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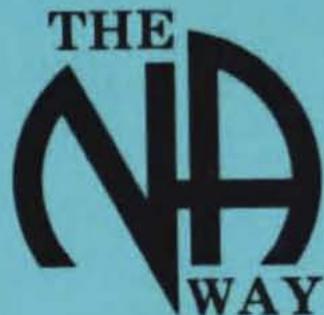
NUMBER 5

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

*New Attitudes*





THE INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP  
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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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*.

*All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input along with a signed copyright release form to: The N.A. Way; World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409*

## THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*  
*We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.*
11. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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## From the Editor

In this issue we are introducing a new section which will be a regular feature of the magazine from now on. In each issue there will be a "Special Feature" covering something of particular interest to the Fellowship. We may highlight the development of the Fellowship in a country where it is still newly forming, as we have done this month, or we may do an interview with a member who was one of the original members of N.A. We may spotlight the Fellowship in a particular institution, or take a look at one of the other N.A. publications, such as the Loner Bulletin or H&I Newsletter. At this point, the possibilities are wide open. We hope this will be a positive addition to the magazine.

We have received some response to our new policy regarding bulk purchases. To help you in making use of that new billing policy, we have changed our order form in the back of the magazine. For orders of ten subscriptions or more, we can now offer a price break, and bill you quarterly or annually. We hope this will be of help to committees with limited access to larger sums of money at one time.

The N.A. Way is truly a cooperative project involving lots of support from the Fellowship. Each month we print most of the input we have in stock, and we always get this slightly queasy feeling—"what if no one sends us anything next month; what will we do?" Each month you come through once again with the high quality of insight and recovery that we have come to expect from this Fellowship. It is at once humbling and exciting to be a part of this. A special thanks to each of you for your part.

R.H.  
Editor

## *New Attitudes*



Our Fellowship contains some people who spent their lives before N.A. as rebels, radicals, fanatics, outcasts—fighting society, resenting authority, scorning acceptance while hiding a deep-seated belief that they could never be worthy of acceptance in any group but one whose norms suited their lack of sound principle. I know; I am one of them.

I found settings I thought suited me—the beatnik scene, the radical political movement, free speech, free love, free penicillin at the free clinic, motorcycle clubs, drug dealing groups, the traveling rock and roll life—any place I could hide from, and rage at, society, the establishment, authority, anyone who didn't accept my current beliefs. I was obsessed with freedom; I hoped "free" meant without responsibility, without discipline, without anything to interfere with my self-indulgence. To be acceptable to me meant agreeing with my ideas.

Attitudes like these helped damage my mind and spirit, and weakened me to the point where I was ready, however skeptically, to try some new ideas when I arrived at the doors of N.A.

The concept of addiction as a disease seemed to fit my idea that there was something basically wrong with me besides all the sickness that came with obtaining and using my drugs. Of course the possibility of distorting any of our principles always exists—"Hey, what do you expect? I'm an addict! Powerless..." But something paradoxical was being offered me.

On one hand, I was told I had a disease for which I was not responsible; that acted as a guilt reducer. On the other, it was suggested I make a moral inventory, admit the exact nature of my wrongs, and make amends to those I had harmed, which sounded an awful lot like I was responsible. Sorting this out took some time, as did letting go of the fear that this was some sort of religious thing in disguise.

To my perception, there were many religious trappings here—ritual, prescribed prayers, repetitive formulas, narrow- or closed-mindedness, a fierce loyalty that seemed to express itself in fear and hostility towards "outside" and "out there"; "Our way is the only way." Careful examination of the traditions showed that these attitudes were not N.A. attitudes.

A few years' experience with our principles can remove most of the doubts, fears, denial and closed-mindedness. We are no longer threatened by ideas other than our own, we have no need to preach the N.A. way as gospel; experience and confidence in our principles replace speculation and desperate hope. We have no need to impose our views on anyone, in or out of the Fellowship. Our recovery speaks for itself, and that fact forms the core of our public relations policy of attraction, not promotion.

