



THE N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

April 1988 \$1.50

The Seventh Tradition: Can We Live With It?

p. 24

New N.A. Horizons

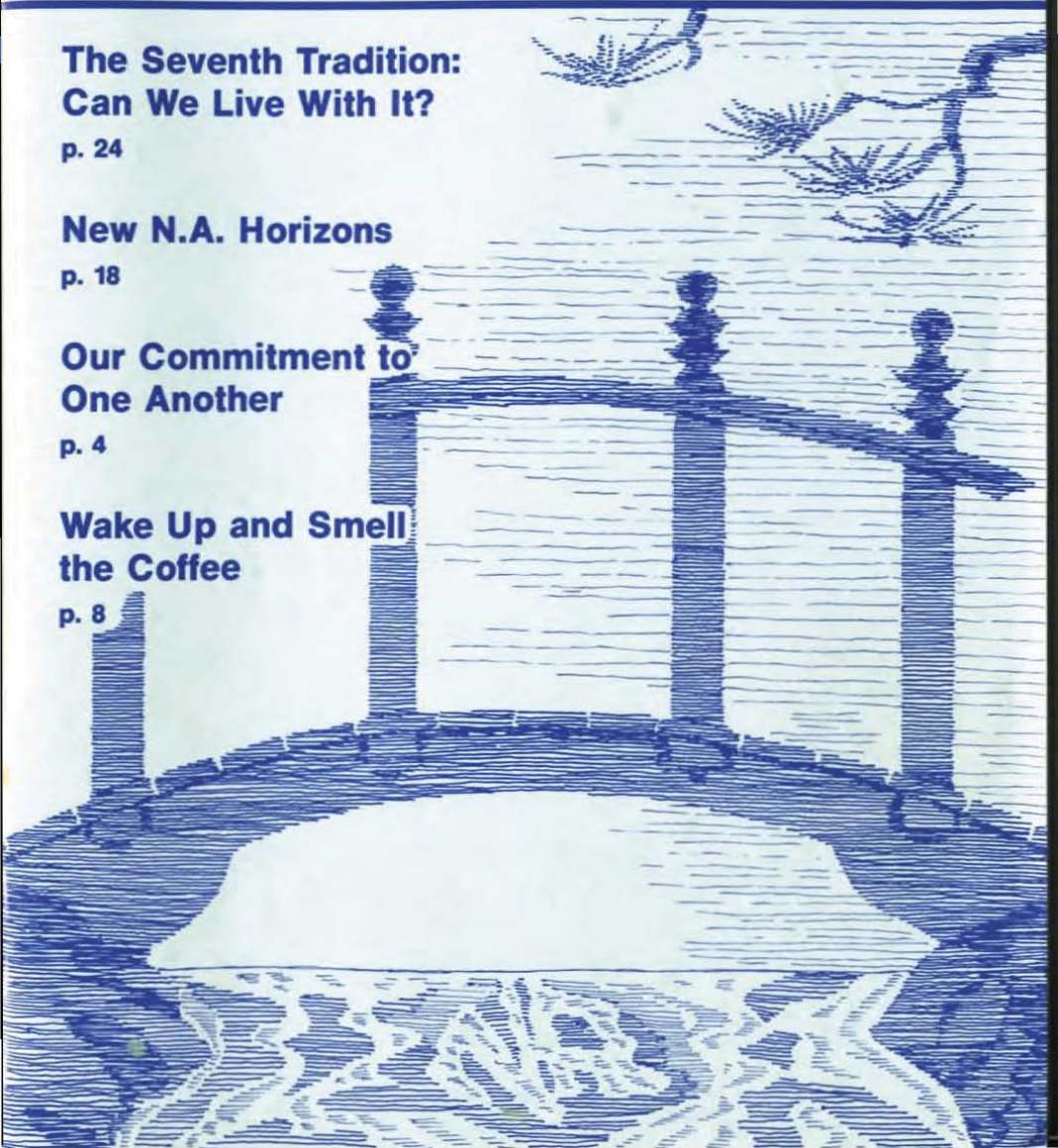
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Our Commitment to One Another

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Wake Up and Smell the Coffee

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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 these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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THE N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

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Inventory: discovering and disclosing

Probably the most important actions I have taken in my recovery were in Steps Four and Five. That's where I discovered who I was and revealed my deepest secrets. It was a risk that was well worth the effort. The benefits from these actions were amazing. These steps helped change the way I felt about my past.

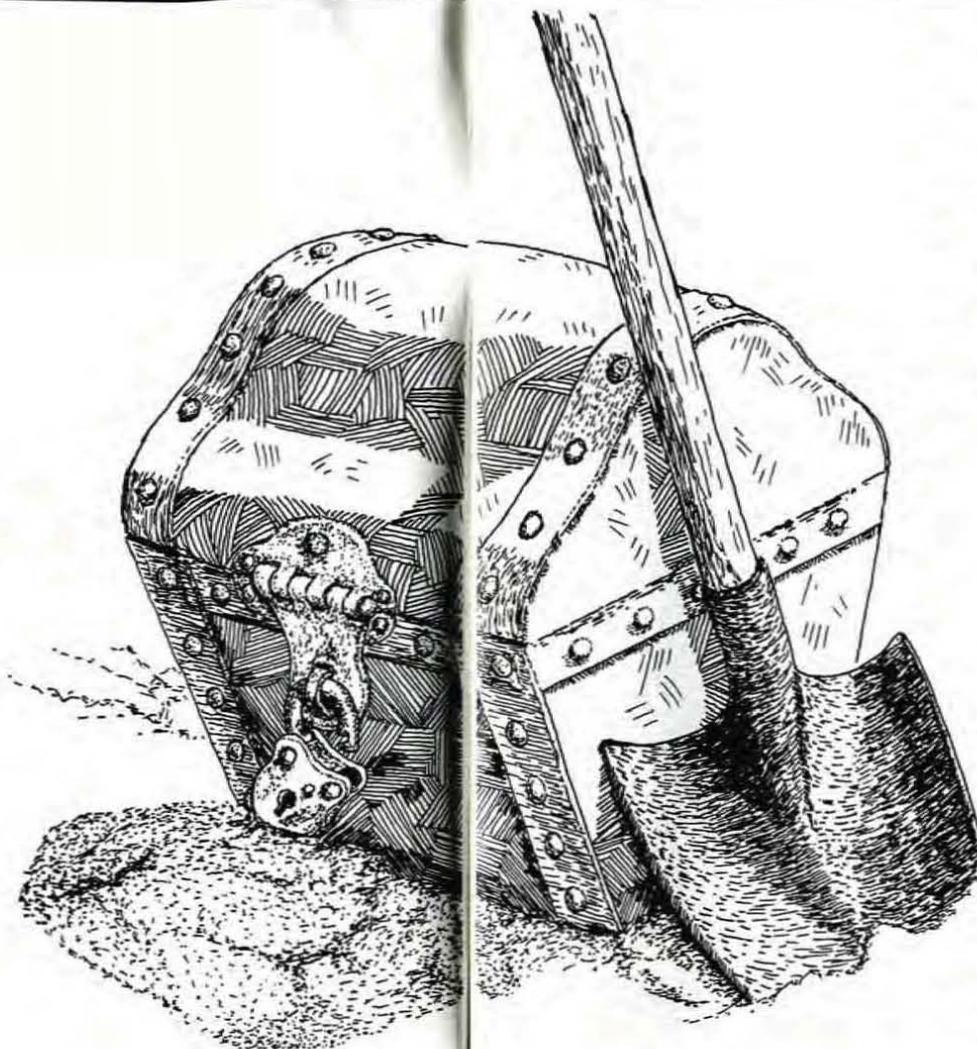
I did not know what to expect when I started to write my Fourth Step inventory. I knew that I had decided to let God manage my will and life, and that my sponsor was available to help. With these tools I could be fearless. I began to write.

