

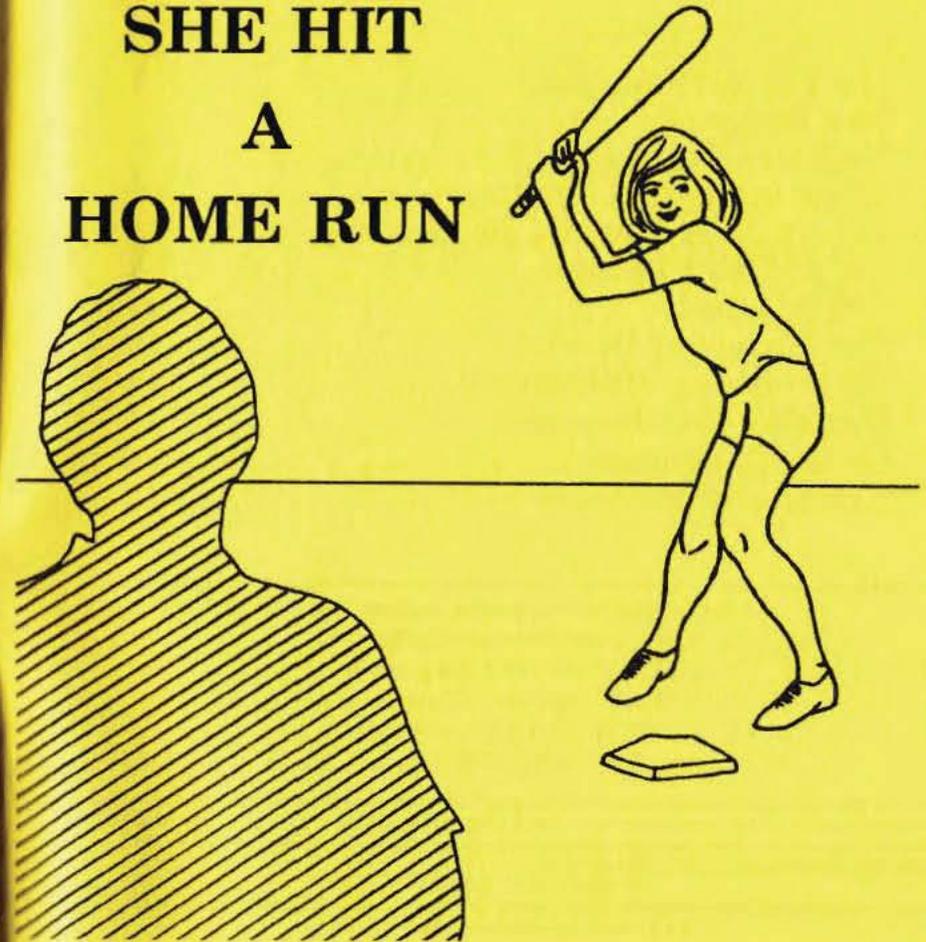
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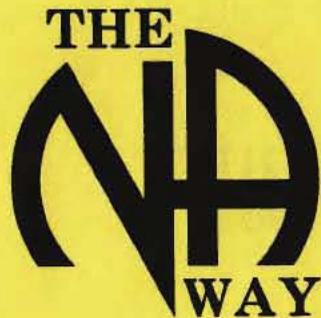
VOLUME 2

NUMBER 12

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

**SHE HIT
A
HOME RUN**





THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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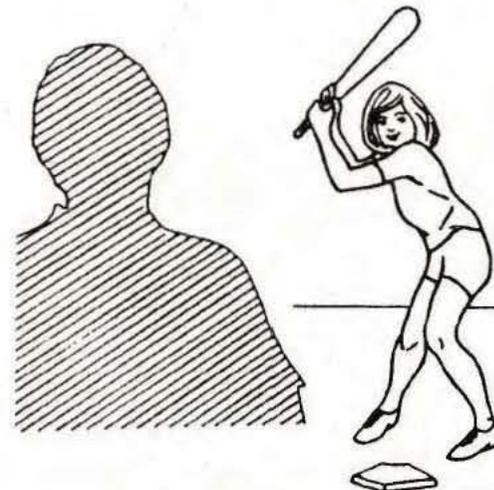
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N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering 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*.



SHE HIT A HOME RUN

My family, my wife and two girls, suffered through my active addiction. At best I was an absentee father for ten years. I put them through years of disappointments, "no shows," embarrassments, mental turmoil and pain.

Throughout this time, my wife was the sole parent, provider and comforter for our children. I can remember thinking, "They don't need me; I'm of no use to them." Toward the end, I thought they had not only learned to get along without me, but had made a decision to do just that.

During this time, my wife had started attending a twelve step program for families of addicts. I thought she was just going to a group of people and telling them about me. I noticed a change in her, and I didn't like it: she was beginning to act as if she didn't care anymore.