Our traditions free us from most disputes with the rest of the world. We have no need to engage in scientific or philosophical debates about the nature of addiction, or anything else. To do so might invite controversy from those who disagree, and in the long run the loser of such debate would be the suffering addict not referred to us by those who disagree. Our greatest strength is our combined subjective experience of addiction and recovery, not any imagined objective expertise on medical, legal, religious or scientific issues. Our concepts work for us, and we demonstrate this by our recovery. To the public and particularly the professional community, maintaining abstinence and becoming a responsible productive member of society are probably the most impressive aspects of our recovery. As individuals and as a Fellowship, we need to avoid smug, know-it-all, my-way-or-no-way attitudes that win no friends for N.A.

Trying to educate the professional community or the general public on the nature of addiction seems to be outside the spirit of our traditions. Even within the Fellowship, disagreement and long-winded discussions about addiction may divert us from carrying the message of recovery. Better this time were spent discussing our principles than the too-numerous symptoms of our disease. Let's leave science to scientists, law to lawyers, theology to theologians. To do otherwise does not enhance the welfare of N.A., and may promote disrespect or even antagonism towards us.

We keep what we have only with vigilance. What we have is a great deal of personal freedom, unencumbered by dogmatic rules, without fear of diverse opinions outside or inside the Fellowship. N.A. has a great many friends among the public, even among those who do not agree with all our ideas. Who could argue with the results of our program? More addicts are recovering today than at any time in history; we are no longer the burden to society that many of us once were; hope is now reaching places where there was none. Whether the rest of the world shares our ideas doesn't really matter. What matters is that N.A. remains attractive—that the world knows by our example that addicts do recover. Our friends have been won not by argument, prestige-seeking, or education, but through adherence to our principles, guided by our loving Ultimate Authority.

The experience of our predecessors can be helpful here: "Let's be friendly with our friends." We no longer have an adversary relationship with anyone. New attitudes, based on the spiritual values of our steps and traditions, free us as individuals and as a Fellowship to live and grow and enjoy life—and carry our message to those suffering as we once did.

S.L.  
Pennsylvania



## *A Few Words about Service*

I would like to share a few words on service work. I have been involved in service since I first got clean. I find it to be very rewarding and beneficial to my day to day program. In the past two years, I have watched our area grow from three to eighteen meetings, not including the H&I and service meetings. On chip night one of our Sunday meetings draws upwards of three hundred addicts. Cleaning up the room after a meeting is the basic service. Reaching out to a hurting addict, staying at the area meeting until it's all over, starting new meetings, H&I work, chairing meetings, showing up **no matter what** to deliver the message—service possibilities go on and on.

I have noticed that the people who get involved and stay involved, stay clean. I have a sponsor who has always been involved. The same with his sponsor. My suggestion to the person who is new, or feels like he or she doesn't belong, is to go to ninety meetings in ninety days (or every meeting available for ninety days), get lots of phone numbers and use them, get a sponsor and call him or her, and get involved in some kind of service. Soon after I was first involved I became over-committed, and I had to let go of some things and find out where I was most comfortable. I also have experienced that being involved (moderately) has been a very good tool to help my wife and I grow separately while we grow together. Everything I have said is from my own experience and hope. I have followed suggestions to the best of my ability, and with God, the Fellowship and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, I will stay clean one day at a time.

T.E.  
California

# *Each Other's Eyes and Ears*



## **UNWILLING**

We have a problem that seems to be the source of much of the sickness in our Fellowship. We have been and continue to be unwilling to confront one another directly. There are three areas in which I believe these confrontations would be healthy, though they rarely happen.

The first is in the meetings themselves. Ours is a small Fellowship, and it doesn't take much to create a distraction at a meeting of five or ten people. Whispering and laughing while someone is sharing will do it; cracking nuts, eating dinner, tapping an empty can on the table, passing notes, firming up a date for Saturday—all of these and many more ways can be found to disrupt a meeting. And around here they all seem to occur, sometimes several at a time. But rarely does anyone lean over and mention it to the disruptive person.

Additionally, we are unwilling to confront trusted servants who fail to meet their responsibilities. A trusted servant has to literally disappear before we take action. In the meantime meetings go unopened, coffee goes unmade, the collections go unnoted and our link to the area is broken. And all the while no one says a thing to the person failing to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

*Two addicts share their views about being honest with other members—even when that means taking risks.*

The third area in which we sometimes fail to confront each other directly is resentment. When a fellow member does or says something that kicks up resentments, almost never is that person confronted directly. Instead, nearly everyone else in the local Fellowship hears about it. It isn't shared at tables or with a sponsor, but rather with other members. This not only batters away at our unity, but does not aid in our recovery. The angered member remains resentful, and the person resented remains uninformed, or worse yet, hears it all secondhand. This nonsense is played out over and over.