I was able to search as far back as early childhood to discover some of the problems I had experienced. The same types of difficulties continuously repeated themselves throughout the inventory. I saw in black and white my patterns of action and reaction.

I wrote about the troubles I experienced with personal relationships. I examined my resentments: how they affected me, where I was at fault. I looked at my sexual behavior and discovered how great a part lust

played in my sexual life.

When I wrote about my attitudes toward employment and personal responsibility, I discovered how lazy I was. When I examined my outlook on materialism, I found out how greedy, jealous and envious I was. I determined that self-centeredness was the core of my problems. I wrote down my self-centered fears, and discovered that the fears of rejection and of being unloved and inadequate blocked my



ability to become spiritual and to trust others.

It took honesty, vigorous action, and the help of God and my sponsor for me to do this inventory. After having written the Fourth Step inventory, I discovered that I had gained courage of a spiritual nature, the courage to trust another human being and admit my wrongs.

When it was time for me to take the

Fifth Step I had no doubt about whom I would trust—it was my sponsor. My sponsor suggested just before we began that we pray for God's presence during the Fifth Step. As I began to open up and reveal myself, I started to feel the presence of my Higher Power more deeply.

I shared the things I had hidden deep inside my inner self that I thought were so awful; I held nothing back. I was honest to myself and

"As I began to open up and reveal myself, I started to feel the presence of my Higher Power more deeply."

another person, probably for the first time in my life. I admitted my selfishness, lustfulness and dishonesty. My sponsor also opened up; his sharing gave me the perspective to see the exact nature of my wrongs.

Step Five was truly a humbling, spiritual experience that revealed to me just how powerful the God of my understanding really is. It was a cleansing of my spirit. After the admission of my wrongs I was at peace with myself, and I experienced personal freedom. I knew that no matter what happened to me, I had the courage and the integrity to handle it. The obsession to use drugs was relieved and replaced with an honest desire to change my personality. I am very grateful to Narcotics Anonymous for showing me this new way of life.

Anonymous, Georgia

A personal commitment to service

In the December 1987 issue's "From the Editor" section, we talked some about our interest in features on N.A. communities around the world. Even before that issue went to press, one of our readers phoned to share with us the local N.A. community's excitement about an experiment in N.A. service that had produced some surprising results. After a few calls back and forth, we received the following story.

The issue of commitment concerns each one of us, particularly with regard to service. I know for myself how easy it is to get fired up at a service committee meeting. I'll volunteer right and left with all the unconditional enthusiasm and sincerity of the moment, only to find myself three weeks later battling a nagging sense of guilt at having accomplished little or nothing.

Just before the last RSC meeting, I was feverishly copying the minutes I had promised to mail six weeks ear-



lier. It occurred to me that I had no personal investment in this rather tedious task. At that moment I was not experiencing the *we* I had heard so much about. And then something came to me: it is not only my *right* to recover today the N.A. way, but my *responsibility*.

Armed with this new realization, I approached the other members of our regional public information committee

with a proposal. What if each of us, out loud, committed ourselves on a personal level to one another and to the committee's work? After a deep breath, I made the first pledge myself and then waited for God's will. (There is no more silent a silence than that kind of wait.)

One by one, each member raised their hand, some with open, smiling faces, some with trepidation, but all admitting to God and to another human being the exact nature of their commitment. At the end, we had a truly unified group conscience. This unity immediately changed the atmosphere of the committee meeting. That unity was solidified by the formation of a telephone tree, the first call to be made by the acting chair of the committee. He was to call the person seated to his left at some date in the near future who would then, in turn, telephone the person to their left, and so on.

I'm happy to report that, so far, it works! This has been apparent to me especially with regard to the minutes. Making up minutes had once seemed a boring chore, begrudgingly performed in the name of duty. That job has magically been transformed into a labor of love.

I've been told that the strain on a random group of "I's" operating around the region had caused many promises to be left unfulfilled. That kind of burn-out had reduced the P.I. committee to but two veteran members.

In light of this, the spiritual rejuvenation and profound change in attitude experienced in our committee seems to be especially timely. Even though we are a mostly freshman P.I.

committee—except for the chair and the vice-chair—we hope to carry a strong message of hope and recovery *among ourselves first*, which we can then send forth into the region at large.

We're all looking forward to the next RSC meeting, having been forti-

"One by one, each member admitted to God and to another human being the exact nature of their commitment."

fied by two interim meetings among ourselves. (These meetings were not only inspirational, but fun!) The group consensus seems to be that the power of God's will is most strongly felt in our communion—that feeling of something *greater* than ourselves *among* ourselves—and that the motivation to become actively involved is further reinforcing itself every time we meet.

