

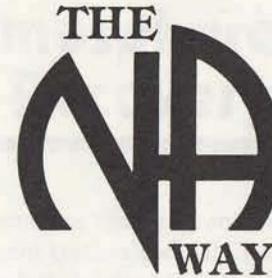
My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE
N.A.
WAY

APRIL 1983

N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply, that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work".



**APRIL
1983**

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 8

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*Please mail all articles, subscriptions
input, questions and letters to:*

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The N.A. Way presents the experiences and opinions of N.A.s. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply any endorsement by either Narcotics Anonymous or the N.A. Way.

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An Atmosphere of Recovery

We come to this program from homes and apartments, offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks and gutters. We come from many different places; but they're all called loneliness, and pain, and fear. Somehow addiction draws us together; to Narcotics Anonymous.

We come to this program for many different reasons; but those of us who stay all do so for the same reason. The desire to stop using and to stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and after the fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see what this program is all about. We start trying to do the things that we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to the Twelve Steps and try to work them as best we can. The result is a degree of freedom we have never known before. We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them; and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves that has been destroying us.

We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it away. So, we seek out or are led to other addicts who have problems like ours, who want help. Usually, one of the things we try to do when we're working with a new person is to get them to a meeting as soon as possible. After all, that's what worked for us.

*"...a feeling of
strength, hope
and love..."*

Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's so special? Usually about all we can say is that there's a feeling there; a feeling of strength, hope and love; an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special to most of us; a place that's "safe", a place where we fit in...but what keeps them that way? One would think that any time people like us got together, the result would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, strong-willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely, but we do. The reason we can is that we have Twelve Traditions which help to keep our Groups "safe" and free.

For most of us, understanding of these traditions came slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little information here and there as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved in service when someone points out that "personal recovery (our recovery) depends on N.A. unity" and that unity depends on how well we stick to our traditions. Because we hear "suggested" steps, and "no musts", so often,

some of us make a mistake and assume this applies to our groups the same way it applies to the individual member. The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are not suggested; they are not negotiable. They are the rules that keep our Fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with others in N.A. and with society at large, we avoid many problems. This isn't to say our traditions eliminate all of our problems. We still have to face difficulties as they arise; communication problems. Differences of opinion, internal controversies, problems with individuals and groups outside the Fellowship and the like. However, when we apply these principles we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predecessors had to face and overcome. Their hard won experience gave birth to the Traditions and our own experience has shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday. Our traditions are what protect us from internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together, but they don't work automatically, it is only through understanding and application that they have power.

EDITORIAL NOTE: This material is from the introduction to Chapter Six of the review form of our Basic Text — much of it does not appear in our Basic Text as approved. We felt you would enjoy seeing it and have reprinted it here with permission from the W.S.C. Literature Sub-Committee.

“A MATTER OF CHOICE”

No matter what the circumstances are, or how bad things seem to be, our happiness does not depend on people, places and things. Today we have a choice to act or react. You can be as miserable as you want to be or as happy as you want to be, but it's your choice. So put a smile on your face, a twinkle in your eye and a song in your heart and keep on pressing on. Happiness is a by-product of the Program worked daily.

SELF-CENTEREDNESS



Today was a very fast-paced day. I sat and began to appreciate the quiet of being alone. The awareness of my spiritual growth reminded me I am never alone. Upon entering N.A., I discovered that active addiction had robbed me of many dreams, friendships and successes. I was determined to do something about it. I had a drug problem. I was going to come to N.A. and do something about it. I went about meeting all the people at the meetings and talked at length in the N.A. lingo; “Turn it over”, “I can't, we can”, “willing to go to any lengths”, “no pain, no gain”. I found a job and started to gain some material possessions, met someone special and fell in love. Alive and clean, I was in love with the idea of being in love. I was off and running both of our lives. I stopped periodically to pray, attend meetings and go through the motions of recovery that I learned in N.A. After a substantial period of time, I was again isolated by my addiction. This came from practicing principles as I understood them.

The fact is that although I don't understand my addiction totally, today I accept it. I don't understand my Higher Power, yet I ask for my Higher Power's will to be done today. The spiritual principle of surrender has proven it's point over and over in my recovery.