Confrontations of the fourth kind are those that relate to each member's growth in the program. Our fellow members can be our eyes and ears, but only if they will speak. If we care about one another and see sickness in the behavior of another member, I believe we should share it with that member. We could share it privately after a meeting or on the phone. Around here there is an absolute terror of doing that. We either don't care or we fear that it will be taken as judgement and we will be judged in return. And so we are forced to rely on our sponsor or on ourselves to become aware—delaying our addressing issues of which everyone else is aware. And our lack of sponsors

locally means that many will have to figure it out for themselves.

I believe this one issue, the unwillingness of N.A. members to gather their courage and confront one another with tact and love, is the main issue facing our local Fellowship. But we will have to face this and become willing as individual members. Each of us. We have been unwilling to help each other recover. We wait for a safer, easier way. No one said the N.A. way was an easy way, or that confrontations are easy. But if we are to recover, we cannot remain unwilling.

M.L.  
Michigan

#### FRIENDSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

Honesty in a friendship is a must. If a friend goes about hurting himself, I believe that I as his friend must take the risks necessary to help. I must point out his wrong doings, and try to stay open to the changes he might go through.

Sometimes a friend will react in a very resentful way, but a true friend will understand—if not right away, then in the end. The friend will know that the confrontation came from love, if in fact you are coming from a loving spot. Love is a very obvious emotion, and will show all over the situation. Because love is from God, and support for my friend is a must, God will help me to be loving, and my friend to understand.

Only a true friendship will respond to love and honesty. And as a friend, I will have patience—I must respect the fact that nothing happens before its time. And only God makes changes happen in our lives, so above all, I must have faith.

There is a fine line, though, between an honest confrontation and a brutally honest one. To be honest with someone because they hurt your feelings is one thing. But to take someone's inventory in the guise of

being honest is brutal honesty. And at best, brutal honesty is the justification for judgement of someone. To judge someone is in fact to deny my own responsibility in that relationship. And as I understand it, God's way is not to be judgemental. So to live in this life and grow, I must be responsible for my own honest progress.

God help me in my quest for honesty with love, and help me to avoid brutal honesty. Help me to have the strength to confront my friends, and to stay clean within the boundaries of honest love and understanding. Most of all, help me to have faith and patience. God help me with all the friendships in my life. Guide my friends and myself to a point of understanding that will lead us all to honest growth.

J.B.  
California



## Be our guest.



#### UPPER MIDWEST REGIONAL CONVENTION-II

A Sunday breakfast/picnic in the park, enthusiastic and loving fellowship, good speakers, carefully chosen workshops and a reasonable cost are some of the highlights of the Upper Midwest Regional Convention this year in Moorhead, MN. The entire registration, including banquet, two breakfasts and dance, is just \$25.00. Lodging is available in the dorms of the university at \$7.00 per night. Hotel accommodations are also available for those who choose. Pre-registration by June first is the only way to be sure to get meal tickets. See page 24 for more details.



## *Stick with the Winners*



The longer I am a member of N.A., the more strongly I believe in the saying, "Stick with the winners." When I came to my first few meetings, I heard this phrase used, but did not understand its meaning. To begin with, I did not even know what a "winner" was. I thought any addict who was staying clean was a winner.

Since then, I've learned that staying clean is but a small part of this process of recovery. It is only the beginning. Recovery in N.A. is based on the Twelve Steps. Honesty, open-mindedness, and the willingness to try are essential. Principles such as "Easy does it" and "One day at a time" must be followed to the best of our ability.

My first N.A. friends and I were simply involved in the program. We went to meetings, hung out with people in the Fellowship, and some of us even had seldom-used sponsors. That's where it stopped. Few of us are clean today.

What changed my life was getting a true winner for a sponsor. This addict was not just involved like we were, he was **committed** to N.A. I heard a speaker recently who shared a story explaining the difference between being involved and being committed. Two animals, a pig and a chicken, decided to have a breakfast of ham and eggs. The chicken, who had to lay an egg, was involved, the pig, on the other hand, was **committed**.