We have committed ourselves to let this unfold in God's time, not in ours. Our excitement is strengthened by the belief that we are acting in harmony with the steps and traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

Anonymous, Massachusetts

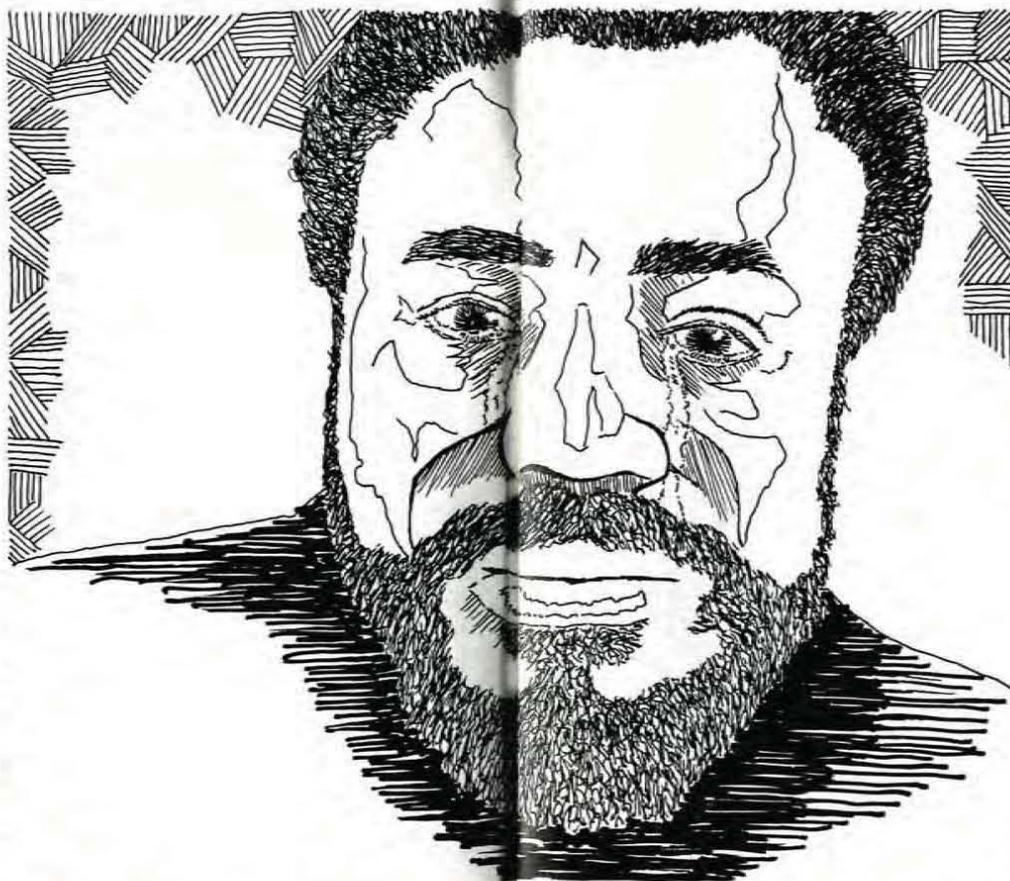
Has your group, area or region come upon any surprising solutions to service problems? Have you completed any projects? Put your experiences down on paper and into the mail, or give us a call at the N.A. Way. Share it with the rest of us!

Honesty ends isolation

I'm clean tonight—no, I'm alive tonight—because of the spiritual principles and the love in this fellowship we call N.A. Five days ago I was attending my home group's sixth anniversary celebration. I was suffering, thinking about just how much had changed during that time. I had the magnifying glass dead centered on *me*, obsessed with thoughts of how these changes had affected me already and how they would continue to effect me.

I became more and more jammed up. Feelings of insecurity and loneliness filled my thoughts and actions. I fled into self-imposed isolation—I thought I didn't trust anyone, but really I didn't trust myself. I became filled with fear. The macho man, "I'm all right" stuff I had used for years just wasn't kicking in! I sat through the meeting feeling detached, yet knowing I could be a part of everything if I wanted to be.

After the meeting I started cleaning up the meeting place, as usual. But I



was thinking, "I'm hiding again; I can't talk to these people. Damn, where did I go wrong? I'm hopeless. I just don't care anymore." As I walked out of this meeting toward my car, I thought, "This is the first time I have ever left my home group without giving a goodnight hug to everyone I could."

As I got near my car, I saw all the way across the parking lot the only person I could have allowed to save me from sure-as-hell destruction. My disease was stronger than ever. Thoughts of getting in my car and speeding away, and "I'll show them," raced through my mind. I guess the "God of our understanding" chose to

walk me past my car and into his arms, weeping like a child that had just found his way home after being lost in the woods. He held me, and told me I'd be okay. He insisted that I come to his apartment, and I agreed that that was a good idea.

As we were walking toward my car, I told him, "I think I'm going to use tonight." For the first time in three years and eleven months, I really meant it. And then another familiar thought I haven't had for about that long hit me hard and clear: "No. I can't use successfully. I'm going to kill myself instead. I just don't care anymore."

We made it back to his place. I can't really describe what happened there, other than to say that two other members and I got in touch with our true feelings. The macho-man crap wasn't needed anymore. I realized that I needed to be real, to get honest. I had spent a long time in my recovery sharing half-truths, and worse yet, being so convinced I was all right that I didn't know when I wasn't.

I had created an atmosphere of recovery for everyone but me. I

"I'm hiding again; I can't talk to these people. Damn, where did I go wrong?"

needed to apply the principles which I had been so quick to explain to others. I had felt like I couldn't share honestly at meetings because you wouldn't understand, or worse yet, you might think the program doesn't work. Somewhere along the line I took on the responsibility of convincing you that the program works instead of getting honest and letting you see it work.

No, I didn't use that night, and obviously I didn't kill myself either, but through that kind of pain I have experienced growth. I know what to do. What's going to be hard now is to get humble and do it. I have to put myself back where I belong: I'm an addict, the same as you. I hurt. It's time I let you all know that.

B.S., Pennsylvania

Reality

As hours meld into months, and years pass, I am learning that a clear view of reality is my birthright. I'm seeing more clearly the reality of the mess I made of my life while I lived for my addiction: the reality of this prison cell where I compose this offering for you. I know only too well where drugs have taken me.