Getting involved with my group in the day to day workings of service, I ran into a lot of areas where I was uninformed. Each time my self-centered, self-serving, self-seeking attitude led me to think; “If I don't know, it's not worth knowing”: condemnation prior to investigation. Trying to graft a new idea onto a closed mind truly doesn't work. I isolated myself from service co-workers and other recovering addicts. Most importantly, I

*“I isolated myself,
I separated myself...”*

separated myself from my daily program of recovery (the steps, prayer, meditation and taking positive action). Upon rising in the morning, fear became a constant companion; one I seldom was able to shake. Only “true confessions” from the podium and self-criticism seemed to humble me enough to seek recovery.

I have gone through gradual changes by willingness to work the steps in my life. I finally listened as others shared their experience with the steps. Through continued abstinence, love, the care and concern of other addicts, I was able to survive clean the total isolation my addiction held me captive in.

Today, the same things still frustrate me. My addiction frustrates me. Fear still enters my life. There is one substantial difference today; I have my priorities in better order. N.A. gives me the freedom to be myself. It has provided a clear direction for a conscious contact with my Higher Power. God,

as I understand God, allows me to surrender with the assurance that happiness comes from within. The chains have been removed. I am beginning to respect myself. Humility, honesty and integrity can be obtained by living the steps and surrendering daily. This gives me a vision of hope! "I can't, We can!"

The Payback is:

As recovering addicts, we learn to live life on it's own terms. The recovery and freedom we enjoy are the results of what's been freely given. We accept the responsibility of sharing this as part of the life we have chosen and in gratitude for the gifts we have been given.

We carry the message of our recovery to the addict who still suffers and offer hope for a better way of life. We practice the basic spiritual principles we have learned in all areas of our life to deal with our fellow human beings positively.

SHORT TAKES...

One of the neat things about this program is that I'm "normal" here!

Spirituality, to me, is awareness of my God, and a knowledge that my spirit is in contact with the Spirit of the universe.

Sometimes the best way for me to do my God's will is to practice patiently waiting.

CHANGES

The past two months have been the most unusual and demanding period of my recovery. I've experienced joy that has far exceeded my limited imagination, sorrows that have shaken the very roots of my soul and a vast range of emotions in between. The bottom line is that through it all, I stayed clean and made recovery my priority on a daily basis. This has kept me living my life by the steps, going to meetings regularly and using my sponsor. Thus, with all the changes and demands that have surrounded my life in these past two months, I've continued to grow in recovery and increases my need for the love and strength I receive from the Fellowship of N.A. As I approach another N.A. birthday, I'm beginning to feel a continual need to surrender my will to the will of my loving and caring God, as never before. I've worked through all Twelve Steps, to the best of my ability, in order, several times, with the guidance of a sponsor. Now I am beginning to see the will of my God becoming an integral part of my daily life. It feels good.

Two months ago, it seemed my whole life feel apart within a ten-day span. I watched a promising and fantasy filled long-distance romance 'bite the dust'. I'd been feeding my disease with those fantasies for several months. It wasn't real and it didn't last. Then, one of my closest friends in the Fellowship died unexpectedly. This *really* shook me. I went to the funeral and upon my return home, felt emotionally paralyzed and unwilling to meet my daily responsi-

"...a continual
need to surrender
my will..."

bilities. I didn't go to work for several days...without calling in or anything. By Friday, I no longer had a job; I was fired. What scared me the most at this point was that I didn't even care. With all my "knowledge" and experience, I just couldn't seem to come up with the right combination of thoughts or spiritual principles to motivate me to be responsible for myself. I lapsed into despair and self-pity. I turned to the only thing I knew could save my spirit — N.A. Service. I just poured myself into it, totally and unconditionally as if my life depended on it (and it did). I was already serving on several committees, but I needed something more direct and immediate. I got involved at the Group level again. My home group needed a Steward (someone to make the coffee, put out the literature, clean the ashtrays and greet members), so I gladly took the job. Another group needed a secretary and no one else wanted the job, so I accepted that also. Almost immediately, I felt rejuvenated. My God placed many newcomers in my path, and it seemed that I was constantly sharing with them, and working

with those I sponsor. My despair and self-pity were removed and replaced by hope and gratitude. I became keenly aware of the importance of a day clean. Soon, I was having spiritual experiences over the smallest things and I began to see the miracles all around me. The details of my day-to-day life began to get better, slowly, as I began finding the strength to do the things I didn't feel like doing...but knew I had to. The results have been very positive and fruitful.