My sponsor was not just staying clean—he was recovering. He was changing—his whole life was changing—and he was happy without using drugs. Until then, I don't think I believed that any addict could be truly satisfied living drug-free. I wanted what this man had.

My sponsor made some suggestions to guide me in my recovery. One of these was to stick with the winners—those addicts who were working a program. I've followed this suggestion and have made new friends in N.A. Our clean time varies from a few weeks to several years, but we all have one thing in common, we are recovering addicts who are committed to N.A. and to recovery.

I no longer sit around and talk about the "good old days" of using, or how much fun I'm missing. My friends and I today talk about the joys of recovery. We do the basics—don't use, go to lots of meetings and talk to our sponsors. We participate in N.A. service work. We discuss the steps and other principles of the program and help each other to follow them. We trust one another and share on an intimate level. There are times when we make mistakes, or slip into old patterns of behavior, but we keep trying. We support each other through both the good and the not-so-good times. In short, we share our experience, strength and hope with each other.

I have gained so much from sticking with the winners. My old feelings of loneliness, mistrust, low self-esteem, fear and despair have diminished considerably. I now have a positive attitude toward life, an understanding of this program, and a mutual support system made up of people who love and trust.

I enjoy life and my winning friends, and I neither need nor want to use drugs. I do need and want recovery. By sticking with the winners, and doing what I need to do, I'm experiencing it.

J.K.  
Minnesota

# SPECIAL FEATURE

As Narcotics Anonymous literature is translated into more and more languages, the program becomes available to addicts the world over. The WSO is in constant contact with members in foreign countries—pioneers building N.A. communities without the full complement of literature that we in English-speaking countries are already taking for granted. One by one, the pamphlets, the White Book, the Group Starter Kit and the Basic Text are all being translated into other languages. In this historic period of phenomenal growth of the Fellowship, addicts from all around the world are forming groups, corresponding with loners and loner sponsors, helping with translations of literature, and forging a truly international recovery Fellowship.

To allow the Fellowship to look in on this process and share in the vision of hope for addicts worldwide, the N.A. Way is presenting this special article spotlighting the development of the Fellowship in Germany. To protect the anonymity of N.A. members, all names that appear in this article have been changed.

The following recent letter to the WSO was written entirely in German, and had to be given to an interpreter to translate. The English version came back something like this:

My name is Greta, and I am an addict. With great interest I read an article recently about N.A. We're planning on starting an N.A. meeting too. Please send information. I've been with A.A. eight years, and know many addicts in A.A. I would very much enjoy any material related to N.A. (preferably in German).

## *N.A. in Germany*

The WSO responded to this letter by sending a Group Starter Kit in English, and a letter of encouragement. Regrettably, the German translations were not yet ready. Greta's address was forwarded to members in Germany who could be of more immediate help.

A member of N.A. from the U.S., we'll call him Mike, relocated to Germany for his job, and wrote to the WSO with some interesting tales of his efforts to find N.A. meetings. The WSO had known previously of his move, and had sent him initial drafts of some of our literature translated into German.

I did receive the package with the German translations of our literature. Thank you! Let me explain my situation here to you a little better. I'm in a pretty remote area in Germany, about six or seven hours away from a major city. When I mentioned to you that there is hardly any N.A. in Germany, I meant it. There are a few, but **very** few N.A. meetings, mostly on military bases. N.A. is in its infancy here, but believe me, I have ideas: 1) I'm taking a German course; 2) We're planning a unity conference soon—a sort of fact-finding conference.

There are lots of addicts here, dying at an incredible rate. Recovery is scarce. Even A.A. is like a secret society over here. It's not listed in the local phone book. I had to hire a private investigator to find it! I went looking for it because if I am going to get N.A. going, I needed to learn how to express my gratitude in

German. I also need to be around people talking about the Twelve Steps. I had hoped to find some addicts there who are interested in starting N.A.

I did find some addicts there, and they were very excited when I showed them our literature in German. They put me in touch with a man who is an addict, clean 12 years; he's a therapist who works with addicts. What a story this man has! He told me you can be put in jail for ten years in this country for just being loaded on heroin. It is also illegal, he says, to help an addict get clean! He very discreetly helps addicts to get clean in his own house. He has a connection with a local doctor, so he smuggles addicts into the hospital if necessary. Isn't it amazing that I found this guy! God really works miracles.