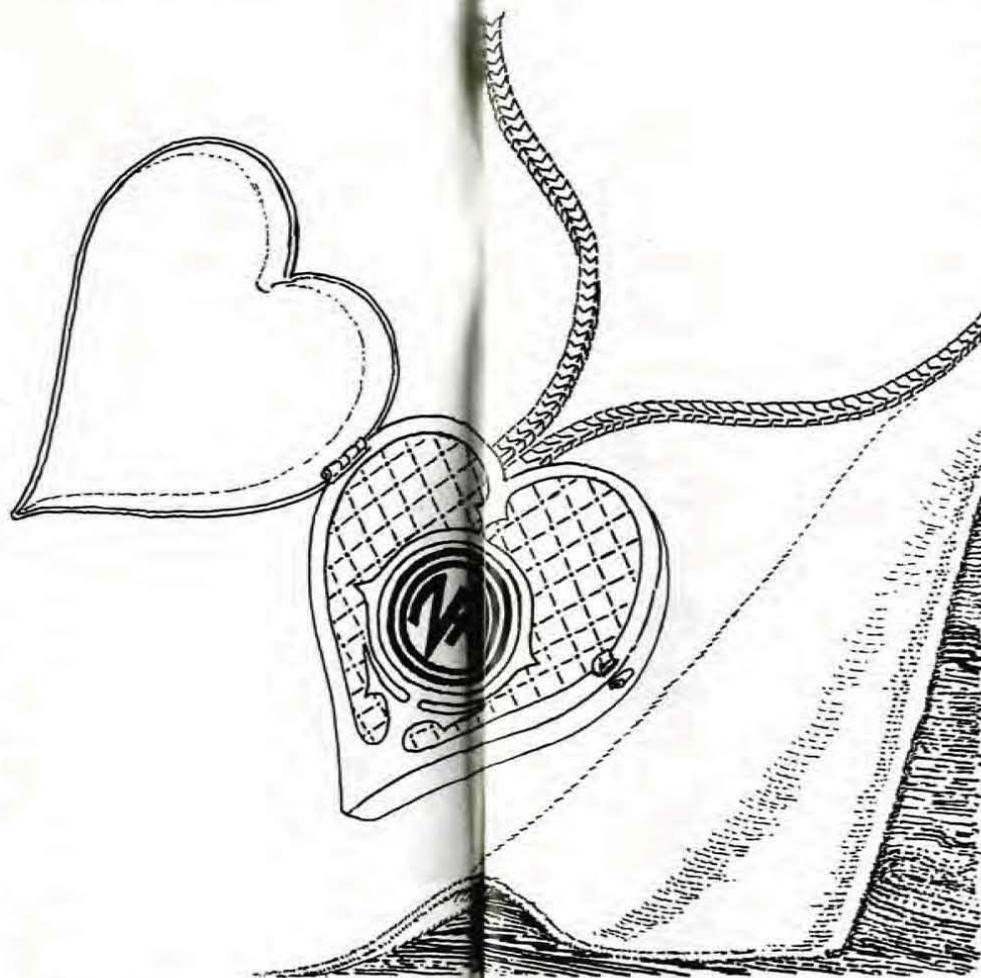
Some twenty-one years ago I started out on a journey that would take me through six prisons, capped by an overdose in which I died and was brought back to face my own living hell and sixteen years of incarceration. I'm a con who's paid his dues, fought a war against a power greater than myself, and come out of it with my sanity restored! I couldn't do it by myself, and I give full credit to this program and my Higher Power (God). I've gotten a good dose of reality from all this, and today I want to share some of that reality with you.

You see, I'm that guy who stole your valuables, that special locket your grandma left you when she passed away. Yeah, the guy who broke into your house and took your stereo and TV, so I could buy drugs. I'm the guy who wanted to kill all the cops in the

world, and who considered every one a lame, a wimp.

So how do you like me now? Probably about as much as I liked myself. After all, what was there to like? I lived to use drugs and abuse myself and society. I acted hard and tough so you wouldn't see just how much I hurt, or how scared I really was.

My dream was to live on a mountain of the purest drugs, "maxxed out" ever after. Well, needless to say I never reached that goal. Instead the cops rescued me from myself once



again, and this time the judge gave me twelve years.

Reality! The difference this time is you, the program of N.A., a seed that's sprouted and taken root within me. The difference is my Higher Power. In the faces of the people in this program I have come to see the one thing I have always wanted. Through your words, I have come to learn about a life where I could wake up still in possession of the treasures of the day past.

I don't know what was so special

about this time, but somehow I came to believe. Today I have so many blessings and rewards. I like who I am and I live without fear. I look out of this tiny slit of a window and I see a beautiful day. I go to a meeting here

"I'm that guy who stole that special locket your grandma left you. So how do you like me now?"

and I experience love. I read and write, and slowly it's revealed to me that my God is not the kind I have to wind up on Sundays. Each day He teaches me a little more about how to live.

Today when I experience pain, I know it's because I'm hearing just what I want to hear and disregarding the best. I realize that through this pain I will gain growth. Imagine even me—the one society had labelled scum—finding peace, friendship and love. It boggles my mind and brings tears to my eyes. All I have to do is be willing to not use, no matter what, and to practice the principles of this program in all my affairs.

I am within days of having a year clean, and the fog is clearing from my once dead brain. I'm in prison, but I have so much to give thanks for today.

N.A. cares; I see and feel that clearly today. We care; that's our birthright. And *that's* reality!

L.W., California

Becoming entirely ready

I am an addict who avoids taking positive action, always looking for the easier way out of my pain. In the past, I have wanted to write something for the fellowship through the *N.A. Way*, but my false humility kept speaking to me, telling me that I had nothing of value to say.

I have found that I cannot work the Sixth Step and persist in letting my disease run my life. Instead of simply believing in the power of recovery, I have intellectualized my way into desperate moves that have led to isolation. In discovering this, I have taken a positive step in becoming entirely ready.

For me, becoming entirely ready meant becoming entirely sick of myself and my isolation. The lies I had lived by for the last twenty-six years had followed me into recovery. In the Fourth Step, I exposed them. In the fifth I shared them, but had not quite gotten tired of them yet.

The more aware I became, the more obvious my defects became and the louder they whispered, "You don't belong—you have nothing to offer, no

one accepts you, you are unlovable." The accusations went on and on as my disease went on and on.

My intelligence, the only thing I had left to be proud of, turned on me too. Recovery was not paying off the way it was supposed to, so I became more miserable and more isolated.

Becoming entirely ready meant having to hit another kind of bottom, the kind where I really felt the pain, because there was no sedation this time. I had to dig a little deeper into

the faith that I had found in a loving God of my own understanding. I had to become willing to let my friends and sponsors in. In letting them in, I became teachable.