My addiction was rampant. I had lost a lot of money. I basically wasn't working anymore, and my health was terrible. I was literally dying. Although I was insane, I sought help. Through this help, almost three years ago, I found NA.

When I first began attending meetings I was aware of an honesty there. I carried some of it away with me each time. I began exposing myself only to people who wanted to stay clean. My desire and my strength to stay clean became stronger. The members showed they loved me, and I began to love myself. I also carried this home with me.

Slowly, I began to feel comfortable with myself, with other people, and with my family. Slowly, I began feeling accepted and forgiven. I know today this came

from the meetings, working the steps, helping the addict who still suffers and seeking the will of my Higher Power.

I became more involved in NA, especially in service. This also ran parallel to the recovery of my family life, for I became more involved with them. My two girls, sixteen, and twelve, began asking my opinions on things. My oldest daughter asked about "boys", and my youngest daughter asked about baseball. Yes, baseball, for she plays Little League baseball with the boys. She pitches and plays third base. Wow, am I proud of them, and although it's hard for me to believe, they are proud of me.

The support I have been given has really been helpful in my recovery. Without it, I don't know what would have happened, but I truly believe, had I not been active in NA in every way possible, the support alone would not have been enough for me to stay clean. I sometimes wondered if I could make it without drugs, but I kept coming back, because this Fellowship gave me a choice.

Today, I have things I either never imagined or never appreciated. I have freedom, I have my family, and I have NA. These things encompass my life. However, staying clean is my first priority, for without that I have nothing. The things I have received by staying active in this program oftentimes subtly overwhelm.

My youngest daughter has been playing baseball with the boys for six years. Although she is very pretty and feminine, she is some ballplayer. This is the first year that I have attended all her games. This is also the first year that I have truly been a family member.

She was picked to be in the league's all-star game. She has been frustrated about her hitting, but her second time at bat she hit a home-run over the fence. This was her first home-run ever, and this was her last baseball year. Although the ball only cleared the fence by three or four feet, it looked as if it cleared by one hundred feet. It was as exciting a moment as I have ever had. No chemicals could touch the feelings I experienced for her, or the gratitude I

had for just being there. My first thoughts were, "Thank you God, thank you NA," for I know that I have had very little to do with where I am today.

This home-run may seem like a minor unexpected surprise, but to me it was a miracle. The true miracle was what NA has done for me. The awareness and gratitude I have today is the miracle. This is just another example that "it works."

For me to continue my progress and true enjoyment of life on its own terms, all I need to do is to keep doing what NA has taught me: go to meetings, work the steps, share with others, be honest, open-minded and willing, and be active in our primary purpose. It's that simple. It just took a home-run over the fence by my daughter to again emphasize how simple this program is, and MAN, DID SHE HIT THAT BALL.

R.K., Tennessee

FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTERS

These are a few of our Fellowship Newsletters. In addition to subscribing to this Magazine, you might enjoy subscribing to one or more of these Newsletters.

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Green Pond, SC 29446

Memphis Miracle
P.O. Box 41323
Memphis, TN 38104

Clean Sheet
2133 E. Huntington St.
Philadelphia, PA 19125

Rainbow Connection
890 B. Atlanta Road
Marietta, GA 30060

The View Newsletter
P.O. Box 6520
Wellesley St. Auckland 1
New Zealand

Miracles Happen
P.O. Box 9063
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

THE POWER OF NEGATIVE THINKING

"We keep what we have only with vigilance..."

I made a decision this morning, while reading my book, to keep what I have learned about my spiritual growth with vigilance. I looked up vigilance in the dictionary, and it said, "Keeping watch, staying awake."

My mind wanders off into fantasy land, and oftentimes I go along for the ride. But, I'm beginning to see that the things, people, and circumstances that I allow myself to fantasize about are often not healthy or in line with the principles I have learned from the NA book and my step work. The insanity is that once I let my mind wander, I really get into what I'm thinking about, and before I know it, I'm building a resentment or planning a scheme, nursing a hurt, or not trusting my Higher Power.

Today I am slowly coming to believe that the source of all my trouble and confusion is a mind that is selfish and self-centered. If I keep a watch over where I let my mind go, and stay close to my Higher Power throughout the day, then I experience a peace inside. If I don't guard my thoughts, then I experience confusion and fear. If I let these things go on too long I drop into depression.

The NA book tells me that "I am responsible for my recovery." By letting things—thoughts are things—slip by, and by not being vigilant about what flows through my mind, I lose my contact with God. I can't afford that, so I have to pray a lot for the willingness to do my part in being restored to sanity.

Reprinted from May'84
The Vancouver U.S.A. Newsletter

WHAT IS THE NA PROGRAM?



I am an addict. I'm sitting in a basic text study meeting of NA, and I'm the only member here. It's a morning meeting, and this is only our second week in existence, so I'll just hang tough and sit here for the whole length of the meeting. I just finished reading our second chapter, and now I guess I'll write about it. I came to share...