We're going to start an N.A. meeting, but my friend warns me that I must be patient. It's going to take time for the people to accept N.A. So this is our starting point. As for me, I'm grateful to have the privilege of carrying the message here in Germany. But I've got to learn to express my gratitude in German.

This letter was a moving reminder of the many similar stories told by N.A. pioneers all over the U.S. and other countries. Old timers tell of leaving meetings in 15 minute intervals to avoid being caught gathering together with other addicts. Only in recent years was a similar law removed from the books in a major U.S. city. N.A. now flourishes there.

The WSO has since learned that the German government itself has no law prohibiting people from helping addicts clean up. There may be local laws governing this in the area discussed in this letter. In any case, we who can walk freely into an N.A. meeting today have much to be grateful for.

About the same time as the WSO was reading and responding to the above letters, as well as some other similar ones from Germany, the following letter arrived:

Dear Friends,

I am a member of a Public Information Committee of A.A. in West Germany. We have an increasing number of addicts in our A.A. groups who are not alcoholics. We are of the opinion that we could best help them by lending our assistance as they start their own N.A. groups. I got your address from the GSO in New York, and I would like to ask you for any informational material available for starting N.A. groups.

The letter went on to ask some specific questions about N.A. The WSO response, along with some enclosed literature, addressed each of their questions. This letter is one example of the way in which the A.A. Fellowship has been supportive of N.A. here and abroad. In a spirit of "cooperation, not affiliation," the two Fellowships have developed a good friendship.

We have been focusing on the Fellowship in Germany, but we could just as well have been discussing any one of a number of countries around the world. It becomes more and more obvious as we grow that addicts all over the world are hungry for a message of recovery. God willing, we will continue to be able to meet that need.

Those of you who attended the World Convention in Chicago last year remember the exciting moment during the roll call when one member of the Fellowship from Germany stood up. The spirit of the standing ovation that that single member received told the whole story of this article. Welcome to N.A.!

Progress involves risk. You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first.

## *Toughin' it Out— A Newcomer's Perspective*

The gift of life given to me through the N.A. Fellowship is so beautiful that I doubt I could put all the benefits into words. However, a lot of the time daily living and recovery consists of just "toughin' it out." It can be work. The hardest work I've ever known. It can be mind boggling when I think of it—the amount of effort I must put into my recovery to stay clean one more day. The key for me is, "Don't think—just do it—just today."

To stay clean one more day I usually find it necessary to hit my knees as soon as I awake and ask God to help me make it. To stay clean one more day I have to exercise constant vigilance on my thoughts and feelings. I can't afford to become obsessed with fear, worry, anxiety, resentment or impatience—which I face daily—or the host of other "luxuries" others seem to be able to handle.

Sometimes to stay clean one more day I've got to grab onto another recovering addict. We stick together and help each other through our tough days saying "come on, we're gonna make it. Just one more day, come on!" Sometimes I have to stop whatever I'm doing, find a place where I can hit my knees and ask God "please help me! Be with me! Get me through!"

Sometimes my mind gets so cluttered that it even feels like God isn't there. Like nothin's anywhere. Like it's all a joke and life just isn't worth it. Why even try? It is then that I have to reach way down into me and scrape the lining of my soul to come up with just enough to make it one more day.

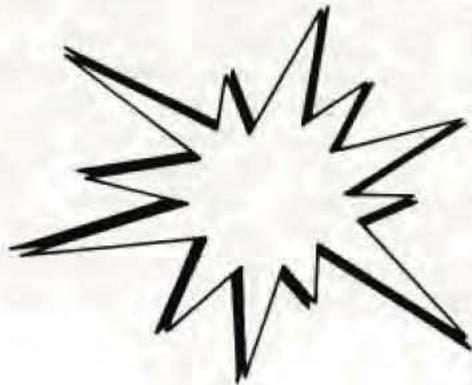
This thing called recovery—this thing called daily living—sometimes it calls for just toughin' it out. I know what I have had to face in my recovery in order to stay clean one more day. This is why I feel so good when I walk into an N.A. room. There they are—in every seat—the ones who made it today! These aren't just "average people." They aren't even just recovering addicts. To me, these people are heroes. In every single seat sits a giant! God bless everyone of you. You are my greatest inspiration to stay clean one more day.