Going back to the First Step reinforced the truth that I am powerless over my addiction. That disease manifests itself in many ways, especially in my relations with self, God and others. I had to keep telling myself that I am powerless over what comes into my mind, but that I have a choice on how to act or react. One of the most painful

parts of becoming entirely ready was that I had to embrace those people I had been running from, the people who loved and cared about me.

It has not been easy for me to silence the voice of my disease, but I am not doing it alone today, and that is the difference. My friends do not understand the magnitude of the help they

"In the Fourth Step, I exposed my lies. In the fifth I shared them, but had not quite gotten tired of them yet. I had to hit another kind of bottom."

give me by letting me hang out with them and letting me share some of my deepest pain with them.

But getting through Step Six was still not enough; I had to fall right into the Seventh Step. Now I am free to become the person that I so desperately want to be.

I know that with a loving God and true friends in my life, I can and will go far. I can believe it when people tell me that they see change, and I can simply accept it without all the intellectual nonsense that I have been telling myself all these years. But this is just the beginning of taking off the many masks. I hope that these people continue to love me, because now the real work is about to begin.

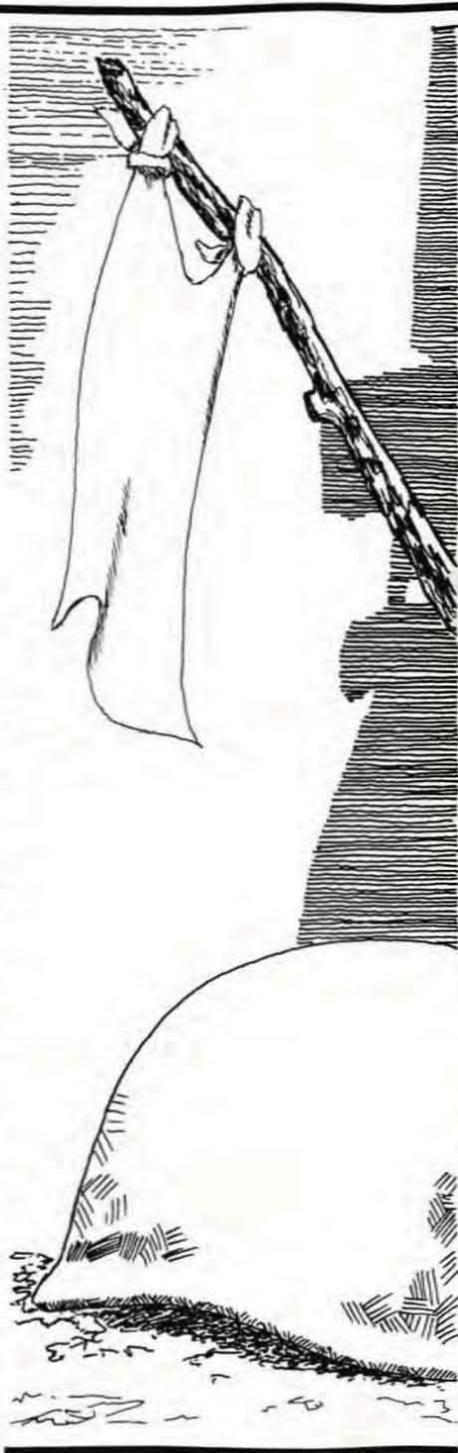
D.M., Ohio

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Surrender to recovery

For me, surrender is the action of letting someone or something take control of my will, my actions, and my emotions. It's an action for me, whether I take it knowingly or unknowingly.

The thought of surrender was always painful for me. I grew up in an abusive environment where surrender just made the situation worse. I learned at a young age to never give in, no matter what. Most of the times that I knowingly surrendered control to someone else were the worst times of my life. During my addiction I was arrested over twenty times. I surrendered my body when I had no choice, but I rarely surrendered my will. Whenever I had to battle in some way against another person, I would usually resist surrender, even if I lost. I could be overpowered, either phys-



ically, mentally or spiritually, but rarely controlled.

But there was a contradiction in all this: Every day I was surrendering my will and being controlled, and I couldn't even confront it. I surrendered my will so completely to my addiction that it controlled more of my life than any person or institution ever could have. I willingly gave in to whatever my addiction demanded, and let it have control over my actions, my thoughts and my emotions.

When I used, I felt good, and when I didn't use I felt bad. When something good happened I had to celebrate and use. When something bad happened, I had to use to kill the pain. My will was gone. I had turned it over to my addiction, surrendering physically, mentally and spiritually.

In the First Step, I admit that I'm powerless over my addiction. This is just an honest admission that I have surrendered to my addiction: I lost that battle long ago.

The First Step was a painful acceptance of reality, but the real terror was the realization that I was powerless to change that reality alone. I knew that the power was not within me.

I knew that I found the answer to my powerlessness when I was exposed to the steps at an institutional meeting. I was very skeptical that a power outside myself could help me, but I hurt badly enough to be willing to listen. Although I had a lot of different types of rehabilitation shoved down my throat, this was different. Here were addicts voluntarily talking about recovery in their own lives. I heard that it didn't have to be like this anymore. I already knew that my way

didn't work. I was willing to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity.

I didn't lack a belief in God as much as I lacked a trust in God as I understood Him. I believed that God was kinda like the top of the judicial system. The police arrest me, the

*"The First Step is
just an honest
admission that I
lost that battle long
ago."*

judge puts me in jail, and God sends me to hell. But the terror of continuing to surrender to my addiction was bad enough for me to try anything.

I couldn't surrender my will to God directly, but there was something spiritual about the recovery that I felt in the meetings. I could surrender my will and trust the recovery process. I trusted my home group more than I have ever trusted any group of people before. As my understanding of God changed and grew, I slowly surrendered my life and my will to Him.

