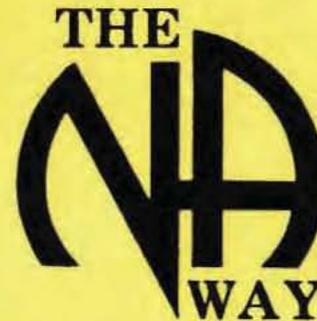


My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.



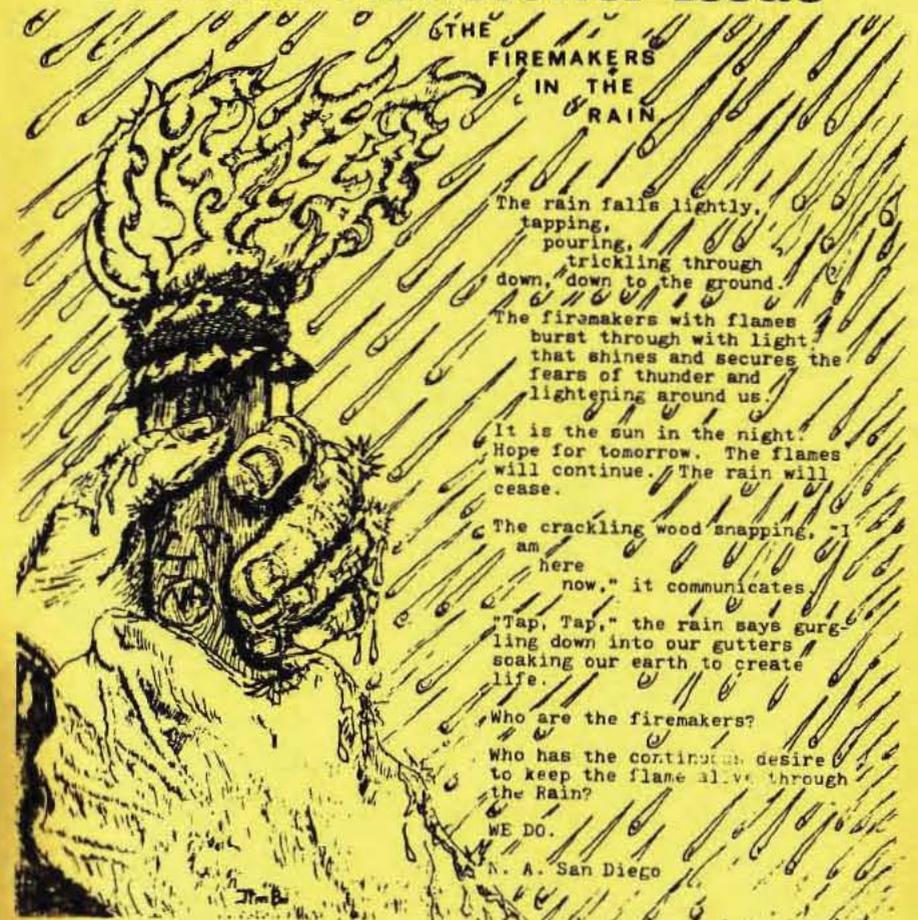
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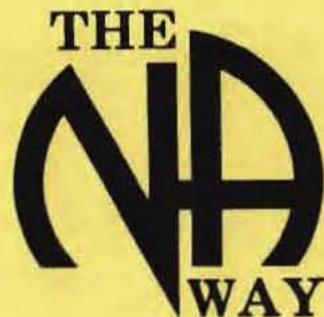
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Annual Newsletter Issue





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.*
11. *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.*
12. *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

This is the third annual Special Edition of the N.A. Way Magazine in which we spotlight Fellowship newsletters. All articles which appear in this month's issues were taken from various newsletters which we have received here at the WSO during the past year. The N.A. Way would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the various newsletters throughout the Fellowship on a really good job carrying the N.A. message.

Special thanks is due the San Diego, CA Fellowship for this month's cover art and poem. As our regular readers may have noticed, we have discontinued printing poetry in the magazine, keeping strictly with stories, essays and letters. In this special edition, we have diverted from that policy to show off some of that N.A. talent that is found in these newsletters. In this case, both the poem and the artwork were locally produced especially for their newsletter.

If your area or region wishes to put a newsletter together, guidelines are available through the WSO. Also, the N.A. Way has a policy of sending a free subscription to each newsletter which places us on its subscription list. If you place us on your list or have been sending us your newsletter and have not been included in this exchange program, let us know at the N.A. Way, attn: Yvonne and we'll get it straightened out.

Our subscription drive is going well. We are somewhere over 2,000 subscriptions now, and growing steadily. We now have available at no cost large display posters for areas or groups who wish to send to us for them (again, attn: Yvonne). These posters include tablets of subscription blanks which can be torn off by members who wish to subscribe. Areas, groups and conventions are encouraged to send for these to help us continue to grow. Welcome again to all new subscribers, and thank you all for the support.

R.H.
Editor

No One Showed

I went to my little home group today and no one showed. I didn't feel alone because the feeling was there. The fact that one member was there and acting differently was enough. The difference was that I know that alone I can't make it. The difference was that I was ready to help or wish anyone well who walked through the meeting room door. I let myself relax, and I thought of others I love and know well through N.A. There are a lot of them. They all have the disease of addiction, but vary as individuals in many ways.

Though there are many people I identify with completely, there are a few that defy surrender as I have come to know it. My disease wants me to engage in a tug of war with them over issues which have come up. N.A. has taught me better than that. There is nothing in this world I can lose if it was truly mine to begin with. If removed, it will come back. There is nothing to win that I don't already have. I love them all and am prepared to show my love many ways, starting with well wishing, and leading to giving of my time, my telephone and my couch, sharing what N.A. has done for me—sharing spiritual principles which only come to life in the giving—trying to be a good solid friend to all I can.

Engaging in useless debate over meaningless issues used to take up a lot of my time. It kept me isolated from many, and only permitted me to have close contact with a few. Since I've come to N.A., a lot of that has changed. I can remember clearly the first time I backed away from imposing my will on others. I wondered if I was surrendering or just being chicken. Later, I could see the wisdom of giving it time: time for me to stay clean, time for others who were doing their best whether it seemed right to me or not, time for the God of my understanding to step in and work yet another miracle.



The thing I've been able to see a little more each day is that reality is my friend. The illusions presented to me as if they were solid facts cut me off from reality and make me crazy. Still, through N.A., I can step back if I don't feel the sense of correctness I associate with the Will of my Higher Power. This reality of feeling and sensing God's Will for me takes precedence over the illusion. When I maintain that good feeling inside, it is reflected in every part of my life. Every time I get to step out on faith. Every time I get to do a good job, I know it comes from my recovery. Recovery remakes me inside so that I can work with reality not against it. Since I can see and hear better, I can respond better.