M.D.  
Maryland



### **OHIO REGIONAL CONVENTION-III**

"A celebration of recovery" is happening in Dayton, Ohio this month. It's the Third Annual Ohio Regional Convention for Narcotics Anonymous. The committee, located this year in the Miami Valley Area, sent us a note along with their flier extending an invitation to as many people as possible. Breakfast and banquet registrations need to be in before May 15, so now is the time to register. For contact people who can tell you more about how to do that, see the "Comin' Up" section on page 24.



## Contact

My sole spiritual experience as a child occurred when I was eight. I was sitting in church with my family, letting my mind wander. I saw myself growing up normal, struggling, and at the end of it all dying. The whole routine for nothing. What a waste of time! Revulsion shook me. No way was I going to live like that.

Five years later I found a way to successfully avoid life. I started using in an East African country where no drug laws existed, supplies were plentiful, and prices were low. Within two months of my first joint—rolled in newspaper—I was strung out on pharmaceutical methamphetamine. We returned to the States in 1970, and I got into acid—first dropping then dealing. Overdoses, bad trips, two arrests, and increasing alienation from everyone piled up on me. By the time I was fifteen, I was ready for a change.

Jesus Freaks were one of the big things at the time (almost as hip as dope fiends). They hit on me until I listened just once to the still, small voice inside they kept referring to. It was real and powerful and enough to clean my act up for me.

I stayed clean two years on that kick. Part of it was authentic and beautiful, one of the best times of my life with some extraordinary people. But my disease killed it. Self-centered, I became "perfect"—meaning, of course, that the rest of the world was going to rot in hell. Living with that attitude toward everyone and everything became pretty oppressive after a while.

In my freshman year of ministerial studies, I medicated the pressure away. I felt so **spiritual** when I was high. As time went on, though, the stuff caught up with me again. I was married, but I couldn't talk with my wife. That relationship wasn't as real to me as getting loaded was. My employer frowned on embezzeling to support my habit. And my religious friends found it distasteful to see me blasted at a Bible study. Eventually I stopped claiming to be religious; I was embarrassed to be giving God such a bad rep.

Maybe you can understand how it was that I came into N.A. with some prejudice against this Higher Power stuff. I felt like I was **bad**. I had tried to rationalize God away so the loss of contact wouldn't be such a big deal. Other times, feeling the need for Something greater than myself, I had woven images of some sort of Cosmic Spirit or another. But intellectual abstractions can't love you, or keep you warm when it's cold inside, or do for you what you can't do for yourself.

I spent my first year in N.A. cutting through that insanity. A five-month relapse put me in a place where I could not live anymore, with or without drugs. Where I had been able to tell myself that I was "managing" simply because I was surviving, I could no longer. I did not have the resources.

With that First Step clear—no question—the ability came to take a no-nonsense Second. I came to believe that recovery was possible through hearing you tell me where you'd come from and identifying with it; from seeing where you'd come to and wanting it; and from reading, "these [steps] are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible." My ideas had gotten me nowhere. Yours, or your program's, had given you a life I was attracted to. I began to consider asking this Power in N.A. to care for me.

"God as we understand Him" was, and is, a troubling phrase for me. I didn't, and don't, understand Him. I do, however, know that He loves me without question, that He's capable of doing something about my disease **and does**.

One night, a few weeks out of detox, I lay in bed hurting. Life was scary, distasteful, more so than it had been when I was sitting in church at eight years old. I didn't see how I was going to get through another day without going crazy or copping. It was the end, I just knew it. So I prayed, "Please, God, whatever You are, HELP ME." There were to the best of my knowledge no large trucks in my room that night. I have to assume that the blinding light that came over me, and the soothing warmth, and the absolute certainty that it would be all right came from my Higher Power. He was doing for me at my extreme limit what I could not do for myself, but had to have done. In the next few months I experimented with some tricks for improving that contact. For a while I made little altars in the desert from stones and bones, demanding that God appear. Finally I built one on a hilltop by the Colorado River. I called out for God, but all that appeared was the large hunting bird whose eyrie I had appropriated, screaming from the sky. So ended my flirtation with paganism.

