

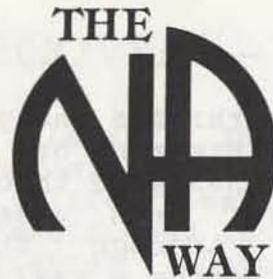
My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE
N.A.
WAY

SEPTEMBER 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".



SEPTMBER
1983

VOLUME 2

NUMBER 1

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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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DEAR READERS

With this issue the N.A. WAY marks its one year anniversary. Our Fellowships Magazine has had to overcome many obstacles, and has gone through many changes. There have been several committed members who have through their dedication allowed a dream to become a reality.

We, the staff of the N.A. WAY find it only fitting to dedicate this, our anniversary issue, to our Fellowships Newsletters. The love and dedication of members committed to provide communication among our members is a sustaining factor of our newsletter.

The following recovery articles were selected from both current newsletters, and some which are no longer in existence. We hope you enjoy this collection of material.

You will find the names and addresses of Fellowship Newsletters which are known to us in the back of this issue. We urge you to locate the one nearest to your local Fellowship, obtain regular issues and to communicate with them the ongoing news of your groups activities and concerns.

Again, we thank you all for your patience, understanding and support through this first trying year. We also ask that you consider writing articles on your experiences in recovery, and submit them to us. With your help our dreams can come true.

We remain your trusted Servants,
in loving service,

RECOVERY - MY STORY

Living, for me, began when I came to this program. Something had gone wrong somewhere. My life consisted of self-destructiveness, paranoia, and loneliness. When I first came to Narcotics Anonymous, the meetings were small and everybody seemed close. The Higher Power which I heard talked about in the meetings differed greatly from the conception of God I was brought up with. My God, the Religious God had definite rules, definite morals, which brought out a definite feeling of guilt!

The flood of old emotions and memories surfaced. It was time to deal with them. Deal with them or use. The only door open to me at this point was the 3rd Step. At this time I turned my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood him. To this day, although I usually have to be up against the wall, I always benefit from this step. The next year and a half, I was nuts. I rarely went to meetings, did not trust anybody, and was relying on geographic cures. As a result I spiritually and emotionally bottomed out. I was forced to trust somebody and asked for help for the first time. Since this is an honest program, the reason I actually started socializing and going to meetings was because of my attraction to some of the men in this program. Men have pulled me through a lot of things. On the other hand, involvement in Narcotics Anonymous service helped me separate principals from personalities, and resulted in me really grasping the Narcotics Anonymous program. I started working the action steps, the fourth and fifth, and currently working the ninth step. These three steps in particular have given me great insight.

In this last year of my recovery, I've had a baby, started a business, went broke, and

have started a relationship. Needless to say there were times when my sanity was debatable. Feeling alienated and sensitive, my friends didn't know how to react to me. I learned alot about self-honesty and honesty with other people. It truly does get better and I'm growing from all my experiences. My baby girl is now four months old and the most beautiful thing that's happened to me. Looking back, I could never have imagined I would have changed so much. I've finally learned how to love, really love my self and others. I've seen this fellowship grow from three meetings a week to our first Narcotics Newsletter, and it feels good to be a part of it all.

MAINLINE 1979



DOING TIME

I'm a fellow addict doing time in a System for drug sales. I'm writing to say I received the first issue of your newsletter and enjoyed it.

Last year I found, or was found by, N.A. I'd been busted on three sales cases, had an active heavy drug addiction, lost everything I had, and had gone through a death in the family - all within a matter of two months. I was at my "bottom". I had to face the fact that prison was in my very near future. I knew that if I did not get help for my drug addiction, I'd never leave prison without problems due to my attitude toward life. I didn't care anything about life, or myself. I was also aware that even if I did beat these cases I'd never make it in life with my addiction or attitude. I was at the "be covered up, locked up, or clean up" stage in life.

I attended my first N.A. meeting in 1982, sick and scared. What I found was, love, Fellowship and fellow addicts who understood where I was coming from. On May 12 I took a white chip. With the help of all the people and all the groups in the Area, I worked my steps and found a Higher Power of my understanding. I soon developed a new outlook on life. I learned to love it, to look forward to today and tomorrow. I learned to care about others and myself. I found in N.A. that as an addict, I had Fellowship among other addicts like myself.

I received my 90 day chip and 2 three year sentences in August 1982. For the past eight months I received countless letters, cards and other forms of support from my newly found family in N.A.

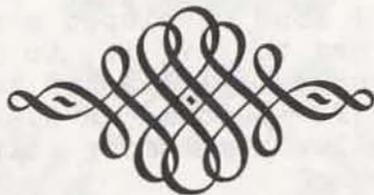
I also discovered that I had countless "old friends" out there that I'd turned my back

on while I was sick with my active addiction. With my new attitude and thanks to my Higher Power, these people have all come to my side and shown their support and love for me.

Yes, I discovered that I am locked up, I am not free, but being behind steel doors, bars and fences isn't half the hell of the imprisonment of addiction. The lack of freedom of the mind that one loses to drugs is twice as bad. This time will pass, and I'll be able to return to all my friends, old and new and my N.A. program in the Free World.