If I'm with someone who is acting badly, today I can see their need for reassurance or recognition beneath their actions. Sometimes there's no way to get through and be helpful with the real problem, but by trying, I know I'm willing.

I never used to know. After all the dope I put in my system, I'd become adapted to living loaded. That forced me into living situations that made it impossible to ever really face issues or make the changes I wanted and needed desperately. I would always get distracted. Clean, I'm a more consistent person with similar likes and dislikes day after day. I spend more of my time doing things I really care about, and less and less time is wasted in futile efforts or assumptions. This way the good grows and isn't wiped out every time the tide changes or I encounter a forceful personality.

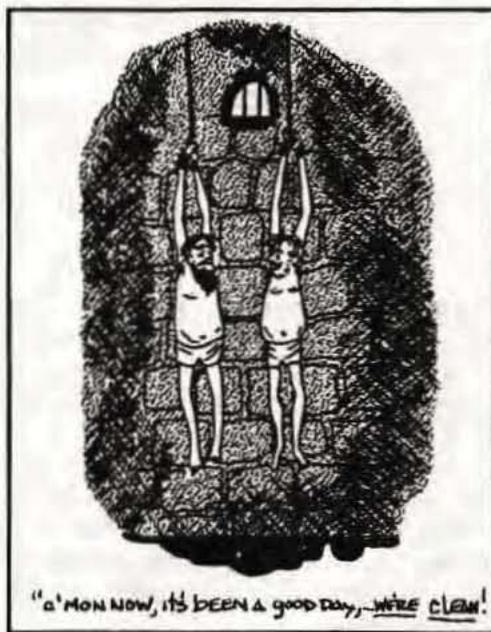
Something about the life before N.A. made me kind of "entranced." I had to eliminate all the changes I could because I couldn't handle any of them. Today these changes are like food to me, and I have a healthy appetite. Usually I'm up to them. It feels

good to say that in writing. It was not always so. Without these changes, I was becoming a zombie.

By practicing spiritual principles (especially surrender, faith and hope) I'm able to act in a manner which feels good at the time and again later on. If I'm insufficient, I surrender. If I can help, I step out on faith. If I don't know, I can hope. Simplistic as it sounds, these work for me. Part of my point is that these actions never ask me to do anything which is beyond my ability, and I expect to be able to keep it up a long time clean.

Carrying a sense of God in my heart and letting my purpose be to help others, especially others like me, fills most of my days with love and laughter. I work, I pray, I meditate, I can admit fault without it being a big deal.

No one showed up for the meeting today, but what you have given me was here with me and I'm glad I came. I'll be back.



Taken From Rolling Paper
Phoenix Arizona Newsletter

Taken From The Recoverer
Federal Way, Washington



Newcomers

I want to talk about the joy and hope I feel when I watch and take part in the entry, from death to life, of a newcomer. From the time they walk through the doors of N.A., lost and confused and just tired of all the past stuff, they are not sure what to do. They can't quite believe that all these people can stay clean.

After hanging around, seeing and hearing recovery, they become willing. They start thinking, "If they can stay clean, so can I" and before you know it, they're getting 30 day key tags!!

I want to talk about newcomers with a smile on their faces and a twinkle in their eyes. They're getting involved in service and welcoming other newcomers, and some come up to me when I'm down and say something I need to hear.

I think what I'm trying to say is that if it weren't for the newcomer, I don't know if I'd want to hang around, because I see all the growth and more of what I went through in each newcomer. I think it keeps me a bit humble. I don't have to have an "oldtimer" attitude and for that I'm grateful.

M.E.

What a Life!

I started using drugs when I was eighteen years old in Seattle, my home town. By the time I was twenty, I had a daily heroin habit and was strung out for four years, until I was accepted for a methadone maintenance program. At the time I thought I had it made, what else could a guy ask for. I could go back to work, have some extra cash, kick back and relax a little. God knows I needed the rest. And all I had to do was show up every morning at seven and get in line for my legal dose of methadone. What a life!

I hadn't used a needle for over two years when a friend of a friend of mine asked me if I could deal some cocaine for him. I told him no problem, and proceeded to use all but a few grams of two ounces of this coke, which was the first time I'd ever seen the stuff. After that episode, my disease progressed rapidly. All I wanted was that coke rush, and I'd do anything to get it. Eventually, cocaine brought me to my knees. It was a downhill fight the last few years out there. I had progressed to the point that every time I went on a coke binge, I'd end up with acute cocaine psychosis, which meant the audio and visual hallucinations, the SWAT team waiting outside my door, the most incredible kind of fear I've ever experienced. I haven't had to feel that kind of pain in over a year, thanks to N.A. Someone suggested that I check out an N.A. meeting to see if I fit. Guess what? I do.

What I've found is a group of people who have the same problem I do, the disease of addiction. A physical, mental and spiritual disease. A disease that I believe can only be arrested, not cured, because every time I thought I was cured, I went out and did it again, ending up more psychotic than the last time out.

Today I believe I've had my last drug binge. I've given up. No more. I've admitted to myself that there is no chance that doing drugs will ever be like it was in the beginning. The thrill is gone, and my love affair with drugs is over.

It took all this time to get me back to N.A. and the chance to experience life as an adult for the first time ever. This includes the joys and pains of daily living, learning how to get along with others, learning how to really make amends, through changing my actions, walking my talk. I've come this far with the support of other addicts in N.A. who have gone through similar situations and who use the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in their lives. I don't use these principles perfectly, and I never will, since I'm an imperfect being, but by using them as guidelines for change, I find I'm changing. And the biggest and most important change recently is that the desire to use has been removed for the last several months. What a freedom that is!

Today I have a family again and friends I care about and who really care about me. That is quite a change. Considering that all I ever cared about before was me and my using, and how I was going to get more drugs. My life is completely different today. My family can count on me, and so can my friends. If I fall, they help me up and if they fall, I help them. I've received this gift of recovery by going to N.A. meetings as often as I can, working the Twelve Steps the best I can today, and sharing with other addicts when I'm hurting or listening when they're hurting. Hey folks, what a life! It's much better than any life I had before, and I want to thank those of you who hung in there with me when I had nowhere to go. That's love.

D.H.