Then I tried a God Box. I had been told to write down questions and concerns, put them in there, and forget them—I had given them to God, and they would be taken care of. It sounded like a neat idea when it was first suggested. But it was too neat, too pat. I had some struggling to do, and a shoebox wasn't going to deprive me of that process.

I picked up lots and lots of books, ranging from the great religious and spiritual classics to a smattering of twentieth century crackpots. I had been told to keep my mind open, to seek what was useful in every tradition of spirituality. But I came to them spiritually bankrupt. I had no categories, no priorities of my own with which to judge what was valuable to me and what was not. I became a religious garbage can.

I was not going to be handed The Way on a silver platter. I was not going to be provided any further trailblazing than the Twelve Steps themselves. I was going to have to find an authentic contact of my own each moment, in each situation asking God's will for me and the power to carry that out, and stifling my ego to become sensitive enough to receive it.

That realization came to me a year and a half ago. Since then I have not been fixed. I don't expect I'll ever be. I have no new Bible, no outline for the salvation of the world, no master plan. I continue to live within mortal human limitations of power and perspective, complicated by the disease of addiction. In order to survive, I must maintain regular efforts to seize the moment, approach a Power greater than myself, and ask, "What is this?" And for that moment a loving God will be with me and will direct me to places I can't see with strength that's not mine. What that Power is, I don't know. How that Power behaves in my life, I do. I've been changed from a hopeless, helpless drug addict into a man who KNOWS that sanity is possible. I've seen it happen by working the Twelve Steps of N.A. I know that if I continue to work them, seeking contact from moment to moment with the Power I need, that I can continue to live and grow. That's my experience, the strength I've gotten from that experience, and the hope it's given me for the future. If you can use it, feel free. It was given to me just as freely by those who came before.

L.M.  
Nevada

#### WEST VIRGINIA REGIONAL CONVENTION-II

The West Virginia Regional Convention is another N.A. event on a lake, with the lodging in cottages—the type of atmosphere that lends itself to an intimate, spiritual convention. The events include the usual array of workshops, meetings, meals, etc. Special note should be taken of the reasonable price. A one-time registration fee of \$60.00 covers all events **plus lodging and meals** for the entire weekend. See page 24 for more details.

# A Thought on Old-Timers

Old-timers in Narcotics Anonymous are strange folks. Their eyes aren't bloodshot, their arms aren't marked up, their hands don't shake as much as they used to, they can speak without stuttering, and some even look like regular people! They can, however, be hard to find. Even when we think we have one, it is sometimes hard to tell for sure.

Having devoted a lot of thought to this matter, I would like to share some things with the Fellowship. These are simply my thoughts, but I think they might have some value.

I used to be hesitant to write about this topic because I was afraid that the "Ancient Ones" might change if they thought we understood them. Addicts can be that way, you know! Nowadays, I am convinced that even though they are stubborn, there is no danger of them changing! More on this later.

I can say straight out that one characteristic which qualifies an N.A. member as a possible old-timer is the way they part with their wisdom. Yes! Just pick out someone who you think might be an old-timer, and ask that person a question. Depending on what they do, you can tell right away if they are faking it.

If we get a bunch of advice, we can tell the person is faking it. This isn't too dangerous, though, because we wouldn't listen anyway. We all know that advice is cheap and worthless. After all, if advice worked, we could all have been cured long ago!

Bona-fide old-timers will always share about themselves when we ask for answers. I know it sounds crazy, but it is what they do. It can be very frustrating to ask one of these old fossils how to get through a crisis, or how to get rid of a character defect, and have to listen instead to how they worked their program and what happened.

Anyway, if we find a person who passes this preliminary test, we must keep watching them! You see, in 1983, I accidently discovered the absolutely indisputable quality which gives away an old-timer. The most valuable of these strange folks will actually **show**

us how they work the program if we wait long enough. It happens eventually, so we must be alert!

It seems that I had to attend WSC-83 because nobody else could go and everyone wondered what all the initials stood for. Also, I was curious to see one of those "California addicts" that we always hear about. Well, while I was trying to figure out what all the fuss was about, I noticed a very unnatural phenomenon. More than once, some seemingly intelligent RSR or committee chairman would get upset, mad, or full of resentment over not getting his or her way with some issue before the Conference. This appeared normal to me, and I expected those people to just throw a tantrum or start a fist fight like the rest of us usually do. Instead, they would excuse themselves to go work steps immediately! Upon their return, I noticed that they were ready to accept the wishes of the Fellowship and go on to the next issue. Amazing!