I also found that a Higher Power is the key to freedom. That is who unlocks your mind and frees your soul. With His help, anything and everything is possible. We can be free no matter where we are.

ROAD TO LIFE May/June 1983



N.A. FELLOWSHIP

When I first came to N.A., I heard many of the members talk about the "Fellowship." At first it was just another word to me that had little meaning. As time passed, I attended more meetings, witnessing the love and sharing that went on. Not only had I begun to understand what Fellowship is about, but also felt a part of this wonderful program that binds all N.A. members together.

Last week, when I heard some members talking about attending an event, my first reaction was, "Why go all the way down there when I can go to a meeting close to home?" I was talked into attending it by some people who were going, and as a result, I gained an even greater understanding of the Fellowship that N.A. is based upon. I met and shared with N.A. members from all over.

Although I was meeting these people for the first time, I felt as if I've known them all my life. We talked, laughed, danced, and shared the program among ourselves. I learned about the activities other regions are involved in and shared events our Area N.A. is planning. The warmth and concern there was genuine. It seemed only natural to greet each person and give hugs to people I was meeting for the first time. The experience made fellowship a more important part of my life. Though I'm miles away from these people, I know that I'm only a meeting away.

Fellowship is what binds us together. Not only at a meeting or through a region, but with recovering addicts everywhere. I thank my God and N.A. for this experience and look forward to future N.A. events in different parts of the country, where I can again meet people for the first time that I have known my whole life.

STRAIGHT TIMES May/June 1983

I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS SICK

I barely knew who I was let alone attaining a conscious realization that I was sick. The idea of a serious drug problem within myself had become a reality but the disease, which was progressing at an ever increasing rate, was quite cunning and clever in it's innate ability to disguise and camoflauged the true nature of the symptoms. Simple everyday problems rapidly grew into seemingly insurmountable obstacles with no accessible means of resolution. In the event that a truly difficult situation or crisis entered my life any and all existing holds on reality and sanity seemed to dissolve and subside rapidly and the severe pangs of emotional despair and fear replaced them. Any amount of energy or positive action to deal with life was whittled away to nothing as this continuous battle with everyday occurrences proceeded. The ultimate result of this conflict was almost complete emotional blunting and a virtual halt to personal growth. At this time the only available means of relief of comfort was through the continuing drug of choice. This was the point where the cleverness of the disease deceptively manifested itself but also allowed itself to progress within my mind and body. I was helpless at this point to see what my real problem was and arrest it. Herein lies the true powerlessness of myself in dealing with my addiction. If it were not for outside intervention I would not have been able to extricate myself from this terrible illness because I didn't know I was sick!

RIVERFRONT RAPPORT September 1982

WHO ARE YOU

While using drugs, I had no identity. I just wanted to be a drug addict hippy. I went to a fine school, so I had to look nice. I worked in a business place, so I had to be a business person. I tried hanging with the gay crowd because I thought it would make my life better. I tried religion thinking it would enhance my life. I was insecure and looked for my identity in others. If people in my life rejected me, I felt like a reject. If I was with the bikers, I felt tough. Outer space was generally my identity. I looked toward people, material things, different cultures, cities, towns and institutions for my identity.

Upon entering N.A., I was relieved to admit I was an addict. I felt at home with the meetings and other addicts seeking recovery. The longer I stay clean and live the steps, the more my identity is revealed to me. I no longer have to look outside my realm or consciousness to find out who I am. With openmindedness toward myself I can see who I am for the first time in my life.

Living life clean today isn't always easy. I learn to work my own program and not to judge my insides by others' outsides. Finding my identity must come from within with my Higher Power showing me his will.

RIVERFRONT RAPPORT September 1982

HUMILITY

I've recently experienced an important part of recovery that I wish to share with you. I've been familiar with the word "humility" for years, but never knew the true meaning. One night at a meeting I was listening intently to a message of recovery when it hit me. The speaker said, "The dictionary definition for humility is having the ability to learn". I'm sure I've heard that many times before, but this time it sunk in. I had been having problems with this in relating to my sponsor. I couldn't reach out for help and I was afraid he might tell me something that was against my will. Wait a minute!?! THATS not spiritual!! I thought I was beyond that way of thinking. I did a third step. I had known that my self-will was creating frustration in my life for a while, but I was unwilling to give it up. This humility I needed to develop a good sponsor-relationship gave me the willingness to change. I realized my God could take care of things alright, I didn't need to design the master plan for my life and carry it out to the "T". I prayed for willingness to change and I was relieved from my slump of self-will and depression. I've been blessed with opportunities to carry out selfless service to the Fellowship and the suffering addict. I now see hope for my personal growth. I get a real sense of satisfaction in lending a helping hand however I can. I can feel a sense of purpose in my life. I don't know what my purpose is, but when I follow the path my spirit leads me on each day, I get those good feelings. Service Work has not always been so rewarding. I've learned that if I do it for the wrong reasons, my attempts will be as unfruitful as they are futile.