What is NA to me? It is many things. It is the light which led me out of the darkness of addiction, giving me hope where I had none. NA means Never Alone...It is a haven where addicts can gather together, free from outside influences, and feel understanding and love like never before. NA to me is being willing to do things I never thought I'd find myself doing, like sitting in this small room in this meeting facility, waiting.

Why do I even bother? I'll tell you why! I have a disease which is with me twenty-four hours a day, every day. It is in my bones, it's in my head, it's invaded every crevice of my spiritual being. Left untended, it will seek to destroy me, mentally, physically and spiritually, until I am totally devoid of any semblance of humanness.

NA is my only weapon against this disease. This meeting room may well save my life. I know of another meeting room, in another state, that has saved my life, many times. I was given many gifts of the spirit through simply sitting in that room, week after week, for nearly three years. I went to that room and witnessed the miracle of recovery manifesting itself in the lives of hundreds of addicts. Most of them are still clean today! I found myself in that room, and I

came to believe in a God of my own understanding there, through sharing, listening and doing whatever I could to keep that meeting alive. There was a time when I sat in that room, just me and my Higher Power, and waited—just like I'm doing now. So, although I don't like sitting here—alone I'd much rather be at home in bed, or out somewhere eating breakfast—I'll just sit here and wait. And I'll come back next week with my basic text, and read chapter three and wait. I need this meeting room...I can feel hope just sitting here. What is NA? It is my life!

Reprinted from
Nov '83 NA Way



FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTERS ... CONTINUED

Straight Times 1744 W. Devon, Box 56 Chicago, IL 60660	No Name P.O. Box 16811 San Diego, CA 92116
Volunteer Spirit P.O. Box 4443 Chanooga, TN 37405-0443	Southwest Washington Area Newsletter P.O. Box 5158 Vancouver, WA 98668
The D.C. Link P.O. Box 29198 Washington, D.C. 20017	Our Gratitude Speaks P.O. Box 4730 Baltimore, MD 21211

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SANITY AS A WAY OF LIFE

If I could keep one thing alive in me every second of my life, it would be the ability to think honestly, practice humility and live fearlessly. Having those qualities would bring about the effects of the second step. I would be restored to sanity.

The key to this is power. In addiction, I am powerless to gain those qualities; in recovery, I must find such a power. The search begins in the first three steps.

To gain access to that power, I was told, I must write a fourth step. When I heard people talking about writing, it just sounded too easy. How could my life change so much simply by writing those things down? I listened to experienced members, and I came to find out that I can't write on one resentment and have it removed. Not until I have written a thorough fourth step, and have seen the effects of self, can I gain the insight needed to change. Not until I have written thoroughly on fear and sex, and then shared that with another person, will I start seeing myself clearly, with the self-acceptance necessary for steps six and seven.

The eighth and ninth steps help me to resolve so many relationship problems. The tenth step allows me to free myself of resentments as they crop up, but if I have acted on that resentment and harmed another, I must make amends. Then I must turn to someone whom I can help. It is in this way that the program heals me.

If a person simply goes to meetings and doesn't work the steps, length of time in the program doesn't seem to matter. It is only when a person makes a commitment, and surrenders to the principles of this easy program, that length of time in recovery begins to mean something. The steps make all the difference.

In my experience, clean time is not enough. Sanity—the result of working the steps—is the bottom line. Having the feeling every day that I might not make it, and all through the day pleading with God to keep me clean, is no longer attractive to me.

I was sick for a long time, but the second step says that I can be restored to sanity—I can get well. I realize that if I am sick, I cannot play "well" very convincingly, and if I am well, I must stop playing "sick." If I've been around a long time and I'm still sick, then I have not accepted the truth of the second step.

Today, I have experienced the Twelve Steps; I have had a deep and effective spiritual awakening. What a joy it is to know God in my heart, to know that this Power works, to know there is a solution. At times I do write because of a resentment, and I must make my amends to face that person and admit my wrongs. It is worth humbling myself in that way to make a friend, or even better, to keep a friend. My efforts toward recovery are no longer acts of blind faith—recovery is a reality.

J.T., California

FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTERS ... CONTINUED

Clean Times
P.O. Box 33351
Indianapolis, IN 46203

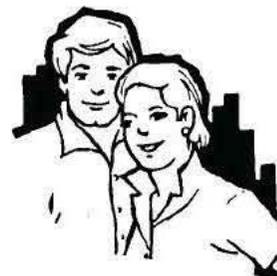
N.A. Today
P.O. Box 759
Fremantle, W.A. 6160
Australia

The Rolling Paper
P.O. Box 34323
Phoenix, AZ 85067

The Recoverer
P.O. Box 3826
Federal Way, WA 98003

Straight Talk
P.O. Box 720, Sta.A
Vancouver, B.C.
V6C 2N5

ONLY WITH VIGILANCE



I had been clean for nine years at the time of an accident in which I chopped off half of my thumb. I never had to deal with any medical emergency up until then.