Fellowship—From Two Perspectives

A GROUP WRITES:

Someone in the Program told me that the thought of having no N.A. in Key West was a frightening thought. That very thought was how N.A. started in Key West. A few addicts banded together because the very basis of success of N.A. is founded on one addict helping another. We knew that the N.A. Fellowship was our lifeline. We had to cling to each other with determination and commitment, because even as new as we were, we knew that without the group, our chances of recovery were slim. That commitment is not unique to the Key Recovery Group. Every addict who comes into N.A. has to stand at that turning point of either joining our way of life or facing jails, institutions or death.

So the commitment is the same, but what we had to work with was a little different than what other places had where N.A. was already established. There were not many people here who could remind us to follow suggestions or take us to meetings or social functions, and sponsors were practically nonexistent. Developing our relationship with our Higher Power was imperative, and staying close to one another was essential.

Little by little the nucleus of our group grew. One of our members made the trip to Miami to bring

us news from a larger group of addicts. We began to feel the stirring of something bigger than our little home group. Just as we knew when we banded together that we never had to be alone, we began to know that we were part of a Fellowship that was ready to reinforce that feeling.

That bonding with the N.A. Fellowship in Miami and the sharing of recovery brought a surge of enthusiasm to our Key Recovery Group. We turned one of our meetings into a step meeting, we discussed the Traditions among ourselves, and we spent time with each other outside of meetings. We are learning what the Fellowship of N.A. really means.

It is one of the greatest treasures to see a newcomer find the Fellowship, to watch him or her grow, make changes, reach out and find serenity. Even greater is the privilege of experiencing the birth of a group, its growth and its struggles as it strives to attach itself and become a part of the miracle of the N.A. Fellowship

Key Recovery
Group
Key West, Florida

A MEMBER WRITES:

When I was asked if I would write something on fellowship, I had three separate thoughts surge inside me at once. First, inside my head, I heard "God I hate to write." Second was the question "How can I talk about this and say things perfectly?" (Being an addict, perfectionism seems to dog my every step). And last but far from least, I heard "you can't say no to this simple task." So I said yes. I looked up the definition for Fellowship, and I started writing.

My friend, Webster D., says that a Fellowship is a community of interest, activity, feeling or experience; a company of equals or friends. When I think of Fellowship in these terms, based on my experience in recovery, the definition makes a great deal of sense.

We are a community. We share all aspects of our recovery with each other. Many of our activities involve each other. As for our feelings or experiences, well, sit in a couple of meetings and see if you can relate.

The experiences of other addicts is where I began to be drawn into this Fellowship. I listened and related. I heard that your experiences were very similar to mine, and often as not, they were the very same. I identified with the feelings you talked about. I saw the relationship between the experiences and the feelings and after a while, I understood that relationship.

As I continued to come around, the trust and the sharing continued to grow. The experiences began to take on entirely new meanings. The experiences I found myself relating to were experiences of recovery, not of addiction. The feelings I found myself relating to were not the cash register kind but were the kind that build friendships. They are feelings of honesty, faith, hope and above all else, love.

During my childhood and throughout my life, I felt different. I never belonged. Yet, when I joined this Fellowship (you're a member when you say you are), I was accepted as a friend and as an equal. I was accepted by you long before I even began to accept myself. I was loved by you long before the feelings of self-love began to stir within my own heart.

The Twelve Steps of this Program teach me the value of "We." They teach me to relate and identify. The Steps teach me to understand by understanding myself. The Traditions insure that at all times this Fellowship will be one of friends and equals based on feelings and experiences, interest and activities. The Fellowship is love and hope—one addict helping another. We are the Fellowship and the Fellowship is us.



Letter to God



Dear God,

If there ever was a time that I needed you, it's now. I am feeling for the first time, and I don't know what to do. I want to run, but there is no place to go.

I knew it would be this painful. That is why I waited until I was dying to finally give up and give it to you. I didn't want to.

Are you listening? Do you hear me?

You know there are these people like me in N.A. who keep on telling me to come back and that it will get better. For some reason, I believe them. I don't want to be alone anymore.

Yesterday, I went to a meeting and after it was over, a couple of gals asked me to go to coffee with them. How did they know that I felt awkward, lonely, afraid and thought no one even noticed me? God, it was wonderful, the laughter, the warmth, and the touching of hearts. They gave me their numbers and asked me if I was going to another meeting tomorrow and would I like to go with them. ME, they wanted me to be with them. I hadn't given them anything. I didn't buy their food or promise them a new wardrobe or anything.

God, you had this all planned, didn't you? Well, it worked. I want to be clean. I don't know what I will do for work, or rent, or food, or transportation, but I will stick around another day to see what happens.

Love,
Patti

Why Do I Resent You?



At first I resented you just because you were happy, and I was not. Because I felt like a failure and you seemed to be making a success of your life and your recovery. Because I knew I needed your help and it hurt to admit to myself or anybody that I was not self-sufficient, that I was incapable of coping on my own.

Sometimes I resent you because you seem to be everything that I am not, and I'm too self-centered to see that you have feelings too, the same fears, the same insecurities. I resent you because I like to be in control and you don't always fit into my plans. Because I have expectations of you that you cannot always live up to. Now and then I see myself in you, and I do not like what I see. Why do I resent you? Maybe because you show me ME.

A—
London, England

There's Always Hope

Once again, as several times before, he came to my bedroom window in the wee hours of the morning. "Hey, let me in," he yelled. I knew he was on his way home from his usual weekend binge. Besides, I thought, "he's out there and I'm in here, and I smell vodka." I was concerned deep down; I took this to mean that he was drinking even more than before. Yet, my thoughts went on, "What an ass! He's really trying to ruin himself."

I didn't answer him. I thought if I just lay there quietly, he'd go away. He only became louder and more obnoxious. Then I said, "If you don't go away, I'm going to call the police." This, he knew, was no idle threat, as I had done it once before. But he challenged me with, "You wouldn't do that, would ya?"

"Watch me!" I said as I leaped from the bed to the phone in the living room. Though he couldn't see through the window, he walked over to the porch and looked through the peephole. I was calling information to get the number, and seeing this, he left.

A few days later, he called. I really didn't have much to say to him anymore. "How ya doing?" he asked. A short, flat "fine" was my answer. "Listen, uh, I need to talk to somebody. I did something really stupid." In a roundabout way, he finally reached the point. He used again.

I wanted to say "I told you so" but I tactfully tried to put it into other words. It was inevitable. We have all heard it, over and over again—you can't benefit from the Program if you substitute one drug for another, and alcohol is a drug. And worse, drinking booze will often eventually lead you back to your drug of choice. Feeling empathetic, I decided this time not to be short with him; rather, I tried to let him know that I was there if he needed to talk about it.