Another time, a fellow whom I respect very much, shared with me his experience of that particular day. It seems that the opportunity had arisen to rip off a company and the desire to do it was totally absent. It was the first time in several years of clean time that overcoming the desire wasn't a problem in that circumstance. This change in his integrity was so startling as to be troublesome to him. He had never shared this with me before because he didn't want me to think that old-timers still had problems! This incident made my knees go weak! I was witnessing the transition from one of "us" to one of "them."

Until recently, I had never told any of these people how they had given me renewed faith and commitment by simply allowing me to be present while they worked their program. As I said before, I always thought it would create change or even resentment. Today I know that old-timers won't change simply because I stole some insight from them. You see, I think that this type of behavior is somehow at the very core of our program of recovery. It is spiritual and it is what works—at least for me.

S.S.  
Colorado

# Comin' Up

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

**ARIZONA:** June 21-23; Western Sts Unity Conv-2; Phoenix Hilton; WSUCNA-2, box 13311, Tucson, AZ 85732; John or Shari (602) 279-0744

**CALIFORNIA:** Apr 29-May 3; World Service Conference; Best Western (Airtel Plaza), 7277 Valjean St, Van Nuys, CA; for reservations, USA 1-800-528-1234; Canada 1-800-208-8993

2) May 17, 8 pm; Lit. Fundraiser: food/meeting/dance; Hollywood Jaycee Hall; 1/4 block west of I-95 on Hollywood Blvd.

3) May 25; Workshops, banquet, dance; Santa Rosa Vets Mem Bldg; 523-1720

4) May 27, 11 am to 4 pm; Ventura St. Beach Park; Memorial Day Picnic

5) July 20; St. Mary's Church, Stockton; Wkshps, banquet, dance

**CONNECTICUT:** Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; "More will be revealed!"

**FLORIDA:** July 4-7; FRCNA-4; Hyatt Regency of Miami, 400 S.E. 2nd Ave.; (305) Jay 255-0720; Andrea 758-2815; Julio 262-1362

**INDIANA:** Nov 1-3; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indianapolis, IN; box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206

**MARYLAND:** June 21-23; 6th East Coast Conv; Towson St. Univ., Baltimore, MD; Box 26513, Baltimore, MD 21207

**MICHIGAN:** July 5-7; Central Great Lakes RCNA; Valley Plaza, Midland, MI; (517) Will 684-9168 or Greg 686-7622

**MINNESOTA:** June 14-16; Upper Midwest RCNA-II; Moorhead St. Univ., Moorhead, MN; Bryce (218) 233-6400; Box 9083, Fargo, ND 58109

**MISSOURI:** July 26-28; High on Life Picnic; Stockton Lake, MO; (417) Bob 781-6770, 623-1225; Blackie 623-6883, 623-2197

**NEVADA:** JULY 19-21; 3rd annl Stampede for Serenity (Campout); Stampede Reservoir, NV; Pre-registration a must!; (702) 322-4811

**OHIO:** May 24-27; 3rd Annl OH RCNA; Holiday Inn, 7999 Prestige Plaza Dr, Dayton, OH; (513) Jim 837-7517, Pat 390-6629, Rusty 426-8182

**QUEBEC, CAN:** May 11; Meetings, dinner, dance; Community Center, 253 3rd St., Shewinigan, Quebec; (819) 538-5027, 537-9796; "L'a l'envol"

**WASHINGTON, DC:** Aug 29-Sept 1; 15th Annl. WORLD CONVENTION of NA; Shorham Hotel; WCNA-15, Box 2232, Washington, DC 20013; travel agent contracted: 1-800-368-3527; register soon—late fee after 7-31

**WEST VIRGINIA:** May 10-12; WV Conv. of N.A. II; Cedar Lakes Camp and Conference Center, Ripley, WV; (304) Barry 757-7537, Phil 292-0896

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1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*  
*For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.*
2. *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*
3. *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.*
4. *Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*  
*An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
5. *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
6. *Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
7. *N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
8. *Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
9. *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.*
10. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*