At that time, we were living in the mountains of New Mexico. We were thirty miles from the nearest town, and the roads leading out to the highway were impassible because of mud.

When it comes to physical pain, I've always been a coward. This causes quite a dilemma for me, because I know my reaction to any drug is predictably unpredictable. I always wondered, "What if something serious happened to me and I had to go under the influence of a narcotic? How would I react? Would it trigger my obsession and complusion?" My sponsor told me that under such circumstances I would have to experience being clean while under the influence; it scared me never the less.

My sponsor was with me, along with my wife and several other members of the program. I informed the doctor that I was an addict. He told me that the pain was going to be unbearable once the novocain and shock wore off. He prescribed something for the pain. I agreed with my wife and sponsor that I would only take them at night if the pain was too much, and would try to tolerate the pain during the day. I did this, and after two days I was able to handle the pain. I felt like I dealt with it pretty well, and was proud of myself. The only problem was I felt I did so well, that I the rest of the pills "just in case."

A little over a year later my sponsor died of cancer. She passed away in our house. She was racked with pain all of the time. The doctors gave her some heavy drugs that we dispensed to her. After she died, there were about 150 of these pills left. I thought rather than throwing them away I'd save them

"just in case of an emergency," so I put them up on the shelf with the rest of the pills.

I've been very active in the program, and I should have known better; but, the truth is, it never occurred to me that what I was doing was dangerous. I've grown and changed in every area of my life, but when it comes to drugs, I haven't changed one iota.

About eight months later we moved to another state. When I was packing, I came across all the pills. I had forgotten all about them. I thought to myself, "I'll take them along with me, just in case," so I put them in my art box.

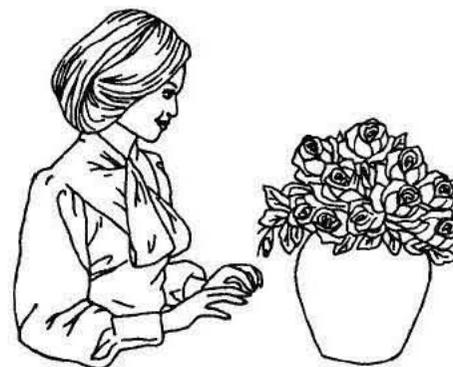
Six months later, I was at a meeting talking to a guy who was new. I don't know what I was talking to him about, but I mentioned the pills, and suddenly it hit me: "What in the hell am I doing with all those pills?" When I thought about where they were, I realized I had left them in New Mexico. Then I remembered something that blew me away: when I used to get loaded, my stash spot was in my art box.

I didn't consciously want to get loaded. I didn't have a desire; I have this program and a new life, but my addiction was out of the bull pen. I've heard people talk about this constant vigilance against using again. I didn't like to hear it. I wanted to be assured that I would never want to use again.

As a result of this experience my willingness to endure physical pain had increased. Just recently, at fifteen years clean, I went through a hernia operation. I had a spinal to numb me from the waist down and took nothing for the pain. I was scared and wide awake. After six hours I went home. Six years ago the willingness and vigilance weren't there to that degree.

I feel that had I not had that experience with the pills and realized how easily my addiction was activated, I would have gone in for general anesthesia and pain killers after the surgery. It would have been so unnecessary, and ever so dangerous. Thank God for progress and this program. Never forget that our stories are not over with yet!

T.M., Hawaii



GIFT OF LOVE

I had almost two years of clean time and I was an ornery woman in the early morning. I was just getting used to getting up before two in the afternoon. I was answering the hotline at the old central office from eight a.m. to noon.

There was a man named "J" who would come in and stay with me then. He had about ninety days at the time. It would infuriate me that he was there interfering with my quiet time and watching me be my usual nasty self in the morning. He would read, rustle papers, or smoke cigarettes. I tried to make him uncomfortable hoping that he would leave. However, with ninety days, he was above all that!

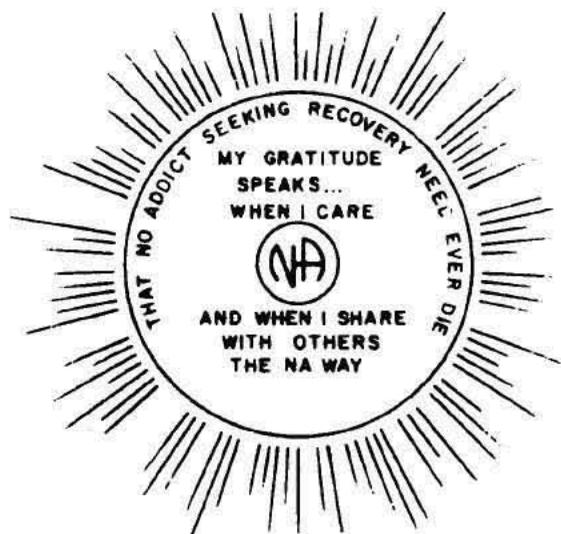
After a while, I got used to his being there and actually looked forward to his arrival. He let me talk to him about the program and how it was working in my life or how it wasn't working in my life. On some days, I would stand on my soapbox and preach, and on other days I would lead with my heart. He really listened. He was kind and gentle. "J" wasn't working at the time, so I saw him often. We had a special warmth between us because of those morning meetings. He helped me immeasurably with my attitude and consideration for other people by his example.