After much pain and suffering as a result of the drain of service work one in an insane

manner of compulsiveness, I've learned something. I was doing selfless service work, but I wasn't following my spiritual direction. I was still operating on the power of my own judgement. I was still being driven by my own will and I was miserable. I ducked out of Service work for awhile, and dove for cover into the old hiding place of depression. After awhile I came to the conclusion that life sucks.

I got tired of hiding in depression, and came to believe that I could get out and enjoy life if I let my Higher Power show me how. Now that my spirit has led me back to Service work, I've been shown that it can be fun, very rewarding and an extension of my own personal program of recovery. I know that I must maintain my own recovery in order to be effective in carrying the message. If I don't, Ego, Self-Will, and Frustration will lead me back to that old hiding place. It's lonely in there! Today I choose to strive for a happier lifestyle. I find joy in contributing to the fellowship that saved my life. I am also finding freedom with every roadblock that is removed from my spiritual path. Of course I still have to bang my head up against those roadblocks a few times before I'm ready to let them go, but it's getting a lot better!! I don't understand how you find freedom by giving up, but I know it works!

THE FREEDOM CONNECTION Nov/Dec. 1982

RAY OF HOPE

I found my ray of hope for my family at a Convention while at a woman's meeting. I heard another mother's story of guilt and sorrow from how she had treated her children. I, too, had felt that intense guilt, remorse, and sorrow; however, being so new to the program, I had never accepted it because I knew it would never go away. I knew that nothing would ever make up for the way I was and what I had did to my child. However, this woman had found that acceptance, in time, through working the program and finding a loving and forgiving Higher Power. She was then able to talk about it as if it was alright. Because it was alright. She was alright, she even looked happy. I had such a good feeling, that "ray of hope" that I could find recovery with my daughter. I learned I was not responsible for mistreating and neglecting her. I have a disease called "addiction" that had no conscience with concerns to families, just as it hadn't with me. I know now I am responsible for arresting this disease. I found that I didn't have to go out of my way by spoiling, or trying to buy her, or even trying to make it all up to my daughter. I had to, just for today, work recovery for myself and this would effect her. The program entailed praying and going to a meeting daily. I am so proud today to say my life is entirely different. My daughter, who would not even hold my hand while walking or would not let me do things for her because she had done it so long for herself, has had the weight of the world lifted off her shoulders. Just this morning she asked me to walk with her while she delivered her newspapers. She now has so much affection in her heart she'll run and jump into my arms and even sing with me. I must say that I didn't

have hope for her. I thought I had developed her personality negatively and it would stay like that because she was a child. The change came over the past year, slowly, just as it came with the rebirth of me. Today, wow, words can't express the dignity that I had for her. She's truly a beautiful gift from God.

Thank you family,

MIRACLES HAPPEN November 1982

RELATIONSHIPS

Every time I meet someone in N.A., I am entering into a relationship. It doesn't matter if it is with a man or a woman, it could be the most important relationship I ever enter. A life may hang in the balance, and what I say or how I act may make the difference between that person's life or death. I must always remember that the ultimate purpose in my recovery is to spread the message of that recovery and to help other addicts who are seeking to recover. It is in these relationships that I truly find recovery from addiction.

MARYLAND MESSAGE July 1983

TRAVELIN' CLEAN

It is with pleasure that I am writing about my trip to Great Britain and how people in the British Branch of N.A. helped me to stay clean through one of the most meaningful events of my life thus far.

Since early childhood there has been a longing in me to go to England and Scotland. Although I had the intention and opportunity to do so 8 years ago, my Higher Power (for reasons unknown to me at the time) saw to it that I did not go. Looking back on events, I see it would have been merely a geographic move, from a pain so potent, that it eventually would become my reason to escape, and chemicals were soon to be those means.

I have always had a fascination for British History. And I guess, in a way, I'm a free-lance historian, with my readings, writings and research on the subject. But it is only now, that I'm not using, that I'm able to understand why I could not compile what I learned and be free to pursue a hobby.

The days I spent in Britain were busy ones for me with all the sightseeing, and I experienced a high on that. But it was an improvement when compared to my past high, taking into account my addictive personality. It was during the nights that the addict in me wanted to emerge, and I was confronted with the First Step. I sat around for awhile, quite bored and drowned in self-pity over the fact that the Pubs were really the tracks for me.

I thought things through and came to realize that going to the pub would lead to a drink, a drunk, and once at the point, I would certainly return to my drug of choice. And I dwelt for awhile on where that left me, and came to a conclusion that no emotion I was

feeling at that time, however negative, was worth escaping.

The confusion I had over my mixed emotions compelled me to seek help from N.A. via the phone. Several people in the N.A. Program in England phoned me that night, as the word spread pretty fast that I was there and needed support. One girl in particular, whom I'll never forget took me to a meeting that night. I met so many wonderful people, and some real special people with whom I shared thoughts and good moments. Through them I was able to look at things in the right perspective, and yet not be condemned because I came close to using.

After that night I went to some other meetings there and was able to enjoy my vacation without using. I am grateful with all my heart that my Higher Power through those special people enabled me to stay clean and truly see Great Britain.