Today, I'm working again. I was led to a job in a counseling center, dealing with addicts still in the grip of the disease. Their denial reminds me of me, and what awaits me if I pick up that "first one". I plant seeds and slip in a few blows for N.A. recovery there, daily. I pray that some of the seeds take root and grow.

I have a beautiful relationship with a person who had been reaching out to me the whole time my head was caught in that fantasy romance. It took the ending and surrendering of that fantasy-trip to see the beauty and reality of this new relationship.

Most importantly, I understand the need to serve, selflessly, this Fellowship that has saved my life, on a daily basis. *My gratitude speaks.*



GIFTS

I recently experienced an insight which saved my life. Each person I've risked to share intimately with has given me a piece of their spirit I carry with me on my journey of

"Each person has given me a piece of their spirit."

Recovery. Sometimes, I can identify that part of my spirit which came from a particular member. Often, I won't realize the had given me a gift until long after it has been added to my spirit. When I

This past weekend left me filled with hope, and joy, and a deep-felt gratitude for being a part of the N.A. Fellowship.

I had been asked to speak at a fundraiser in a distant state. I was ready to leave, when my car broke down. It didn't look like I could possible make it, so I called to give them the news. Before I knew it, other arrangements were made. I was to fly to a large city four hours north of where I was going to share and a member would meet me there to drive me to the fundraiser.

As it worked out, the cost was less than if I had driven by myself. So, amazed, I went. Upon arrival in the large city, I was greeted by a member of the Fellowship from that city and another member who would drive me down. At this point, it all felt like a beautiful dream and I kicked back to enjoy it. We spent a few hours driving all over the city. I got to meet a lot of beautiful people in the Fellowship there and some from out of town. We swapped ideas and shared experiences about mutual service projects. I enjoyed those few hours with the local Fellowship so much, I hated to leave the city, but we had to hit the road in order to make it for the fund raiser.

We arrived just as everyone was getting ready to dig into some of the best food I've had in a long time. I couldn't believe I had made it. There was only one other member in the hall I'd ever met before, but I felt right at home. They were all N.A. members and we shared the bond of recovery from the

AN N.A. WEEKEND

disease of addiction. I'd been asked to share recovery from my disease, so I spoke for two minutes on my active addiction and forty-five minutes on my recovery. I'd never done that before, but I prayed to be used as an instrument, and as I spoke, I felt the presence of my Higher Power. By the end of the evening, I felt like a member of the family...the love and care that was shown me there was very touching.

The local members then made changes in my transportation arrangements. This enabled me to spend a while with someone I'd been hoping to know better. They took me to a special place to eat. We ate in the same hall where the banquet for a recent Convention for N.A. had been held. It was a beautiful way to end a dynamite weekend. As we sat there, reminiscing about conventions past and looking forward to conventions to come, I was filled with a sensation of gratitude for being right where I'm at, living in the here and now. Something special blossomed in the new friendship that was growing before my eyes. From where I came, this life I know today is like a dream, yet it is real. I owe it all to my Higher Power for leading me to N.A. and for working through the N.A. Fellowship to help me recover, just for today. I love you, family.

IT'S NOT JUST WORDS

Recently, I was given an opportunity to pass on a gift of love, a gift that was given freely to me four years ago.

I was planning a lieisurely weekend, something I hadn't done in quite a while, when a phone call brought news of the death of a friend's mother. Torn between my need to rest, and my need to be there for my friend, I paused to pray and meditate.

My brother had died suddenly when I was four months clean. Angry and in pain, I wanted to run from my feelings; to deny they existed. "Program" people saw my need for support and filled that need before I even knew it existed. They understood my inability to reach out and surrounded me with their love. In the midst of all my pain...all my denial, one fact could not be denied. These people cared about me...really cared. It wasn't just words.

"My friend has plenty of family, and a large local Fellowship for support, I'd only be in the way," I thought. "After all, we've only been acquainted for a few months, and I never even met her mother..." I remembered though, how people I barely knew showed up at the funeral home just to let me know they cared, and I remembered how I had needed them.