I resigned from the phone lines three months later and didn't see "J" for quite a while. He had his one-year birthday, and it was exciting to be part of his recovery and remember the beginning of our relationship with laughter.

In February of this year, I was working in a place that was out in the boondocks and it was Valentine's Day. A truck arrived that morning, and I received a dozen red roses. The card said, "With love, "J." I thought to myself, "The only "J" I know is the one from the hotline. Why would he send me flowers? I haven't seen him in ages." I called him at the end of the day to solve the mystery. He said to me, "Remember the times you sat and talked to me when I was new? Well, without people like you, I don't know where I would be. It's those kinds of memories that sometime keep me going today. The roses are my way of expressing thanks."

I will remember those roses for a long time. I never know when I will touch someone else's life. It may be a word, a gesture, or a smile. Giving of myself has brought many rewards. It is one of the wonders of the program and the Fellowship.

Reprinted from San Diego
Newsletter—No Name, June '84



THE NATURE OF SERVICE

Much has been learned in recent years by our growing Fellowship. Many dreams have come true. Our Book, Narcotics Anonymous, is now available to help newcomers and oldtimers alike. Our World Service Office has been able to expand its operation and perform services as never before. Many regions, areas and groups have come into existence, reflecting the recovery of thousands of new members. The need for a way to share the successful experience with others in NA service work has never been greater. For years, articles on service have been appearing in newsletters put together by members from all over. It has become obvious by default that some of this material, as well as tailor made relevant material, needs to be made available for wide distribution to meet the needs of our growing fellowship.

If all our program consisted of was service, however, we would soon exhaust our spiritual resources before we even learn to feed ourselves spiritually. Our surrenders, our faith, our inventories, and our amends to those we have harmed prepare us to carry the NA message. As we learn and grow in recovery, we discover that the good we do comes back to us; good works then make more sense. Even the most hardened and embittered of our members eventually realize they have been given a new life by those of us who were privileged to love them before they could love themselves. Without service there would be no NA, no newcomers, no helping of others. Our atmosphere of recovery depends on God's grace and the service of NA members.

*Without Service
there would be
no N.A.*

In the beginning, the giving of our meager resources seemed like utter foolishness. We were takers all. We didn't think much of ourselves for taking, but our disease had reduced us to the point where we had no choice. Our disease ate up our resources so quickly, we had to do whatever we could to replace them. In the beginning for each of us there was at least one member of NA we trusted. We may have hung out with them, chosen them to be our sponsors, and gone to meetings and activities that we couldn't attend comfortably unless they were there. We all need someone to turn to who wishes us well, and when we have good reason to trust. As our trust grows, and our fear of others is lessened, we make more friends. We may get a home group or a circle of people we see often and have contact with. We go to more meetings and sometimes travel far from where we live, only to find ourselves at home in another NA meeting. We begin to feel about our NA Fellowship the way we felt about our first NA friend and our first circle of friends. Our fear lessens and we are more free.

We discover that many of the problems we have in our interactions as members bear a certain resemblance to problems in the outside society. In time we find our place in the world and are able to



take it, joyously and gratefully. Most of our unreasonable fears are gone, and we can feel a part of the human race again. Our needs are met, so we aren't as desperate. We see, accept and feel thankful for the help and love we receive from others. To do less for others than we receive from them would be a sort of spiritual relapse. Giving begins to make sense to us, because we can see that giving results in spiritual growth. The world is good to its givers. Becoming a member of society is a transformation from being a taker to being a giver.

Basing our lives in a Power greater than ourselves gives us the freedom which makes the welfare of others of real concern to us. This concern is part of the attraction our newcomers feel. This concern is part of the attraction our newcomers feel. This concern has been summed up in the phrase, "What do you want to do about your problem and how can we help?" By our efforts to help others, we ourselves are helped.

This spiritual lesson of the ages is brought home to addicts today in Narcotics Anonymous. We call it service.

B.S., Georgia

SURRENDER

TO

WILLINGNESS

There are a lot of reasons why addicts continue to use drugs after they stop being fun and start being destructive. I believe my reason was that I was unable to cope with day to day feelings, thoughts, desires—and with life in general. I couldn't seem to live life the way others did. By the time I'd gotten obviously self-destructive, I had already lived through the formative years of life, loaded. I hadn't been able to learn basic lessons of living that other non-addicts learned. I didn't have a clean idea of who I was or wanted to become, what was wrong or right for me, what I liked or disliked, what made me happy or sad. I was an addict practicing my addiction, and I had no mind of my own. My life had become unmanageable, and I was powerless over my addiction. I had, without realizing it, made that surrender almost a year before I heard about NA.