MIRACLES HAPPEN November 1982



"THE NIGHTMARE AND THE DREAM"

The dark wings of night enfolded the city upon which nature had spread a pure and white garment of snow, and men of labour deserted the streets for their homes in search of warmth. While the wind probed in contemplation of laying waste on the streets and rooftops of the city, there between the corners and the alley ways stood I in darkness, in cold, in misery. Not of the elements which I see, but of the longing and hunger within to satisfy my desire for a pleasure as wanting as life itself, yet more horrible than death.

For I am suffering from the worst disease invented by man to destroy his fellowmen. As I am an addict, killing myself by the only means I find necessary in order to fulfill the image known as me. God look upon me and discover just how miserable my heart is. For you have amazed many in this night where mercy and cruelty wrestle in this human heart like the mad elements in the sky of this terrible night.

But mercy shall overcome cruelty, as it is divine, and the terror alone of this night shall pass away when daylight comes upon me, for who spoke these words and how true they be? The animals have their caves, and the birds of the sky their nests. Yet I have nothing in this age of falsehood, hypocrisy and corruption, but misery.

I feel worse than the prisoner for one day the prisoner will be free from his confinement and the worries that kills his sleep: yet all my days and nights will forever be the same as they are now in this cold, this wind and this darkness.

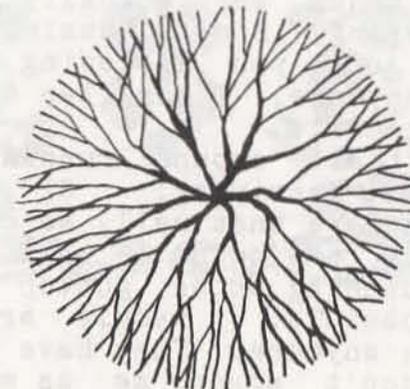
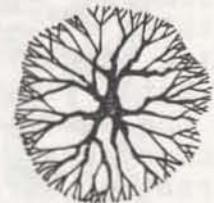
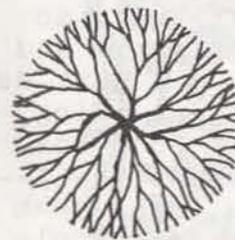
For I am the fool, the honest, the wicked, and the saint: I am the addict in as many forms as the creatures in life, yet my pain is self-implanted, self-imposed: but it destroys

more than I alone, as it kills me with pleasure, the people I love and those that care about me, it kills them with the thought of seeing me killing myself and making a war out of the beauty of life, as I have not the strength to follow the spirit of my soul nor the will to search out the truth in my being.

Forgive me of my cruelty, self-implanted upon my soul and give me the strength to overcome as the days shall do this night in your mercy, your love and your will.

In seven words I pray: God, give, you, me, love, peace and beauty.

TOGETHER WE CAN March 1983



GROWING UP

You know, it can really be hell, this being a pre-teen trapped inside of the body of a woman teetering on the brink of 30. As addicted as I am to drama, trauma, and making simple things generally impossible, it's amazing that I'm still here at all.

Like breaking up, growing up is hard to do! But there is hope. Ah yes. I'm living proof that this program works. Now if I could just get me out of the way...

I don't have any little pearls of wisdom, easy-to-use-no-muss-no-fuss formulas. Growth is not for the impatient. It's a slow, very often painful (sometimes Ow! excruciating) process. A lot of this for me is because of the old attitude.

Someone told me early on to take everything I did "out there" and do the opposite, and I'd probably be alright. And ya know what? They were right. I just don't think the same way anymore. For one thing, my vocabulary has improved. So has my conversation. I no longer talk about how f---ed up I got last Saturday, like wow, man, yeah wow far out heavy. You know? I can ask people how they are today and actually listen to the reply! Amazing. Simply amazing. Talking to me isn't just you listening to an endless monologue anymore. I can give other people air time. Incredible.

I don't sit around running people down anymore, and gossiping. Of course, I don't know people here that well, so only time will tell... but the point is that I don't look at life as something to be gotten over with as soon as possible. People aren't Johns and Marks to me anymore. They have faces and names and they don't scare me as much. I'm still scared of living, but I want it. I want to

join in, and I'm doing it, one day at a time. I'm learning how to feel, and to feel OK about the crummy feelings. I can talk about them. I can be wrong today, be an ass and laugh about it (most of the time). Eventually, I'm going to reach out and let people here really know me. I've done that before while clean, and it's really beautiful.

VOLUNTEER SPIRIT March 1983



"OUT THERE — IN HERE"

"Where's Eddie?" I recently heard at a meeting. "Eddie? Oh, he's out there", the other person replied. We all know what it's like to be "out there" and some of us know what it's like to go back "out there". When I was "out there" my world was a little piece of the planet that never extended beyond 10 miles from my home. (Me - a prisoner?) For years, before I came to the fellowship of NA, I never once left my town unless it was for a trip to an out-of-town institution. Within that little circle life itself was very limited:..."the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more" was all that mattered. "Out there" it was lonely - that special kind of loneliness that all addicts suffer from, the kind that gets worse when people come around. And the fear, the Horseman I tried to stay two steps ahead of, seemed to grow geometrically. Where will the next one come from? Will he be at home? Will I get caught? An addict on a run is a close approximation of perpetual motion. There's no time to stop and rest, no time for small talk, no jokes, and no love.