My understanding grows day by day, and the way I live the steps changes as I grow. Today I try to keep my life simple. I will never be able to control my own life and my own will. But today I have a choice. I can either surrender my life and will to my addiction, or I can surrender my life and will to recovery by trusting the God I have come to know through the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

Anonymous, New Jersey

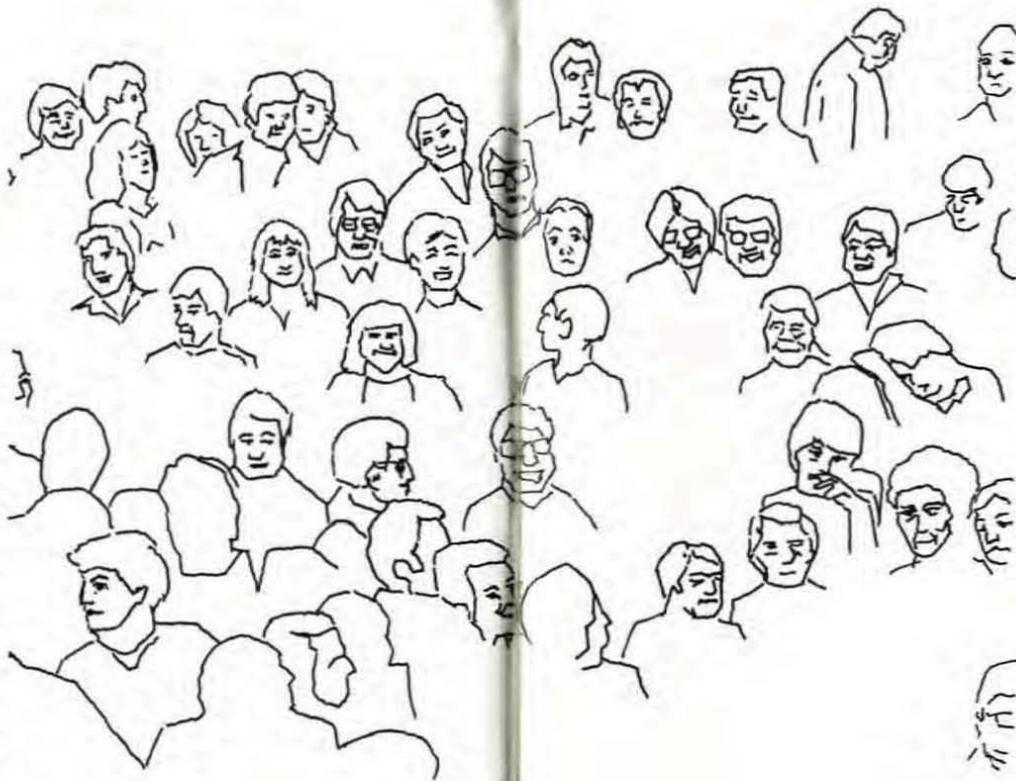
Some thoughts on group conscience

Misperceptions of the traditions, and especially the meaning of group conscience, are common. Because we do not have any one definitive document in Narcotics Anonymous that tells us exactly what group conscience is, how to attain it and how to recognize it, we are left with individual interpretations. Typically, individual interpretations are a reflection of the particular individual making the interpretation and similarly, they are limited by the individual's personal experience and scope of knowledge.

One common misperception is that group conscience is measured by a system similar to voting. A limited view of group conscience is that it is a majority rule, as if Narcotics Anonymous were a democracy. But N.A. is not a democracy, nor was it ever intended to be. Anyone with even a basic knowledge of government can

recognize that N.A. was not set up that way. N.A. is a spiritual fellowship, unique in its purpose and design. It is a set of principles which are voluntarily practiced by its members. They cannot be enforced, and no one is ostracized or punished for choosing

not to abide by the principles. There is no need for this type of discipline. All our members share the disease of addiction. The practice of spiritual principles is the only way to find relief and recovery from the disease. Therefore, it is our disease which disciplines



us. If we choose to ignore spiritual principles, we will surely suffer.

Group conscience is not a mere showing of hands. Ascertaining group conscience is a much more difficult process than simply counting how many hands are raised on a given question. It is a process of quieting the mind, putting aside the ego, and

“Group conscience is a process of quieting the mind, putting aside the ego, and listening for a loving God.”

listening for a loving God. Sometimes the answers come from the most unlikely places—maybe the shy, timid member in the corner who rarely says anything. Group conscience is not about who can yell the loudest, who is the most persuasive speaker, or who is the most popular member. It's about joining our own individual consciences into one collective group conscience.

The word “conscience” bears some looking at in this case. A conscience is a quiet little voice inside of you that lets you know when you're on target and when you're going off on self-will. Many of us liken it to the voice of our Higher Power, intuition, or the “still small voice within.” It takes a lot of practice to learn to listen to it. Most of us, in our active addiction, listened only to our disease. We know the misery that lifestyle brought about. But in recovery, it is a hard lesson for us to learn first to listen to our

sponsors and other members. Developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves is an ongoing part of recovery. We make a beginning in the Second Step, we take the Third through Tenth Steps to clear away our defects which stand between us and our Higher Power, and then in the Eleventh Step we continually seek to improve our relationship with this Higher Power through prayer and meditation.

I suggest that prayer and meditation are an integral part of reaching group conscience. Group conscience is, by definition, the expression of a loving God. But if we have difficulty with finding God's will for us, as many of us do, and having the courage to practice it in our personal lives, then how much harder is it for us to find God's will in the excitement of a heated argument at a committee or business meeting?

Another important part of group conscience is the First Tradition, which talks about our common welfare and unity. Group conscience is, to me, a meeting of the minds. We put aside our individual differences, personality conflicts and egos and allow God as we understand Him to join us all together into one fellowship dedicated to helping other addicts find recovery. It is really quite simple when you get right down to it, but the getting down to it is the hard part. It requires humility, recognizing that I might not have all the answers, that I might not be right on this one. Or maybe I don't have to give my opinion at all, because maybe it's not all that important. It's having enough faith in God and in our trusted servants to believe that the good of the many is more important

than the good of the one. And eventually, coming to realize that what is good for the many is good for the one because alone, we cannot recover. It is having enough humility to live by the slogan "I can't, we can."

I have seen group conscience in action. Usually I recognize it after it has happened. I've seen people come to a conference or business meeting so diametrically opposed on an issue you'd think they were ready to revert to knives and guns. And somehow, when they bring out the primary purpose and see what impact the issue has on carrying the message of recovery, the differences are resolved. It's not always easy and I've seen the toll it takes on people. It requires surrender and sometimes humiliation. But afterwards, they know that it's right, because it just "feels right." It is not possible to recognize group conscience when you are still holding tight to your own idea or viewpoint. That blind stubbornness prevents us from seeing others' viewpoint and from seeing what may be best for all. It is usually in looking back that God's will has been the clearest. So, in looking at the various decisions made by group conscience, we can ask ourselves, "Is this going to help carry the message of recovery?" "Is this going to help Narcotics Anonymous as a whole?" "Is it going to further our spiritual principles?" If the decisions are reached through self-searching, an attitude of openness and genuine willingness to be helpful, and the answers to these questions are a confident yes, then we can be certain that a loving God has expressed Himself through our group conscience.