My disease took everything from me. I had turned my will and my life over to drugs. In a moment of clarity, I saw that I could no longer live the way I was living—that there was nowhere to go. Drugs and addiction were all I knew. Friends, relatives, the old man, even my child, were gone. I was ready and willing to surrender, but to what?

When this program was offered through a recovery house, I went for it—only because I didn't know what else to do. I had no idea what was in store, but was willing to do anything. I scrubbed floors, peeled potatoes and was taken to a lot of meetings by a lot of people. I was cared for until I learned how to care for myself. I watched people all the time to find out how to act and what to say. I

grew up because of this program and the people in it. I was scared to death of going back home and having to run the streets again. I finally had hope that there was a chance for me to not just clean up, but to stay clean. I wanted to make damn sure I found out how to do it.

I'd put my trust in these people and this recovery house, and I wanted to stay forever. It was safe, and it buffered me from the real world in which I'd never been able to function; but the day came when a sponsor told me it was time to go, and I was still willing. Before I knew it, I had an apartment, a job, a car and my now two year old son, and there was a lot of pressure to be all those things I never thought I could be. I had started defining my needs and wants a bit. By then I had developed some kind of belief in a Higher Power other than the recovery house, but I didn't believe that that Power had anything to do with earthly needs. It was a very abstract Power. I didn't think it applied to cars, kids, etc. But I remained willing and tried to learn. By that time I knew there was a way to live without using. NA was the way. I no longer believed that "once an addict always an addict." I didn't want to die.

It would be impossible to list each experience in my recovery that has helped me grow up and learn how to cope with life on a daily basis. What I can tell you is that with continued surrender and willingness, I have established a relationship with a Higher Power. That Power is available for all my earthly needs, and, when I ask supplies all the courage, knowledge and wisdom I need.

When I admitted I was powerless, I had to come to believe in something more powerful than addiction, and I've found my Higher Power to be the best thing to use. I'm still willing to do whatever is necessary for me, not just to stay clean, but to continue my recovery from addiction. For me, that's taken a lot of twelve stepping and a lot of service work.

I still believe my only chance is Narcotics Anonymous.

D.B., California



STEPPING INTO RECOVERY

At my first meeting, I heard them read the first step and say they were addicts, that they were powerless over addiction. Coming from where I had, I shouldn't have had any problem relating to that. So when they called on me, I naturally admitted that I was an addict too, although it really didn't mean much to me. Earlier that year, the state of California had declared me mentally ill, and a threat to myself and society. I'd been called other things which made being an addict sound respectable. Although I knew that whenever I got loaded I couldn't stop, and would end up in all kinds of trouble, I still felt that drugs were only an add-on to the wild and crazy life I'd always had. I could understand being addicted, but I had no concept of what it meant to be an addict.

I believe this program teaches us about ourselves, and about the nature of the disease we have. I always thought that once I got loaded I'd lose control—that that's what it meant to be powerless over addiction.

I had a learning experience when I was seven months clean. My life had changed so much in those seven months; for the first time in my life I was alive, and full of gratitude for it. I was active in the program and rigorously working the steps. I felt my obsession had been lifted from me—I hadn't had a desire to use in those seven months.

I was lying on my bed one afternoon. I had just came back from a convention, and I was feeling spiritually high. I had some old drawings on my wall that I had done when I was loaded. This feeling came over me; it felt warm and innocent; I remembered

being on a speed run and awake for days while I was drawing that picture. I remembered hitting on a joint and feeling it ooze through my system. I suddenly had this overwhelming desire to smoke a joint—"just one." NA, the steps, sponsors, God, just didn't exist.

I heard a knock on the door. It was my older brother. He was loaded and happy. I thought to myself, "I bet he's holding."

Crazy enough, though, I thought, "I can't ask him for drugs because he knows I've been clean. But if he offers, then it would be OK." I no sooner had that thought when he turned to me and said, "Tommy, If I were to pull out a number right now, would you smoke it with me?" I said yes, but the word that came out of my mouth was NO—my body shook and I got all confused. He said, "Yeah, I knew you wouldn't; your doing great."

After he left, I sat there by myself and thought, "What just happened?" Just like that, it would have all been over. I would have been back out there again. I'm one who doesn't know how I got clean. I don't know the recipe, and I've always been afraid that if I ever went back out I wouldn't know how to get back in.

It was after that experience that I looked at the first step and understood what it really meant. It says in the white book that we "used to live and lived to use"—that we used with or without our own consent. I looked back through my own history and saw that the real truth was that I was powerless even before I picked up that first fix, pill, drink or joint. It scared the hell out of me, because I realized I had nothing to do with being able to stay clean. It made me take the first step and admit in my innermost self that I was powerless over my addiction, and that my life had become unmanageable.

I believe what happened to me was that a power greater than myself had restored me to sanity, even in the midst of my insane impulse to use again.