Soon afterward, he came by my house to talk. He was ventilating anger and frustration directed toward someone else. "You can't blame others for your using," I told him. "You have to take responsibility for that yourself. Look at yourself, not them," I urged.

The conversation finally centered on his use. He shared a personal dilemma that entered his life shortly after he left treatment—an experience so painful and shameful to him, that he began to drink again. He continued to drink to mask the negative feelings he had about himself, and was soon caught up in this self-hate so much that personal growth seemed impossible.

"So, that happened. Are you going to beat yourself down for it for the rest of your life, or can you forgive yourself? We all make mistakes," I told him. "It's how you deal with these things, how you correct your faults, that makes you a better person."

"I've never been able to forgive myself," he said. It was clear from his expression and the tone in his voice that he sincerely meant those words.

"Well, you've got to, unless you choose to continue on this path of destruction," I said. "You're hurting yourself, and you don't have to keep doing this."

Finally, he admitted, "I've been to the doctors several times this week. I got a whole bunch of stuff, including two prescriptions of codeine. Tomorrow I got an appointment and I'm gonna get some doriden." He also mentioned how he had been trying to establish some connections and how he could forge scripts. All signals of impending self-destruction.

"Look, you made a mistake when you went back to drugs this time," I pointed out. "You don't have to go all the way with this. Most of us in N.A. know that if we have relapsed we can come back, and there will be friends there to accept us with open arms."

How could I convince him that he didn't have to go all the way down with this, when he actually believed he deserved to lose it all?

Close to two hours had passed. Obviously, he wanted help or he would have never come to talk. But his manner was so calm; he had accepted defeat. Nonetheless, I continually encouraged him. With all the sincerity I could manage, "You have to make a decision one way or the other. It's your choice."

"You know," he said to me, "I'd really like to throw those pills away, but I just can't bring myself to do it. I've worked so hard to get them. I want to feel that euphoria."

"Then what?" I asked. "If you really want to throw the pills away, I can help you do that. At least then, you'll be making a decision, for now, for today."

After another long debate, he finally said, "Okay, let's go get the drugs. I wanna flush them."

You can't imagine the feeling of joy in my heart having heard these words. I really didn't expect them. I couldn't help but feel that I helped encourage him to try again, for I feared that if he didn't try, he would lose it all. We've been told time after time that going back to using is always worse than it was before.

There was a long silence as we drove the short distance to his apartment to get the pills, and the silence was even greater as he emptied the vials of the muscle relaxers and codeine into the john. I felt a sense of conviction with my own program, for these were my drugs of choice.

We hugged, and then he calmly said, "Well, I'll see ya soon," and turned to leave. There was a light in his eyes though, and I knew he would be all right.

The next day he called to say he had entered a treatment facility.

For me, having been clean for only eight months, this was a very beautiful experience. There was no question that I cared about this fellow addict, but little did I know that my Higher Power would use me in such an enlightening way. It didn't occur to me until later that I had done a "twelfth step call," and this only reinforces what I've been trying to do all along. It's like they say, "You can't keep what you have unless you give it away!"

*Taken From Tampa Funcoast Clean Times
Tampa, Florida*

Step One

We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Instinctively, I knew something was very wrong in my life. Who could have denied it? I had finally assumed, though, that I was a bad person and that it was just my curse to be unhappy. This self condemnation, of course, only served to add fuel to the fire of self destruction that I seemed determined to make larger.

As a child, I had been strong, courageous, always in control and always ready to help. So as I began smoking pot in high school, I could tell myself that these strong qualities were still mine. I could handle using drugs. Never would they handle me. I remember one summer in my teen years that my mom confronted me about smoking pot too much. When she insisted that I would be happier if I would cut down, say "no" to the entreaties of friends, I did just that. This ability, of course, further convinced me that I was in control. I had no problem. Still, though, I was that bad, unhappy person. It never occurred to me that my addiction was ruling my feelings, controlling my life.

Gradually, I began to use more and more. Drugs were my morning pick-me-up, my afternoon lift, my evening staple. They became indispensable, so much so that whatever values and ethics I had once had, were quickly abandoned: I stole, I lied, I cheated, I willfully wrote bad checks. Friendships and family existed as resources for drugs, not as intimate contacts. I had no choice. I was powerless. I did use and abuse against my will. Yet, even though it was clear that I had reached the point of no return, I believed that pure willpower could get me back to normal life. I was wrong.

Physically, mentally, and spiritually I was battered. The physical aspect was obvious in my looks, my eating habits (or lack thereof)—my placing using above everything else. Mentally, I felt a constant and overpowering obsession with the desire to use. Spiritually, I was lost—lost in myself. This self-centeredness reached its long, greedy arms into all kinds of responses: denial, rationalization, justification, anger, isolation, and cynicism. I had reached the bottom. Positive feelings were but vague shadows. Love, sharing, the beauty of a sunset . . . What were these?

I went into treatment. What is now amazing to me is that I took that step. It certainly wasn't conscious in my mind that I was going to give up drugs. I was running, running from the messes I had made, from the world, from myself. On some gut level, I knew I was out of control.

In treatment, small miracles began to happen. I learned to look at myself differently. I wasn't bad, I was sick. What relief! My walls of defense and denial slowly began to crumble. I learned to surrender. Yet, for those 28 days that I ritually repeated, "my name is J—, and I'm an addict," I still had my doubts about whether that included alcohol. Only after I got out, tested the reality of it and failed, could I totally surrender. Only then could I really accept that an addict is an addict, an escape is an escape is an escape, a drug is a drug is a drug—be it cocaine, pot, alcohol, or whatever.

This surrender, this admission of powerlessness over the **disease**, was my real and necessary taking of the First Step. The second part of Step One—admitting that my life was unmanageable was the easy part. That recognition is what got me into treatment, but that recognition was not enough. Only by admitting total defeat was that huge weight lifted from me. I didn't have to use anymore. I was free; free to rediscover joy, free to feel love, and free to fully live.

J.C.

Taken From New Freedom News
Great Britain Newsletter

Honesty, Openmindedness, Willingness to Try

I arrived at this Fellowship beaten and tired. I never really wanted to become eligible for membership in Narcotics Anonymous, but I did—and how. I went to my first meeting, and through the hazy veil of active addiction I saw that these people had something. I didn't know quite what, but it was something I wanted. And I knew for sure I no longer wanted what I had! They were clean—I never knew the species existed!