I never realized that there was any other way to live any choice other than the world "out there", until I came "in here". By "in here", I'm talking about the 12-step recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous. "In here" what I have found is another way of life based on simple principles that offer me an opportunity to make a 180 degree change from the person I was in my active addiction. And this is what the basic text of the NA "recovery book" says that recovery from addiction involves more than simple abstinence. Although I am just starting to deal with changes other than staying away from "the first one", I have already begun to feel the contrasts between being "in here" and being "out there".

Just three months in the NA program has seemed like a kind of Bill of Rights. I have the choice of freedom "in here" or slavery "out there". And not just freedom from drugs. I'm free to associate with people I didn't know existed previously. I'm free to talk about things other than drugs, connection, "big scores" ("big lies"), etc. I'm free to travel without fear of getting sick or running out of drugs. And more importantly, I'm free to find and develop an understanding with a positive Power greater than myself. "In here" I have the opportunity by using the tools (Steps) at my disposal of getting some small bit of the freedoms I denied myself when I was using. Like my friend says, "It's getting better every day." And I'm beginning to see that the "it" is not my bank account or my material possessions, but the "it" is ME, my spirit. As my spirit, my true self, begins to take shape, the path of my recovery opens new doors: fear is now three or four steps behind me, self-seeking has begun to slip away, and talk of God and "spiritual stuff" no longer makes me uneasy.

I feel that what I found "in here" so far is just a tiny part of what this Program offers me if I'm willing "to make the effort to get it". I'm told by those who have been in the Program several years that I can either be satisfied with a "child' plate" or I can go for "the whole thing". "In here", the possibilities are limitless; "out there" the possibilities are certain: "Jails, institutions, or death." "In here", I have the choice(s). (My sponsor says that you're never in a box in this Program). "Out there" there was never an option, only further degradation. "In here" the recovering addicts care and understand me: "out there" the practicing

addicts were indifferent to anything other than keeping the monkey's coat glossy. So Eddie (not real name), when you've had enough "out there", you can recover ("We Do Recover") "in here". But, Eddie, I'm not putting you down or even comparing myself to you. I'm no better than you, but my God has graced me with love by letting me get sick enough to come to Narcotics Anonymous. My God permitted me to hurt enough to find help from life "out there" and to recover from the disease of addiction "in here".

NASHVILLE NEWS September 1982



COMING HOME

"What was going through your mind?" someone asked me after I picked up the "first one" again. I had been clean for a year and a half, as an active member of our N.A. fellowship. I then became complacent. Oh, I still went through the motions - going to meetings, (but starting to be critical of others), carrying the message (more out of a sense of duty than love), staying in contact with my sponsor, (but neglecting to share those things that were really bothering me). After all, I was drug-free, wasn't I? I mean, isn't that what NA is about -- staying off drugs? Wow, I had really missed the whole thing. "Powerless over drugs". I had made a selective surrender - to the drugs, not to the addiction. I had made considerable progress in dealing with my drug problem, but very little in treating my problem of addiction, the emotions, the insecurities, the ego imbalance, the fears and all the rest that are best summed up by the phrase "the inability to live comfortably". That's my addiction. Drugs were the treatment for this illness until they too began to fail.

But most of all I stopped caring - about me, about others, about N.A. I had stopped caring because I had stopped growing and I had stopped growing because I was not treating my addiction with the 12 steps of recovery. I didn't really understand why you needed the steps to stay clean. Oh, I used steps one, two, three, and twelve, but take an inventory? Not me. The result was predictable - lack of growth =lack of change =apathy =discomfort =relapse =return to the old way of life =extreme loneliness, fear, and self hate =bitter ends (jails, institutions, death).

Well, I still haven't answered the question that I started this with - "What was going through my mind?" Even with the problems, misunderstandings about my illness, indifference, etc. that I was suffering from I didn't really use any of those things as a reason for getting loaded. I knew there is no reason for getting loaded. I didn't think that I could handle "just one" and I knew I was powerless. I also realized that I would shortly return to my old life of "ripping and running". And I had the feeling that I was giving up the best thing I had ever found for the thing that had been killing me. But I went ahead anyway. Even when my Higher Power gave me one last chance to back up, to say no, to turn certain disaster into something positive.

When I dropped a fellow N.A. member off at the doctor's office, I drove away and there on an "old corner" was an "old friend". I parked my car and walked up to him. But before I said a word, he spoke up "Man, I been hearing about you and those meetings you've been going to. I wanna check those out." (He sold dope, but was an addict himself.) Now here was my Higher Power giving me one last chance to save myself. But I had already given up, so I replied "F--- that, where's the stuff." A few minutes later, my only relapse began. Two years, two more institutions, and untold amounts of misery later, it ended.

Finally, I'm ready to confess what was going through my mind was this crazy notion that when I'm ready to give this up I'll just go back to N.A. and start my recovery again. If drug addiction was only that simple...all along I wanted to "come back" but my pride, my ego, my addiction wouldn't permit it. (I'd

forgotten all about the grace of God). I tried to get straight on my birthday, the 4th of July, Christmas, my sponsor's birthday, on weekends, at treatment centers, for someone else, for my job. The results were predictable.