The third step seems like a really logical move from there.

T.M., Hawaii



GROUP CONSCIENCE

In service to NA, "...there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience..."

What is this thing called group conscience? How does it develop? When can we be sure it has been expressed? Upon what does it depend? Our basic text warns us, "...We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between group conscience and group opinion... Some of our most painful growing experiences have come as a result of decisions made in the name of group conscience."

It seems that the gathering together of NA members to discuss and decide upon an issue does not insure that the result will be the conscience of that group or an expression of our Ultimate Authority. The limiting factors seem to be the accuracy and completeness of information provided, and quality of recovery, or spiritual base, of the members involved.

Group conscience is only a channel for the expression of our Ultimate Authority. The clarity of the channel is dependent upon each individual's ability to clear a channel to a personal Power greater than themselves. Active addiction, especially in the form of deceit, manipulation, and self-importance among participants, clogs this channel, and limits the ability of a group's conscience to accurately express an Ultimate Authority. The more surrender, faith, honesty, openmindedness, and humility a group shares, the more recovery exhibited by a group, the more accurately that group's conscience may express our Ultimate Authority.

We must have accurate information, however, and it needs to be presented without bias. Also, the group

must have sufficient time for all voices to be heard, all experience shared and an atmosphere of service through recovery maintained.

Some may feel that this Ultimate Authority is all-seeing and all-knowing; that the power of a loving God expressing Himself through group conscience transcends the nasty reality of any lack of information or inaccurate information. This may be true. However, in our honest attempts to serve through participation in a group conscience, we each use all the logic, experience, and common sense we have. We trust the personal integrity of our servants. We expect to receive accurate, complete, unbiased, timely information from which to draw conclusions and make decisions in the name of group conscience.

This makes us extremely vulnerable to manipulation by trusted servants who lack integrity and would control communication. Many very wrong decisions made in the name of group conscience have been the result of manipulation in form of incomplete, inaccurate or biased information. While encouraging the members responsible to change and grow, we should be highly critical of such actions.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of participation in a group conscience comes when we try to resolve a recurring problem. Our primary purpose, maybe even the very lives of addicts seeking recovery, hangs in the balance. The problem looms larger than life. We have sought an answer through group conscience before but failed to find a solution. Old and new ideas fly around the room. We become frustrated and maybe even angry. What do we do? Each member seeks a conscious contact with their personal Higher Power. Perhaps a gentle voice from the rear of the group suggests quietly "we could follow this new path..." The idea seems so clearly inspired, the group and its conscience feel very relieved, a loving Ultimate Authority has been expressed.





REWARDS OF RECOVERY

To be a member of this Fellowship, to have an inner circle of friends and acquaintances who share our common bond of recovery—this is to have a contact with a Higher Power and a practical program of action for my life. These are some of the rewards that NA has brought to me. I reflected on these as I sat in a warm, crowded, gymnasium this June, participating in another milestone of success made possible by those rewards of NA. I graduated from community college.

The Associate Degree I received is not only a symbol of two full years of attending classes, but also two years of living. There were Saturday evenings of dances and socializing given up to do homework. There were hours of homework put aside to go to meetings when I knew which I needed more. There were the part-time jobs and the financial aid paperwork shuffles to make ends meet.

I learned much more from my college experience than what came from classrooms and textbooks. I learned about becoming more sociable with people outside the program. I learned about self-discipline, and about sacrificing my immediate wants to accomplish a worthwhile goal. I learned that no matter how busy I think I am, I always have time for meetings, prayer, inventories and close contact with NA people. I gained self esteem by challenging myself, doing the necessary work, and seeing the result.



I didn't start college when I first entered the program. I was three years clean before I had enough faith and desire to take the risk to start. Then I spent four months doing the footwork to get myself enrolled and set up financially as well as possible. I had already tried college and failed when I was using, and I didn't want that to happen again.

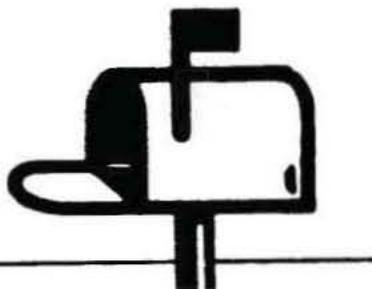
I said several prayers of thanks that evening as I readjusted the ridiculous square hat and tassel, pulled the long borrowed gown around my jeans and readjusted the honor cords dangling over my shoulders. I applauded as three members of our program took their turns on the stage, as I had done, shaking hands with the president of the college. I thought of the dozens of other members I knew who were also attending the college or who had graduated before.

College is not a requirement for staying clean, nor is it a goal that every member should want. I have as much respect for members who are single parents, struggling to make ends meet, or people working at honest jobs, as I do for college graduates. I share my experience for any members of our program who may have doubts at times whether things will ever get better.

...Yes, we do recover.

Reprinted from May '84
The Vancouver U.S.A. Newsletter

Letters from Our Readers . . .