The one thing I got pretty quickly was willingness. I got it quickly because I was scared to go back to the life I was living. Through the respectful love and caring of another addict, I was shown that all I had to do was put down that LAST drug and then face withdrawal, my greatest fear. But as it was pointed out at the time, I only had to do it one more time.

I withdrew with two close friends who were in the same position. They helped immensely with mutual encouragement, but what I would have done without the lifeline of meetings I don't know. In fact, I do know. I would have done exactly what I had done so many times before.

Once the physical side of withdrawal was over and I began to feel life in and around me, I was faced with the fear of living and the fear of tomorrow. Sure, I tried "living in today," but I didn't know how. The fear could often become like a blanket of confusion and panic. Willingness allowed me to be open minded enough (only just) to try, tentatively, to pray. Since that time, whenever fear is with me and I can't see the forest for the trees, and I'm thinking I can't cope with life stretching out there in front of me, I pray. I pray to reawaken the awareness that it's not me who has to cope and keep things in place. All I have to deal with is now—my immediate problem. And I can't do this if I'm sitting there working out tomorrow's problems!

If I'm honest, my concept of God is pretty simple: it works, so I do it. I do seem to hear, one way or another, what I need to hear when I really need to hear it. I am restored from my self-made insanity on a regular basis. Don't get me wrong, I have doubts—many—but very slowly, as I listen to others and experience events that are restoring me to sanity, these doubts are being stripped away.

For me honesty is a relief and a release. Honesty with others means I can relax, I don't have to live with the tension of trying to impress, wondering what I've said, "Who was I last time?" and trying to smile (more like a grimace) as I say, "I'm fine," when I'm in hell. Also when I'm honest with others, they can be honest with me and this leads to friendship, care and sometimes love. Through honesty, not only can I see myself in others, but I feel and know that I'm no longer alone. This N.A. thing is where I belong.

Honesty with myself is another (ongoing) story, though if I start hunting for self-honesty, it's a sure bet I won't find it. Honesty can mean the ability to see my own crazy or sick actions and reactions and catch myself and laugh, and not become angry with myself or self-pitying.

My Higher Power kept His side of the bargain that time, but I never kept mine. Did you?

When I came into this Fellowship, I was so desperate to stay clean that I did most things suggested out of sheer fear of the consequences if I didn't. It was suggested that I pray to my Higher Power in the morning for help in staying clean, and then in the evening I thank "Him" for this help. To be quite honest with you, I hadn't the slightest idea what I was praying to!

Then I started to hear other people talk about their concept of "God." I am still developing my idea of a Higher Power. I realize now that I don't have to go off and live in some squat, eating brown rice and getting into meditation, to find a Higher Power.

I have no power over my addiction, my feelings, the results of my actions, other people, places, or things. After a while in recovery, I started to dwell on the first part of this fact, and realized that something had been looking after me all along, holding me by the hand and bringing me through all that difficulty.

It seemed to have far greater power than I ever had, and to be acting out of unconditional love.

At three or four months into recovery, I suddenly became aware that I had not had one thought about using drugs all day, even after five years of heavy using.

Today, when I pray on my knees I try to believe in what I am praying to. Praying no longer means wearing holes in my jeans either. Sometimes it means smiling or being positive when I don't feel like it, or talking to a newcomer when there's a really good looking blonde on the other side of the room who I'd rather go and "help."

As time goes on, I become more and more aware of just how much I need this Fellowship and the love you all offer me. To anyone in any doubt about this Fellowship and what it has to offer, just be willing to believe it . . . The best is yet to come.

J.V.

Up Your Bottom

When I was first introduced to N.A., I really didn't think I was a drug addict. Does anyone? After all, a big part of this disease is denial. The drugs were still working for me and I still had my wife, two cars, apartment and a darn good paying job. I was just about to give all these up except for my job because I knew I could do better.

In what seemed to be a moment's time (a moment of clarity) I thought about all the times I was going to stop using and couldn't. I thought about all the money I was spending on drugs and what I could have if I had put that money to good use. Guilt had set in. I thought about the business I was embezzling money from and more guilt set in and the paranoia of getting caught shook me. I know now that this moment of clarity came from a Higher Power which I choose to call God, but it was still not enough. God had more work to do on me that night.

I went home and started another fight with my wife. Her father, brother and a cop came over and tried to kick me out of the apartment. Then someone called me a drug addict. Was this Higher Power trying to tell me something or what? I told everyone that I would be okay for the night and I would seek help. Of course my sick head told me all I needed was a rest and this was a good opportunity to run from my problems again. So I checked in at a hospital for my well-deserved rest.

This hospital introduced me to N.A. (Thank God!) I had a hard time believing the doctors, therapist and psychiatrist. I thought they were there to brainwash me into thinking I was a drug addict so they could make money off me. The first couple of N.A. meetings were a real laugh. I was so busy listening to how different I was I didn't hear the similarities. I mean I never went to jail, I never did anything bad enough to go to jail, I never lost a job because of drugs, I never hurt people, etc. . . (talk about denial!).

I did my First Step which showed me that the more my disease progressed, the more power and control it had in my life. The more drugs I did the less manageable my life became. I could see as the years of using went by, I cared less and less about what I did to other people and myself to get a fix. I did some pretty awful things, but I still hadn't done all the terrible things I heard at meetings.

The hospital I was in insisted I go to meetings even though I was still fighting the fact that I was a drug addict.

Somewhere around my fourth or fifth N.A. meeting, God knew my sick head was telling me I was well, that I was now rested and it was time to leave the hospital and go out and play some more. So my Higher Power sent this person who had just come back from relapse to share his experience with me at this meeting. He sounded a lot like me in that he hadn't done a whole lot of harm to people, was never in jail before and he felt like he didn't belong in N.A. because none of these bad things had happened to him. That was when he decided to go back out. Well, guess what? He got to do all those things he never did before. He ended by saying, "If drugs have caused one problem in your life, you can stop using now or you can continue and do all those things you hear about but haven't done yet."

After hearing his story and reviewing my First Step, I accepted the fact that I was a drug addict and became thankful that I didn't have to do all those things I haven't done yet. Which keeps my bottom where it's at. I also realized it was only a matter of time if I kept using that I too would get worse and get the chance to do all the things I haven't done yet.

Now, when I find myself feeling better than others because of their past, all I have to do is say to myself, "I haven't done that—yet." This helps me to listen to their story and helps me to see where I could be if I continued to use. It makes me grateful I stopped and keeps my bottom where it's at (in a chair at an N.A. meeting).

P.L.