G.S., California

Personal from Panama



I got out of treatment in New Orleans in July of '87 and returned to my home in Panama. I started attending N.A. meetings with the group established there in the Spanish language. As I am not too proficient with the language, I was having a difficult time listening and sharing. Sometime in August I decided to start an N.A. group in English.

The local A.A. group had an open night on Thursdays, so I asked them if I could use the meeting hall at that time to try and form an N.A. group. They gave permission, and we announced the meeting through various substance abuse counseling services.

The first three or four meetings were myself, a coffee pot, and old H.P. Sometimes an alcoholic would come by and share with us. Finally the message started to get out. One or two people showed up around the end of September.

H.P. sent us a gift. A member from Texas who had nineteen years clean

came to Panama. He helped arrange an event at one member's house. We had a super party with Tex-Mex food and loads of dancing and fun. From that point on the two groups have been supporting and helping each other.

After every meeting we all gather at a coffee shop in Panama City and have great fellowship until around midnight about five or six nights a week. Both groups continue to grow and add more meetings. The Panama Canal group is up to three meetings a week and eight to ten regular members. The Spanish group has thirty to forty regulars and six meetings a week. One of the Spanish group's trusted servants keeps us in close contact with the N.A. groups in Medellin, Colombia, and he translated and printed an N.A. text which we use. (A copy is on its way to the World Service Office for their perusal.)

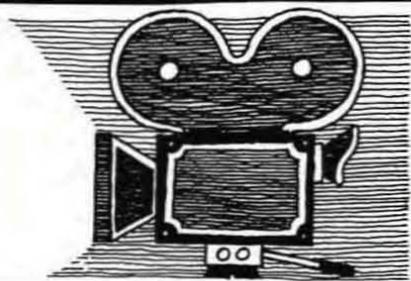
Anyway, this is to let you know that N.A. in Panama is alive and well, and will continue to be so as long as it's H.P.'s will. If any of you are travelling through, please give us a call. We would really be pleased and honored to share what we have with you.

I've recently had the privilege of visiting the World Service Office and was given a tour of the facilities. What a super group of people! They really did all they could and more to make me feel comfortable and a part of the group, as well as showing me all of the Spanish literature that I needed for our group in Panama. I am so grateful for this program and a loving God Who made it possible for me to be here today and to be able to share with you.

J.G., Panama

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Feature



A report from Hong Kong: the prospects for N.A. in Asia

N.A. was invited to participate in a large international conference on drug abuse held in Hong Kong late last year. Here's one member's first hand account.

The Ninth Annual International Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations against drug abuse was a much larger and more organized conference than the one that was held in Hawaii [see the November, 1987 *N.A. Way*].

The theme was "from substance abuse and social apathy to self help and community participation." Of the three hundred or more delegates that were present, about ninety percent were from Asian countries. Narcotics Anonymous was scheduled to give two presentations to this conference, one on the opening day and the other on the closing day during a luncheon.

The opening ceremony was a big event. It was officiated by the governor of Hong Kong and held in the grand ballroom at the Victoria Hotel, accompanied by bag pipes, flutes and drums. There were more than five hundred people attending. The opening was well covered by the media.

The keynote address was given by a doctor well known in Hong Kong. His inspiring message offered perspectives on addiction and recovery that many of us share in Narcotics Anonymous. When he finished, a delegate from each country reported on what they were doing about their drug abuse problems. Rehabilitation and

prevention techniques were reviewed from country to country.

It was with a little bit of discomfort that I sat amid the cheers of approval while countries like Malaysia and Singapore reported that for possession of eight grams of heroin they will "hang a person to death." Nevertheless, estimates of the number of addicts in these countries were staggering. Addiction, it would appear, is running rampant in these places.

Most of these countries are seated within what is called the Golden Triangle. For many years they were mostly drug producing and exporting countries. As they—and their youth in particular—have become more westernized, these countries have themselves become large consumers. Many of these countries trace this turn to the Vietnam era, when thousands of Americans—both G.I.'s and hippies—flooded their cities.

The United Nations conducted a survey on what the future effects of drug addiction would be in these countries. They concluded that in ten to fifteen years the infrastructure of these third world nations would be crippled. Hence, it is not so terribly surprising to see how active these countries are in their campaigns against drug abuse.

There was also a delegation from the Peoples Republic of China. This was a first. They were not as forthcoming as others in talking about their drug addiction problem. Their report consisted of a study on how cigarette smoking is the leading cause of cervical cancer in women. I had a conversation with a Chinese doctor. During dinner he told me he was developing a therapy for detoxification of heroin

addicts using herbs and Chinese medicines. He had experimented with hundreds of addicts over the last couple of years.

I was introduced to a man from Thailand who was the United Nations representative to the conference. He was also a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. We had several conversations, and he was able to provide me with a wealth of information about many Asian countries.

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During the question and answer period of our first N.A. presentation, a man from Malaysia asked me how we screen our members. How do we separate out the undesirables? I explained our Third Tradition and told him that we do not discriminate against anyone. Judging by his reaction, he was not very impressed.

Later, my friend from Thailand explained what was behind the questions from Malaysia. For centuries, many of these nations have had a class system built into their cultures. They are adamantly opposed to mixing the classes.

I asked him how the A.A. Fellowship has dealt with this problem in these countries. He told me that in countries like Thailand, Singapore,