DEAR N.A. WAY;

ABOUT OUR BOOK: DOES ANYONE CARE?

I've had two recurring thoughts about the Book Narcotics Anonymous lately. One is that it could be better—a lot better! Another is that we need to start working toward that end NOW!

Having these thoughts is one thing, but airing them is quite another. I know that this borders on heresy, but I really must do it. I am compelled; it could be part of my disease, you know? Anyway, it could spark some feedback from you. I'm open to feedback most of the time.

I recall that we as a fellowship were so excited to finally have a book. We couldn't delay anymore with revisions. We did the right thing at the time. It was better to have a somewhat garbled book than no book at all.

Now, don't get hysterical because I put the book down! I know and recognize that supreme effort, prayers, tears, and agony were all involved in the process. I was there! WE were great, the book was great, everything WAS great!

The problem seems to be that NOW it isn't great. Sure, everything important is in there somewhere, but the book has problems. It is choppy, awkward, incoherent at times, and redundant at times. Almost every sentence makes sense to most of us, but the sentences and paragraphs don't always fit together well. Some chapters even have paragraphs that belong in other chapters.

So, let us quit quibbling about the wording of Traditions four and nine. Let's get on with revising the entire book!

Oh, I can hear it now! Some of you say "We're only addicts." I won't buy that garbage ever again. It's a way we have of putting ourselves down! A cop-out!

The more I think about the whole issue, the madder I get! Let's get it together! Lots of people tend to get emotionally irregular when anybody speaks of improving the book. Well, you all have to grow up! This book was a monumental "first." We must not drop the ball now that we are rolling.

Just ask around! How many addicts have cleaned up using the NA book? How many fourth steps have been done from the NA book? When a newcomer reads "Who is an addict?", "What is the NA Program?", "What can I do?", can he/she separate out some answers? Is it clear to anyone other than people with two or more years clean?

Far be it from me to tell people how to do things. On the other hand, if I don't maybe nobody will! Get the ear of your RSR. Channel input to the World Service Conference Literature Committee. If anybody cares, we could start on this now, so that we could allow time for it all to go through approval channels in the foreseeable future.

Of course, maybe nobody cares! Maybe everyone is content with what we have. Maybe I'm making a big deal out of nothing.

If you care, or even if you disagree with me (not likely), then write something for this magazine. If nobody writes back to the NA Way, then I can assume that either every addict out there agrees with me, or else you just don't care. Maybe you are content to continue using the books from the "outside issue" fellowships. Oh well, we are just addicts—right?

S.S. Colorado



N.A. Way Subscription Report:

During the past two months we mailed renewal notices to all subscribers who were due or over due for renewal payments. There has been a fairly reasonable resubscription rate. The first notices were sent over 30 days ago and a second notice was recently sent. If no response is received during the remaining 30 days since the second notice was sent, they will be dropped from the subscriber list. The following is a table showing actual figures that represent the number of subscribers:

Renewal notices sent (those due prior to September 84)	265
Payments received from notices sent	<u>67</u>
Outstanding renewals	198
Renewals already received	67
Current subscriptions	<u>490</u>
Currently paid subscriptions	557

SUBSCRIPTIONS BY MONTH

September	68
October	36
November	42
December	37
January	35
February	38
March	33
April	37
May	42
June	45
July	56
Other	<u>7</u>
TOTAL	490

COMIN' UP

AUGUST 30 - SEPT. 2, 1984
14TH Annual World
Convention - WCNA
Hotel Continental
Box 24, 1744 W. Devon
Chicago, IL 60660

SEPTEMBER 14 - 16, 1984
First London, England
N.A. Convention
INFO: Tel-01-871-0505
or P.O. Box 246, London
S.W.10, England

SEPT. 28-30, OCT. 1, 1984
First Australasian
Regional Convention
Sydney, Australia
P.O. Box 440, Leichardt,
2040 Australia

OCTOBER 5, 6, 7th 1984
2nd Tri-State Region
Convention T.S.R.C.N.A.
Holiday Inn Pittsburgh
412/361-4005 or
412/921-4865

JANUARY 4, 5, 6th, 1984
3rd Annual Virginia
Convention - AVCNA
Richmond Virginia,
The Marriot Hotel
804/264-3910

OCTOBER 19, 20, 21, 1984
6th Southern California
Convention, Miramar Hotel
Santa Barbara
P.O. Box 1944,
Redondo Beach, CA 90278

OCTOBER 5, 6, 7th 1984
7th Annual Pacific
Northwest Regional
Convention
Thunderbird Inn at the
Quay, Vancouver, USA for
INFO call 206/254-0179

NOVEMBER 9, 10, 11, 1984
1st Annual State Wide
Convention, Milwaukee
Wisconsin at the Park
East Hotel for info call
414/374-5886

NOVEMBER 21 - 25, 1984
Volunteer Region Convention
Sheraton West, Knoxville,
INFO - P.O. Box 4443,
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