Sponsorship

is

Friendship



My sponsor is my best friend. She is my confident. She is my best sounding board for those things inappropriate, or too personal to share in the rooms. My sponsor is the greatest thing since paper napkins. Yet, she is human and just another recovering addict.

Just as friendship is a two-way street, so sponsorship is a two-way street of give and take. I not only share with her, she shares with me. I share my joy and pain, and she shares hers.

She has never told me what to do or what not to do. She shares her experience, strength, and hope with me. She suggests things to me (sometimes strongly), and gives me the freedom to decide what I want to do. And when I fall she is there to help pick up the pieces, and she is there to share my joy, and I can be there for her too.

My sponsor is a very big part of my recovery. She has taught me about friendship—how to be a friend and how to have a friend. As a friend, she can help me, if I allow her to by letting her into my life. I don't even really see her as "Sponsor." She is my friend.

This letter is for you, beautiful—you give me total joy and I'm very grateful that God put you into my life.

I love you and I need you, my friend.

A friend today

How Fast Do Your Feet Move?

I came to this Program very sick. That is not to imply that I'm now well by any stretch of the imagination, but at least now I seem to be able to look at things that affect me with a little more clarity and perspective. What I have noticed since making this Program a way of life is the tendency of people in the Fellowship to practice the thirteenth step. Many people are so adept at it, in fact, that you can't even see their feet move. We of this Fellowship tend to know our character defects all too well, but I feel that sometimes we don't seriously attempt to change them, using the tired rationale: "I'm still sick: what do you expect from a sick person?"

If you put two sick people of the opposite sex, (or same sex, for that matter) together, there is a tendency to revert to old patterns, habits, and behaviors. Moving in on newcomers who are still in much confusion over their own identity and the goals of recovery is to do them grave injury. It is imperative that we give the newcomer (the most important person, according to the N.A. Basic Text) a chance to get to know themselves in recovery. A newly recovering addict usually doesn't require much excuse to turn back to his or her old, destructive ways. We can absolve ourselves of guilt by saying that it takes two to have a relationship. But in the case of the thirteenth step, one of those two is definitely the sicker, and that one is NOT the newcomer.

Anonymous

Distant Cousins

When I came back to Cornwall six months into my recovery, I brought a bit of N.A. literature with me and went to an A.A. meeting. I thought that would be how I worked my program in Cornwall. At the time, I genuinely felt much too weedy and wet to start an N.A. group. God, however, had other ideas. I happened to mention after an A.A. meeting something about N.A., and a suffering addict overheard me.

Within three days, we had the first meeting of the Falmouth group of Narcotics Anonymous. That was just under two weeks after I moved back to Cornwall. If God wants you to go to meetings, to meetings shall you go!

It has been, and continues to be, hard work for all four of us, as we grow together in recovery. But our individual commitment is high, so our collective commitment is very high. After much hard work and heartache, we now meet in a public room at the YMCA in Arwenack St., Falmouth, Thursdays from 7:30 to 9:30. There's nowhere to make tea and no smoking anywhere in the building, but everyone else gave us a blank so there we are.

This month we're sending our GSR to the ASC meeting in Bristol, and we have established contact with the groups in Plymouth and Torquay. We've had lots of encouragement, support, and offers from individual members, the H&I committee, the Bristol and London ASC's, J— whatever-his-title-is, and the International Committee. We also owe much gratitude to the members of other Twelve Step Fellowships here in Cornwall who helped us get on our way, and to the helpline who sends us referrals.

Good to be clean today.

R—
London, England

Another Grim Reaper

Death just walked out my door. It was not the tattered, black-cloaked dude with the grizzly gray beard and the razor-sharp scythe. No scabbed and skeletal finger pointed in my direction and no ghoulish voice beckoned me to follow. But it was a grim reaper just the same, and the effect was terrifying.

It was in the eyes, normally bright and filled with a mischievous twinkle, now dulled by remorse. It was in the slurred words and the absence of the laughter that has lifted me from despair so many times. Gone was the quick wit and mirror-image sarcasm that had cheered me on those gloomy days of self-will run riot.

Yet the unknown person of usual proud and erect posture slumping in the chair before me was no stranger; he was a fellow addict who for months had managed to help me grow in my recovery by reminding me of the importance of honesty, who had eased my own pain through his empathy, who re-emphasized to me that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel, and who shared experience, strength, and hope as the old mental attitude of distrust was crushed by the growing bond of friendship based on recovery.

It's frustrating for me to attempt to relate to a normally sharp mind momentarily dulled by active addiction and accept my powerlessness. It hurts when I realize that I am not talking to the person I have grown to love and respect, but to a cunning and baffling alter-ego incapable of seeing past the fog of active addiction. It's hard not to start projecting and obsess over which of the three obvious paths of active addiction my friend will follow. Will it be jails? institutions? death?

But the biggest pain comes from the realization that active addiction can destroy the feelings of love, trust, empathy, happiness, and all those other previously unknown qualities, and as the feelings go, friendships end. The ties of recovery, caring, and sharing that bind us together no longer remain stronger than active addiction that will tear us apart, leaving nothing behind but the memories of good times shared in recovery one day at a time the N.A. way.

I am fortunate that the past few 24 hours have left me with a lot of good memories, totally unlike those I can conjure up of the years of my active addiction—these old images gradually fade into oblivion. But the image of walking death that carried my friend away last night will haunt me for a long, long time.



Addicts on Asphalt



Recently, the Iowa City area has been refining the art of "traveling meetings" (not from house to house, but in transit from city to city). After the last regional on January 19th, addicts from Iowa City decided to hit the road—literally.

Soon trips to Muscatine and Cedar Rapids became frequent. On one occasion we were on the road to a dance in Cedar Rapids, late as usual. A thermos was passed from cup to cup. At first, conversation was light, but soon it turned to recovery. We talked of gratitude for being clean and the promise of good fellowship ahead. All four travelers expressed the need for a meeting.

We said the serenity prayer. Out of the blue, a newcomer, D—, said "Welcome to our semiregular Addicts on Asphalt meeting." We all laughed and the name has stuck ever since. The meeting proceeded as any other, and the sharing was some of the best we've ever had. We approached Cedar Rapids, somewhat regretting that we didn't have further to go. When we arrived at the dance, we all got out of the car, formed a circle and said the closing prayer followed by lots of hugs.

These "Addicts on Asphalt" meetings have brought unity to both the Iowa City area as well as unity between neighboring areas.

We from the Iowa City area would like to encourage any recovering addict to join in the sharing, caring and fellowship as "Addicts on Asphalt." Start one up—it's worth the trip!