Only when all my crutches were gone (some detached with love, some simply detached, most left hurriedly) and the drugs stopped working completely (an hour after my last shot I was crying my eyes out), did I both "want what you have to offer and was willing to make the effort to get it".

Today, with two months clean time, I am clear about what I have to do to recover. It's simple" all I have to do is change my whole way of life. And the most important message I have for every member of this fellowship is also simple: Before you decide to "go out there" again take a long look: if you're eating, you should always see exactly what's at the end of your fork - so take your time and think it through. IT AIN'T EASY TO COME BACK TO N.A.

And really, folks, I didn't learn a thing I didn't already know. But the drug learned that it had me tighter than ever, controlled me more totally, and had even added some new choreography to the "junkie jig" it made me dance. So a word to the wise guys: There's nothing new out there. And for myself, I'm very grateful to be back home where I feel safe. I love you very much for being here and loving me as I am.

NASHVILLE NEWS August 1982

REALIZATION OF SERENITY

In order to find Serenity, one must strive to attain it. By working the Steps, training ourselves to move toward God-consciousness, we find that our life becomes less oriented to selfish egomania. By sharing the relief we discover, more of our Fellows can attain it. This allows others to add their own personal experience and variances to the application of the actions prescribed by those of us who strive for Serenity.

Once we attain this feeling of Serenity, often referred to as "spiritual enlightenment", we note that our old negative, non-productive energy expenditures turn about; a new, exciting positive flow becomes apparent to us. As we strive to prolong the "good feeling" (how like our using days that is!), we begin to learn the very patterns of freedom and happiness that eluded us for so long. By practising these activities, we build a strong foundation for our future, so that hope can guide our actions in the here and now.

This on-going, positive recovery, once a fantasy out of our grasp, is possible and within reach for all of us. Living these Steps insures our recovery, just for today. The vision of any addict clean, the miracle that each of us live, can only be experienced by those of us who wish to achieve it. The Steps are not "up to a plateau" of greater consciousness. The Steps lead us from isolated, dying existences to finding the real God-consciousness in us all, permitting us to find our true selves and live real lives, not participate in meaningless scenarios. Our recovery, if pursued with vigor, insures Serenity.

I'M AFRAID TODAY I CARE

I really do care about our program. I would also like to show my gratitude by getting involved in service to help in any way I can. I'm just afraid of messing up in some way.

I've seen some members mess up and have a hard time being forgiven. I admire these dedicated individuals who kept on serving and didn't give up.

Anyone who gets involved and does many things for the program is bound to mess up somewhere along the line. I'm afraid of the pain I've seen others go through. It's a shame they have been labeled "troublemakers" and "sick fanatics", after they've given countless hours and sacrificed much for the growth and continuation of our program. Just because everybody isn't a "service junkie", is no reason to condemn those who have been gifted with the drive and desire to serve....let's face it, not everyone can do it. All of us have different limitations and capabilities.

I can see in their eyes and feel in their presence that it's not a sick ego trip, that so many of us would like to think. I've shared with many members who are involved in service and out of their hearts come gratitude of what the selfless service has given back to their personal recoveries...this is not to say that those members are special or unique, they're just addicts, doing what they believe in. Often, I don't allow them to be sick, like we all are...regardless of how long we've been around the program.

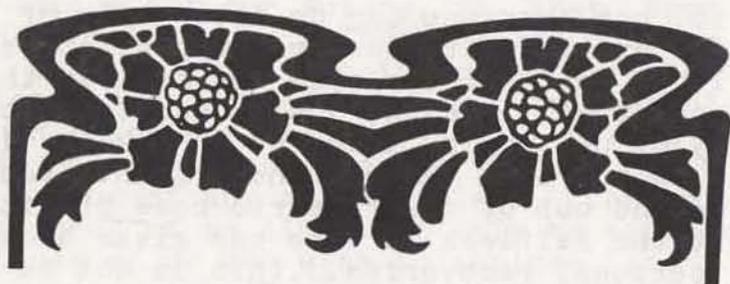
Their willingness to go to uncommon lengths lets me know that there is something in service for me, too. I know I will have

to take the risk and let go of some self-centered fears. If I can grow and trust, even in the hard times, then all will be well.

I would like to say a few words to a few dedicated "service junkies" who I love and care for: keep doin' what you're doin', take it easy and don't get burned out! I love you people.

Grateful and Anonymous

CLEAN TIMES Mar/Apr. 1983



IT GETS BETTER

I came into the program from the streets. For me there was no medical detox. The whole weight of what I had physically done to myself came down when I stopped using. I had a job I could not afford to lose and a host of living responsibilities I could not afford to walk away from. In my addicted head I had sold myself on the notion that it was as bad to do into an institution as it was to keep using. So I got sick in an attempt to get better.

Not only was I afraid that the physical addiction was a part of my destiny, the constant dread of the inevitable; but I was also scared of putting my corrupted soul in an institution. I was melted into the passenger seat of the car that delivered me to my first meeting. I was too sick to drive and too busy thinking up excuses for changing my mind about the meeting to notice "it was time".