I made my decision and a phone call. My friend's father answered. I'd never met him before. I felt awkward and inappropriate as I explained briefly who I was, expressed my sorrow over his family's loss, and asked him to please tell my friend "I'll be there". Not just words...

I packed and began the long drive. I wondered if my ego was so inflated that I believed I was indispensable. A few moment's meditation brought my answer. My friend needed someone and I needed to know *someone* was there. I needed to be that *someone*. I understood.

Our basic text says "...a simple hug can make all the difference in the world..." How true. No words were needed as I held my friend. How trying it can be to go through the motions of politeness and courtesy when all you want to do is cry and grieve. How grateful I felt to be there in those moments when my friend was overcome by grief and just our eye contact brought a moment's peace. "A wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy..." How healing it can be to have someone who knows your feelings. I understood not only pain, but I understood that the denial of pain could kill.

Many times again I felt awkward and inappropriate. My clothes "weren't good enough" my hair "wasn't right". Release from this self-obsession came when my friend said I was needed there. The instinctive feelings that come through meditation and sharing our experience in recovery is real. "If sharing the experience of our pain helps just one person, it will have been worth the suffering... words mean nothing until we put them into action."

My friend had a need that I understood. I could fill that need. I care, very much...it's not just words.

Spiritual Awakening

Our book isn't out...Time, money, and much effort have been wasted...Rumor, gossip, fear, distrust, lack of faith abound! They all seem justified; but before you buy into negativity, ask yourself: "Am I clean today through N.A.?", "Am I a miracle?". If you can honestly say "I am" to these questions, you know the real truth.

Our growth in N.A. in recent years has resulted in unpredicted problems, in unexpected needs! Unprecedented solutions are called for. We need to strengthen the structure that our members and groups depend on to serve their needs. The availability of literature and information about recovery from the disease of addiction and our Fellowship will be the foundation to meet those needs.

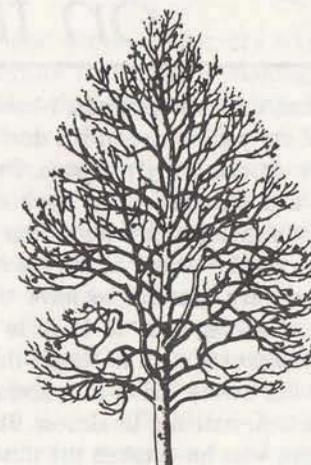
We already have the basis of our recovery: our Program, our meetings, our approved text and most importantly, our members and our relationship with a Power greater than ourselves. These are important things, the rest is detail.

The Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is experiencing a Spiritual Awakening today. Members who felt lost and left out are getting involved and sharing their spiritual strength with other members. A great deal of energy is coming out of the realization that every N.A. member is important. The solution

is overwhelming the problem. Today we have enough spirit and enthusiasm to meet our own needs, and whatever needs lie ahead. We are not weak, confused, dispirited people we once were. Together, any good thing is possible. Through N.A., we reach out with the hand of recovery. We can do

"Today, we have enough spirit and enthusiasm to meet our own needs..."

whatever is called for to stand on our own feet and reach out to others who would die without us. We care. The truth is that N.A. can withstand any controversy, any disservice or any adversity. This is the miracle of N.A.



that groups guard their atmosphere of recovery. If personalities come into play, the personalities select that which is to be passed on more in terms of *who* said it rather than *what* was said. We believe we can learn something from each and every member of the Fellowship and certainly areas and regions have something to offer. Only by opening and protecting channels of communication can we share experience. In this way areas and regions can serve one another in much the same way as do individual members. If like members, they talk to each other regularly in spite of differences.



A SENSE OF HOPE...

In the midst of confusion, chaos and feelings of utter desperation, for a fleeting moment there is a sense of hope, a feeling of gentleness and security. That soft calm in the midst of a storm gives me an awareness of a force, a power greater than I, as it reaches my consciousness. However brief that moment may be, it reminds me that I am not alone and need never be again. It restores my faith and gives me the strength I need to continue the climb. I know today that the mere awareness that I am at the foot of the mountain, that my emotions are in the valley, is the actual start of reaching the top again.

SETTING IT UP

So you want to start a Group. Well, let me play the Devil's advocate for a moment. Do you really want to start a group? Are you willing to pay the price? Many times it can seem a hopeless, thankless and frustrating job. Are you willing to give up your Tuesday (or whatever) nights for say a year or two? Are you willing to go to any lengths for your recovery or for the group? Only you can answer these questions and a lot depends on where you are located and what help you can expect.