Hug a Stranger

This week I attended a meeting where a man raised his hand and identified himself as a newcomer to that meeting. The secretary made the announcement that newcomers should keep quiet and stick around after the meeting and talk to people. When the meeting was over, as I was helping to clean the meeting place; I saw the man who had announced that he was a newcomer standing by himself in a corner looking awkward and very uncomfortable. I went over and introduced myself and started to talk with him. He told me that he had been to two other meetings besides this one and that no one had ever approached him before.

Folks, we can't help the still-suffering addict with just good wishes. Our friendships within the Fellowship are good. Socializing after a meeting is great. But small talk and gossip ought to wait until we carry the message. Everyone always assumes that someone else will talk to a newcomer (and luckily someone usually does), but if you really want to stay clean the N.A. way, the next time you see somebody standing alone after a meeting, whether you've seen them before or not, introduce yourself. Ask how they're doing and spread the message. Some people are shy or have a hard time communicating. Some people are afraid of other people, even after they've been coming to meetings for awhile. We might think that they're arrogant or trying to act cool, when they're really just intimidated or don't know what to say.

If we just hang out with our friend, N.A. will turn into a social club. You, the individual, we N.A. will turn into a closed social club. You, the individual—we, N.A.—show our gratitude, keep ourselves clean, and do ourselves a favor. Talk to that new comer. Talk to that non-using, but still suffering addict within the Fellowship. Hug a stranger or a loner today and he or she might be a recovering friend tomorrow.

A Grateful N.A.
Member

They are the thing I searched for all of my life, in bottles, bags, and nameless faces. I finally found it in an N.A. meeting. I found it in you—not by taking from you, but by giving to you. I have learned that these gifts are mine if I am willing to give God my fear, habits and desperation, what a bargain. "I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. God's given me life that I might enjoy all things."

Thank you God, for those who had to die so I could live. For them I am filled with love and gratitude. Thank you for the choice I have today. I choose life with all of its highs and lows, with all its laughter and tears, with all of its pain and growth.

I choose life!!!

In love and
gratitude,
B.B.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is probably one of the most satisfying "musts" in my program. First of all, it is such a gratifying feeling to have my Higher Power choose me to help by reaching out to another recovering addict in times of confusion, and to let us work it out between the three of us. It is always first and foremost to keep in my daily program the realization that I am just a member of the team, and God is running the show. This awareness usually keeps me in line. I keep in perspective just how important I am in the grand scheme of it all. It also helps keep a very large ego in check. I have yet to experience a sponsorship relationship with anyone whom God did not let touch my life in a profound way, and enrich my N.A. Program as well.

When I first considered sponsoring a fellow member, I had to look at where I was in my own recovery. How could I tell someone to trust in God if I did not? How could I tell someone about a Fourth Step, without my own Fourth Step in hand? One thing that makes N.A. work is that it is not a "tell me" Program—it is a "show me a new way of living" Program.

Through sharing and letting me know I was not the worst person to be created, I came to believe that if I just stayed one more day, maybe I could make it. This is what my sponsor gave me through the grace of my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God. My sponsor showed me that if I just extend the hand of N.A. in a caring and sharing way how can I possibly see myself as a loser.

R.H.



I Choose Life

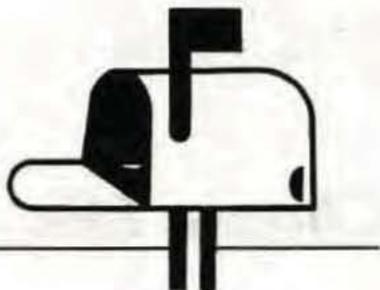
This is a letter of gratitude and love for all of the gifts I've been given in my recovery. Thank you God for the choice I have today. I choose life with all of its highs and lows, with all of its laughter and tears, with all of its pain and growth. I choose life!

For all those years I survived on animal instinct, driven only by my fears, habits and desperation. Searching, always searching for a part of me I couldn't seem to find. I looked everywhere—in the bottom of a bottle, in the bottom of a bag, in the end of a needle. I thought the thing I sought must be in "Him" and so I took them one by one into my bed (for I felt I had nothing else to offer). And one by one, the search became more desperate.

Does anyone remember what it feels like to commit suicide one day at a time? I shall never forget. All I had left when it ended was fear, habits and desperation. I believe today they were gifts from God. Because of them I came to this Program broken but willing, beaten but with a desire to do anything to change my life. The only thing I was certain of that day in September of 1981 was this: Any kind of life was better than the one I had, and if recovery—the last-ditch effort at life—didn't work, the solution was clear. I would have to kill myself, because I just couldn't live like that any more. Suicide, one day at a time . . .

I left my first meeting with a tiny bit of hope, and I didn't even know that I had found a piece of that thing I had been looking for all of my life. I've found many other pieces since then. Besides hope there is honesty and willingness, faith and humility, acceptance, trust and love. Together they are serenity.

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

Your plea to generate new subscriptions for the N.A. Way came at a timely moment. We in Flint, Michigan have been busy raising money to buy N.A. Basic Texts for the shelves of area libraries. Your plea, and the enthusiasm of the library administrator on receiving the Basic Texts, prompted us to ask if libraries might also accept our gift. Although it is clear that we have more fundraising to do in this area. Please find enclosed the address of the first library on our list and a check for one subscription.

We would like to take a moment to encourage other N.A. groups and service committees around the world to consider similar efforts.

Such endeavors will not only bolster the circulation of our magazine and insure its continuance but provide a unique way to carry our message: "Addicts Do Recover."

R.W.
Michigan

Dear N.A. Way,

The other day I picked up an N.A. Way and put it in my purse. Later on, I took it out and read it. I felt like I'd been to a meeting when I put it down. I had this secure, hopeful, warm glow in my heart. I am a newcomer, although I first came to N.A. ten years ago. There was not a complete willingness or acceptance in me ten years ago like I feel now. I'm in treatment now, and when I first got here, four

months ago, I beat myself over and over for not latching on when I first had the chance.

Since then, I've forgiven myself. I've been learning about the disease, and understanding that I just wasn't ready. And I believe being ready is crucial.

Now I am finding such strength and hope in the N.A. meeting I'm allowed to attend. It is the real highlight of my week. One of my plans, when I do leave treatment, is to attend many N.A. meetings, and give in any way I can to the suffering addict.

A few weeks ago, I become "literature person" of this meeting. I had to laugh at myself, at how absolutely excited I got over this. It is such a small duty that I tend to think it's nothing to be thrilled about. But thrilled I am. I want so much to be a part of N.A. and one of the "winners" on the program, that even the smallest chore is a turn-on for me.