I was uncomfortable with the institutionese I heard spoken during the course of that first meeting. But I was hurting so bad I could pick up on the sincerity and caring of the message. By the end of the meeting I had convinced myself that this was just a room of psychos who could not handle dope, not addicts; so I made a steady pace for the door. I was stopped by a no-nonsense--member who began to talk program. It was straight, up front, program spoken like one street addict to another, without any group therapy pharmaceutical overtones.

I left feeling lousey, hurting, sick, but with the illusion shattered that the program wasn't about recovery of people with a serious disease. I left that first meeting with the first stone of my recovery, that if I was going to do this without signing into the hospital I had to completely surrender from the beginning or there would be no beginning.

The first week I was so raunchy with the green sweats I could only make it to three

meetings. All three were in institutions. And after each meeting I felt so bad from the unexplainableness of it all that I was sure that it wouldn't work without first enrolling in a hospital for the full course. I had the monkey telling me I would be back out in a couple of weeks so what was the use. But - A Day at a Time - I made it the first week. At the end of the first week, I made a meeting at a clubhouse where NA meetings were held, a non-institutional meeting where I could relax and listen without looking over my shoulder or hear strangers speaking in the tongues they had learned while in the hospital. There was something in the ease with which these people accepted my miserableness that there was no doubt they were of my kind. With this meeting I found a solid footing for riding out the first weeks of my fog.

I felt like a reptile crawling onto a rock, waiting to be stepped on by civilization. That first morning had to make myself get up and go to work. All the while I could feel the big foot overhead about to squish me. I made it by making it from hour to hour, from one break to the next break, from lunch to the end of the day. It was the longest day of my life. But because of the unusual conditions the management was used to seeing me during my using, withdrawals did not stir any out of the ordinary comments. I believe that the management and my co-workers knew I did not have much longer on this earth.

The first day was the day I took time to memorize the Serenity Prayer. Saying the prayer over and over within my fractured head did not work a miracle, but it over rode the voice of the constant babbling of my monkey saying, "it ain't no use it ain't no use it ain't no use". I felt really awkward praying. My monkey would say, "who are you kidding, who are you kidding". It was no coincidence I heard about the monkey at my first meetings. It was this image that saw me through my

detox. I hated the self doubt and uselessness the creature fed me. I hated the monkey enough those first few days that I acquired the power not to hand my life over to it. The hate for the monkey led me to the softer way of handing my life over to spiritual principles. But in those first days it was hate for the monkey and not the love of a god that kept the dope out. I knew that I was fighting for my life and those first days were the most melodramatic of a struggle for which was poorly prepared.

I do not know how it must have looked that first week muddling through my job, but I made it. My erratic behavior had long been accepted and the quiet misery of my withdrawals raised no complaints from my co-workers or the management. Only once was there a meeting of concerned active users who offered to turn me on to a few Quaaludes and a little smoke to cool my jets out. I yelled that nobody was going to kill me and they backed away, never to let the subject come up again.

My functional short term memory was so shattered I had to carry a note pad and make notes concerning everything. I could trust nothing to my memory. I was sure only of being beaten by the dope and if I was going to recover I could not afford to walk away, in a daze, from a job I couldn't handle when I could. ("courage to change the things I can") So I carried my note pad, making notes, hopeful that the strange sounds and the nauseous sweats would soon go away.

The saving grace of all the nagging aspects of detox was that among the ever changing mood-swings would come a period of simple ease, OKness, semi-comfortability, coming just as I was about to climb the wall.

After that first week of realizing how I had been physically raped by the monkey, I stepped into more emotional struggle. The emotional battle is where The Program made it's real impression on my monkey. The

Fellowship could not hurt out my detox for me, but they could start the wheels into motion as to what my recovery was all about, and the spiritual awakening around the corner waiting to stomp the life out of my monkey. I believe when the Spiritual Awakening first peeped its head was when I stopped backing away and allowed the hugs and smiles to come and let the Fellowship replace the Running Mates.

Meetings every night filled the miserable problem of what I was going to do with myself centered pitiful condition. They kept my old friends and their well-intentioned-poison away from my highly compulsive presence. Instead I made a meeting and let myself be surrounded by "It can be done", instead of, "when are ya gonna backslide?"

After the first couple of weeks I was able to pray without feeling as if I were a jerk. With the comfort of prayer came the conviction of recovery. It had gotten better.

THE RAINBOW CONNECTION June 1980



"N.A. SAVED MY DAY"