If there are a lot of groups around from which you can draw support, things should be fairly easy. For me there are probably forty to fifty N.A. meetings a week within a half-hour drive; twenty to thirty meetings within fifteen minutes. A group starting here can get support. Years ago I sat alone or with one or two others for nine months keeping the doors open for a group that finally died. There's a group about one hundred miles from here being kept alive the same way. If there are only a few groups around, things are probably going to be difficult, and if you are breaking new ground where there has never been any N.A., you will need a lot of dedication and communication with the rest of the Fellowship. It can be done and it must be done by someone if N.A. is going to grow.

Being Used... By Our Higher Power.

I would like to share this story about something special that happened. The principle I see in this is that surrender lays the groundwork for miracles.

At a particular N.A. convention I attended, I didn't collect meeting schedules like I usually did. At a rest stop on the way home, I met some members I recognized from the convention. One of them gave me a few meeting schedules from their area. As I thanked and hugged them, we parted, not knowing how close we would become in the future.

*"I was unaware
of the plans my
Higher Power had..."*

I was unaware of the plans my Higher Power had for our crossing paths that day; the special plan for that particular meeting schedule I was carrying back to my home area.

Soon, after I returned home, two addict friends shared with me that they were going out of town to visit relatives. I didn't realize my Higher Power had used me as a courier until they shared that the city they were about to visit was on the meeting schedule I got at the rest stop.

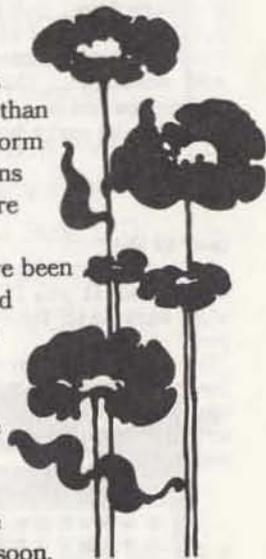
As I turned the meeting schedule

over to them, I had the overwhelming feeling it was intended for their use. I gave them the name of the member I had met from that distant city, so they had someone to call as well as a meeting to attend.

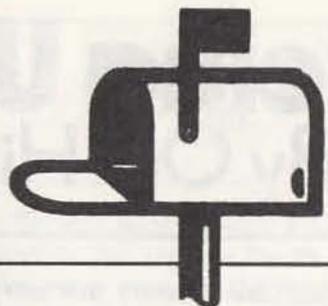
What was really amazing to me was how that member happened to be present at the meeting to greet my friends. The morning of the meeting, the member's car didn't start, which encouraged unplanned attendance at that particular meeting. My friends came to that very meeting and the one person they knew to ask for by name was there to greet them with hugs.

The will of a Power greater than ourselves can form intricate patterns by which we are drawn closer Together. We've been able to visit and share with one another about this instance and others like it...I trust we will be able to see one another again soon.

The God that I understand, many times takes care of us, through us.



Letters from Our Readers . . .



Dearest Fellow Members,

Hi. I'm writing to find out what happened to my February issue of the 'NA Way'. I know they were sent out because friends of mine received their copy.

Also, what's happening with March? I hope that it will be out soon. I really look forward to getting my copy. Resentments will form if I don't get my magazine. (Just kidding.)

Yours in Fellowship

DEAR READERS,

The February issue was sent out bulk mail because of a lack of funds. We are sorry that it got to many of you very late. Our March issue was printed with some errors and a correction sheet needed to be printed and enclosed. Things are going better now and our April issue should be to you by early May.

Dear NA Way,

This is the input I promised to send. Even if you find nothing that will work into the magazine, Thank you.

The opportunity to work through my learning handicap has been very rewarding. The therapeutic value of writing down my feelings is beyond expression.

God be with you
in your service

P.S. One trick I've learned is if all else fails, I do what my sponsor says, just to get my sponsor off my back!

Dear 'NA Way' Editorial Committee,

I love MY magazine and I thank you for all YOUR hard work in getting it out.

Recently, I've been involved in a lot of service work and while I'm grateful for the opportunity for growth it gives me, I appreciate the fact that it takes a lot of time and effort.