Someone here in treatment asked me who is my best friend. My answer was that I want the N.A. program and myself to be my best friend. This I remember thinking, up in detox, when I was at the end of my rope. Drugs (in any form, including booze) were my best friends for years. Day after day, searching for, spending money on, stealing and living for, the freedom and love I experience now, each day clean.

I just love this program, and never thought I'd feel this way. I always thought I'd just never make it. I just couldn't believe I could live free from drugs. I could always get off for awhile, but then, I'd still smoke a joint, or take three or four cold capsules. Anything to take the edge off.

The miracle I'm experiencing now is a real delight in being clean. Each day, I'm amazed. Amazed to be alive and happy, discovering who I am, and what my positives and negatives are. Amazed to have absolutely no desire to use, I sometimes wonder where that went, for it is truly gone. Then, I just tell myself that I'd really had enough. Sick and tired of it all, and truly ready at last.

I love the people that talk to me, and hug me after meetings. I feel like I'm coming ALIVE! I love those who don't (or haven't yet) talked to me, I love those that have gone before me, and share what they have gone through with me. I love this program and the Twelve Steps. The steps and my recovery are my

number one priority now. And I'm very happy with that.

I've never felt so committed in my life, and this commitment is to myself and the program.

I thank God for N.A. and all the N.A. members, for keeping this program thriving. If not for all you wonderful, special, beautiful people, I'd have no where to go. I feel very "at home" in N.A., the first time I felt that in my 28 years on this planet. I owe it all to the steps and N.A.

Aloha,
C.L.
Hawaii

Dear N.A. Way:

Just received the July issue of the N.A. Way and promptly read it cover to cover. I eagerly await each and every issue and would like to express my sincere thanks to all responsible for this wonderful, informative publication. I am never disappointed and never fail to read something I need.

I would like to address the addict who wrote the article "Principles Before Personalities" (July '85). I too believe that speaking of one's sponsees or even sponsors in the ways pointed out in the article—over coffee, in amusement, etc.—is most definitely a violation of the spirit of anonymity. Idle chatter or gossip of this nature can only hurt all those involved. Announcing your sponsor or who you are sponsoring is also another form of ego or gossip.

I believe at one time or another many of us have participated to some extent or another in such acts. This is a good reminder for each of us to take a good look at ourselves, get honest, and stop such gossip or stop taking part in such gossip. We might even feel like removing ourselves from any such situations and kindly point out to those sharing in these practices our views. Confrontation is sometimes required to get us to look at ourselves.

Thank you again.

A Grateful Addict
St. Charles, MO



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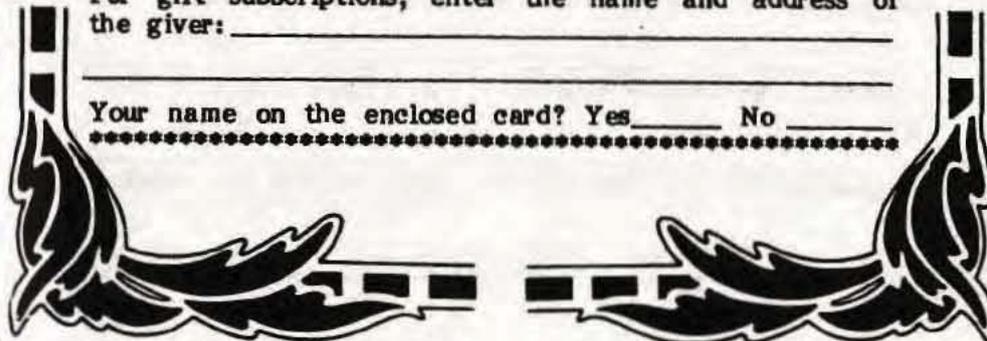
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Comin' Up

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.

CALIFORNIA: Sept 28, 8 pm; Love & Hugs Without Drugs Day; King Kenedy Center, 601 Franklin, Modesto; 209-577-8905

2) Oct 25-27; 7th Annl S Cal Conv; Hyatt Hotel LAX; Stu 805-584-1135; Terry 213-370-9875; Preston 714-761-3222; Bridget 818-762-2305

CANADA: Oct 4-5; Bilingual Convention; College Marie-Victorin; 7000 Marie-Victorin, Montreal, Quebec; INFO: 514-845-1035

CONNECTICUT: Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; Mike or Al 203-347-7856

INDIANA: Nov 1-3; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indy; Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206; 317-Terry 873-3295; Micky 873-6519;

IRELAND: Oct 25-27; Ireland's First Convention; Dublin Sport Hotel; Kilterman, Co Dublin, Tel: 893631; PO Box 1368, Sherriff St Dublin

MICHIGAN: Sept 7; Unity Dance; St. Andrew's Church, 1922 Iowa St., Flint; Ron or Tracy 238-3636

MINNESOTA: Sept 21; Twin Cities' 2nd Annl N.A. Banquet; St. Louis Park Community Ctr. Hwy & Wooddale Ave., St. Paul; Jimmy 612-374-9070

2) Oct 19; 4th Annl Fargo-Moorhead N.A. Banquet; Comstock Memorial Union, MSU, Moorhead; PO Box 3243, Fargo, ND 58108; 701 Rita 232-3543, Mike 235-3752 (Kick off meeting 18th 10 pm St Mark's, 670 4th Ave N. Fargo)

NEBRASKA: Oct 11-13; Nebraska RCNA-II; Best Western Airport Inn; Lincoln; 402-475-9541; PO Box 83615, Lincoln, NE 68501

OHIO: Sept 21; Unity Day; St. Pat's, W 38th & Woodbine, Cleveland

OREGON: Oct 11-13; 8th Annl Pacific NW Conv for NA; Valley River Inn, Eugene; 503-Martin or Susan 485-1397; Rick 746-7466; Doug 689-7711

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct 25-27; Tri-State RCNA III; Ptsbrgh, PA; Airport Hltn Inn; 412-Carmina 695-7333; Terry 681-4532; Yvonne 304-232-5858;

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov 1-3; Serenity Festival III; Myrtle Beach, SC; Jeff F. 919-746-3583; Michael D. 803-762-1690

TENNESSEE: Nov 27-Dec 1; Volunteer RCNA; Benchmark Hotel, 164 Union Ave, Memphis, TN; 901-Bill 525-4798; Gene 454-1313; Joseph 529-8779

WISCONSIN: Oct 11-13; 2nd annl Wise Conv; Wausau Holiday Inn; Box 502, Wausau 54401; 715-Heidi 845-5545; Bob 675-6673; Marilyn 675-2563