Saturday morning the police came knocking on my door. I walked out and opened the door and there were guns everywhere. They hauled me down to jail and wouldn't let me get a word in edgewise. They read me my rights and told me I was under arrest for armed robbery. With my past record they didn't want to hear anything from me on the way down to the station. You know, "Shut up, we don't want to hear nothing from you!" I got down there and they went through the whole thing again, "You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and probably will be used against you in a court of law." Finally I said, "Wait a minute, was this robbery committed between eight and nine-thirty last night?" They said, "Uh huh, you claim you didn't do it and yet you know when it happened!" And I said, "Look, my car was loaned out." And they said, "Well, where were you?" I said, "Look, I was at an NA meeting over at Peachford Hospital." They said, "What kind of meeting?" I said, "N.A." and they said, "What's that?" I said, "Narcotics Anonymous" and they said, "Oh, you're a dope fiend." Then they started looking all over me for needle tracks and everything. They asked if there was anybody who could attest to that and I called a couple of the other people who were there at the meeting that night who were known to me personally while they listened on the extension. I just asked them if I was there that night and they said yes. In fact, one of them went so far as to say that he would testify in court if necessary. He said to go ahead and give the police his name and phone number. I didn't have the heart to tell him they were listening on the extension. First they weren't even going to give me a ride

home. They hated to let me go. They were looking disgusted. They thought they had themselves an easy case. At one point they were saying, "Well we know it was your car. It was described, they got the liscense number, your name's on the front and everything." They brought me back to my trailer and asked if they could search my home. "You're a dope addict? Well, if you're not using, you don't mind if we come inside and search your house, do you?" I said I didn't mind and so he followed me up to the front door and when he got to the front door, I said, "Have you got a search warrant?" He said, "Do I need one?" And I said, "Yes, I don't mind if you come in and search my place but you're going to need a warrant to do it." They took off. They came by once again last night and now they're trying to find the kid who actually committed the robbery and asked me to help them. After all that stuff that come down Saturday, they're asking me to help them.

THE RAINBOW CONNECTION January 1980



WE HUMBLY ASKED

A few short 24 hours ago when I came through the doors of the N.A. program I had little faith in myself, let alone a Higher Power. Much has changed since then and much growth has taken place within me. Today with the help of my Higher Power I now have some belief in me. I am also at this part of my recovery experiencing a lot of spiritual growth. Along with this I am now beginning to appreciate the feeling of some serenity and peace of mind.

Recently, I was in a situation that enlightened my program very much. I lost something that was very meaningful to me. Through this incident I felt alot of anger, hurt and resentment towards people outside the fellowship. I realized very shortly thereafter my old tapes were playing in my head. I probably would not have reacted any different if I had been using my drug of choice. Today, I can chose to grow through Honesty, open-mindedness and my willingness to try a new way of life or I can continue my old behavior. Well, I made that decision. Today I choose to be guided by the spiritual principals of our program. Realizing this, I know to feel anger and resentment only hinders my growth. So in the course of this situation I spoke of and the freedom I have found through this fellowship, I was able to turn these feelings over to my Higher Power and ask for my shortcomings to be removed. Upon doing this, I felt real good about myself. I realize today I can't change other people's behavior, but I can change mine. In accepting the 7th step, I feel I have made much progress. I also am feeling much better about my program.

I also know that by coming to meetings and sharing I am working my program. Even though sometimes I don't feel as though my program is real strong, today I know I'm doing the best I can at the particular time. And, with growth like I have just experienced, I know that by working the steps I get what I need. Just for today for me that is life.

MARYLAND MESSAGE July 1983

"THE SELF-WILL CATASTROPHE"

How come my life is still unmanageable? After all, I quit all moodaltering substances and I believe in some type of Higher Power. Why am I still neurotic and depressed? This sounds like a classic case of self-pity. Oh yes, the "Why me?" syndrome.

The only way to solve a problem is to take positive action. Problems are opportunities in disguise. Clearly, it is time to advance to the third step. Since almost everyone in N.A. has been making all the decisions in their life, it is very conceivable that they would have difficulty in believing in something you can't see, hear or touch. After making numerous mistakes and realizing that if my way was so good then what am I doing in N.A., I began to accept God as I understood him. He can run my life much better than I ever could. My self-will was leading me toward using.

God's will for me is to stay clean, just for today and to help other suffering addicts. Today I find life enjoyable for the most part. God represents good and orderly direction. God's will is usually evident in my life during most of the situations I encounter. The burden is on God's shoulder's. So now I can seek the real meaning of life, the joy of living.

THE FREEDOM CONNECTION ISSUE VI

A LESSON IN HUMILITY

After being in the Program for 3 years, one of my problems today is learning to accept success.

Many wonderful things have occurred in my life since coming into Narcotics Anonymous. After spending 8 years faithfully unemployed, in and out of Psych wards, I quickly became "A respectable and responsible part of society", through this program. I am presently a Dean's list college student with marketable skills in print and broadcast journalism. I am also enjoying a successful marriage.

However, I have allowed all this material prosperity to cause me a great deal of pain. It has created spiritual deficits.

Constantly, I forget to attribute my success to my God and the Program. Instead I take the credit, and as a result, my ego inflates to the point of agony, superiority feelings, cockiness, and arrogance.

Before I realize what hits me, I feel isolated from my fellow recovering addicts with the same feelings of loneliness, fear and self-consciousness.

Generally, I usually suffer for a few weeks unable to share my feelings at the group level. This just fortifies my prideful and egotistical attitude and the pain festers. The agony gets great enough and I make another surrender and get clean with my Group. This is usually the turning point on the road back to recovery.

I'm beginning to realize that I must maintain a low profile regardless of how good or bad things are going in my life. In order to survive, I need N.A.; and in order to be at peace with myself and the fellowship, I have to take success with a grain of salt.

THE MARYLAND MESSAGE June 1983

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