Through the 'NA Way' I can hear from addicts all over the country and the world. For your service, I say Thanks and I pray it will continue.

To the 'N.A. Way' Staff,

When your editorial committee was selected at WSC '82, I was quick to doubt the editorial guidelines of the magazine after doing a 'well founded' and thorough inventory of your personalities. I couldn't keep principles before my personality, and my disease of self.

I am very pleased to say after receiving the last seven issues. Tearing the envelope open and retreating to privacy to let my Higher Power speak to me, I've become a believer. I love the 'NA Way', and the one month it came late due to the bulk mailing. I kind of smiled and felt better knowing you guys were human and it truly was done like my home group. What do I mean by that? Well, our book says insanity is making the same mistakes and expecting different results. Our group has started late before, but the quality of recovery shared from caring and sharing is always given freely and in abundance just like the 'NA Way'. Thank you for letting me be of service by the written word. I am a convert to Recovery from addiction/Just for Today.

Dear 'NA Way',

Last year while I was at the World Convention I bought a subscription. Since I bought the subscription and got the first copy, I have yet to receive another. Please clear this up because I would really like to catch up on all your great articles.

Your immediate action in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Thank You

'NA Way',

Last September at the World Convention, I bought a one year subscription to your magazine. I haven't received any issues. Either you print them on invisible paper or I have a problem. Can you help me sort out which?

Literature has always been important to me. For the first several years almost the only contact our meeting had with the rest of N.A. was Literature, letters and phone calls.

If the 'NA Way' isn't happening, do you know of any other newsletters which are? I heard a rumor that the 'Rainbow Connection' was starting up again.

God love you always

DEAR READERS,

This continuing problem reminds us of how very poor communication is within the Fellowship today.

All the RSC's were notified in December, 1982 that the 'NA Way' staff had never received the subscription list or the money collected at WCNA-12.

We have made the following request repeatedly and make it here again.

If you or anyone you know subscribed to the 'NA Way' at WCNA-12, please write to us. We do not know who you are. As soon as we know who our subscribers are, each will receive a subscription including all back issues. The 'NA Way' staff wants all subscribers to receive all their copies of the magazine A.S.A.P. We the 'NA Way' staff are doing our directly responsible best to compensate for the problem that has resulted in this situation.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Hello to all the staff
of the 'N.A. Way';

Thank you for the last edition of the 'N.A. Way'. I have circulated it here to members asking for their input and/or subscriptions.

After I mailed you my previous letter, I realized that I had not affixed sufficient postage. So, just in case it got help up somewhere, I have included a copy in this letter.

My opinions remain the same, except to say that each edition leaves me more impressed with the quality of your publication and the effect it is having here.

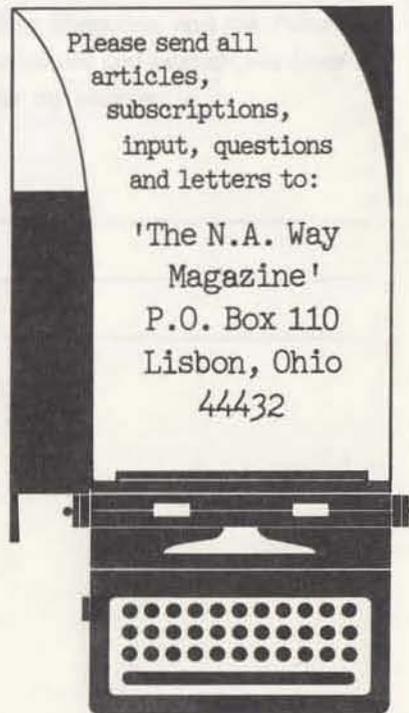
And now, a bit of news for you. Our last Regional Service Meeting was attended by 300 NA members. That represents enormous growth! Three years ago there was no N.A. here.

Please note my change in address and telephone number.

Sincerely Thanks

Please send all
articles,
subscriptions,
input, questions
and letters to:

'The N.A. Way
Magazine'
P.O. Box 110
Lisbon, Ohio
44432



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I hereby certify that the information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and that I have not provided any false or misleading information. I understand that this information may be used for purposes of the National Security Agency and that I am releasing this information to the public. I understand that this information may be used for purposes of the National Security Agency and that I am releasing this information to the public.

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Submitted in Loving Service,

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