fair and objective, giving credit where credit is due, but also being open and forthcoming about the many controversies and personality struggles that were part of the fabric of NA's history. He watched and participated in NA's developmental journey keenly aware that as time went on, the founding members of NA were getting more scarce. The wealth of memories and experiences of early NA were slowly slipping away, and with them would go the ability to tell this story. With that in mind, he made it his business to talk to these people and to make notes of these conversations. This book is Bob's attempt to pass along those many years of conversations and experiences. He died in 1996 before the book made it to print.

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