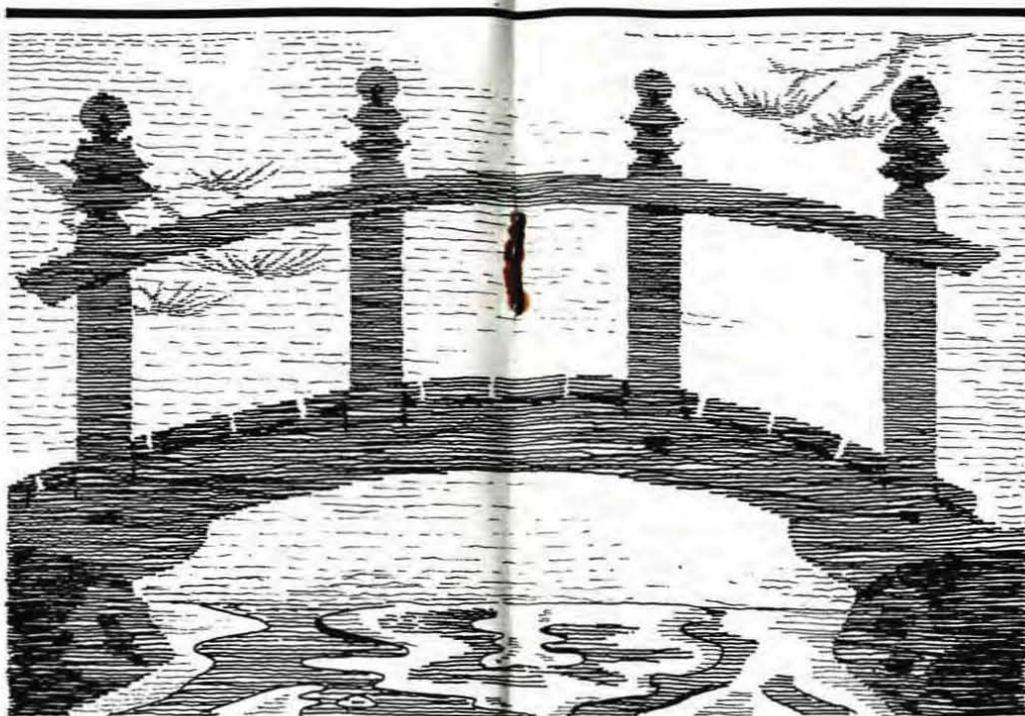
Malaysia and Hong Kong, the A.A. Fellowship is small and primarily English speaking, consisting mainly of Americans, Australians and Europeans. Very few of the locals have become members. He felt that much of this has to do with both the class system and the importance of the family structure of support.

In many of the reports, the family is mentioned as often as the rehabilitation of the addict. Apparently the reintegration of the addict into his or her family is a determining factor in their acceptance back into society. An addict can be stigmatized for life if he or she is not accepted back into the family. It appeared that the support of the family plays a big role in cultures where there is strong class separation.

The Twelve Steps, with their mention of "God as we understand Him," pose another problem. In countries where Hinduism or Buddhism is the primary religion, western spiritual concepts are as foreign to them as those religions are to many of us. The message of a personal God, one to whom we "turn our wills and lives over" for protection, guidance and care, is a concept that is as alien to them as reincarnation and karma are to many of us in the west.

When we translate our literature across languages, we must consider translating our message across cultures as well. A concept that might seem very simple to us could appear to be "out in left field" for someone in Sri Lanka. One thing is very clear: If Narcotics Anonymous is ever to grow in these countries, then an awful lot of energy will have to be expended on our part in translation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the



number of addicts per capita in this part of the world far exceeds the numbers to be found in North America and Europe. To what extent our world services wish to recognize this depends largely on how willing we are as an international fellowship to make the necessary sacrifices of money, time and empathy, shifting our attention from regional to international concerns. When it comes to translations, we are going to need to exercise flexibility and open mindedness if we hope to develop literature that will be relevant to the various cultural backgrounds involved. Only one thing is sure: addicts identify with other addicts.

The need for addicts to help other addicts and to take responsibility for their recovery was voiced many times at this conference. The keynote ad-

dress specifically mentioned this, as well as the concept of addiction as a disease and the futility of substituting one drug for another. Narcotics Anonymous was referred to as one of the major forces in rehabilitation.

The acclamation, support and universal recognition of Narcotics Anonymous among this segment of the international community was evident. This is wonderful, and certainly good for our self esteem as well as our public image. But the actual "nitty gritty" is still before us.

Many thousands of addicts in the English speaking world found their recovery in Narcotics Anonymous with only one piece of N.A. recovery literature available to them—the White Booklet. The Japanese, who are one of our more isolated N.A. communities in terms of geography, language and culture, had small begin-

nings but have grown steadily. They had one piece of translated N.A. literature—the White Booklet.

In light of what we are discovering in these Asian countries, both in terms of the numbers of addicts there and the openness these countries have shown regarding rehabilitation and recovery, it is my opinion that our

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world services should start making immediate plans to produce basic literature in various languages. Of the two international conferences in which N.A. participated last year, these Asian countries were well represented: Bangladesh, Brunei, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and the Peoples Republic of China. Many doors are open to us.

We have greatly benefited from participating in these conferences and interacting with the other representatives. We have been able to establish a measure of confidence in Narcotics Anonymous, which gives credibility to our belief that the concept of one addict helping another is without parallel. In addition to being able to interact on a personal level, we have gained the support of an abundance of individuals and organizations who can be very helpful in letting our existence be known to the addict.

Although this is one of the primary

goals of public information committees, a note of caution should be sounded here. Without the necessary translated and copyrighted N.A. literature available in these various languages, we leave the N.A. name and message open to interpretation and possible misinterpretation.

We have already seen this happen to greater or lesser degrees elsewhere. A couple of years ago in Germany, a

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doctor used the N.A. name and attempted to translate some N.A. literature in connection with a treatment facility he ran. Fortunately, because his primary motive was to help the addict, he was willing to cooperate with the WSO and disassociate himself and his clinic from Narcotics Anonymous.

We have heard of similar problems in India. And we had an interesting experience in Hong Kong. We saw how an organization similar to ours, but without our rigorous emphasis on total abstinence, could fall short of its goals.

On the closing day of the conference we gave N.A.'s final presentation during a luncheon. We shared with them our vision of hundreds of thousands of recovering addicts in over 10,000 groups around the world, clean, recovering and united in one purpose: to carry the message to the addict who

is still suffering. Two N.A. members shared their experience, strength and hope.

Afterward the chairman of the conference announced that everyone was invited to attend the twenty third annual dinner of Sarda that evening. He said that the Narcotics Anonymous representatives would be there to meet the recovering addicts of Sarda. There were several distressing things we learned from that dinner.

First of all, Sarda—or the Alumni Association (A.A.)—was founded twenty three years ago. They are considered to be the largest drug program in Asia. They claim to have more than 1,600 recovered addicts. They refer to themselves as A.A. or A.A.'s. Their members are awarded medals for each year they are clean, when they pledge to stay clean for another year. Some of their members are celebrating twenty three years. All are Chinese.

There is, at present, only one N.A. group in Hong Kong, and it is only four months old. There is one member there who has had many years' experience in recovery and service in N.A. He has helped to inspire the small group in some public information efforts. We invited a couple of the local N.A. members in Hong Kong to come with us to the Sarda dinner.

As dinner was served, we noticed pitchers of beer being placed on each table. We noticed that all of the Sarda members were drinking. The secretary of Sarda was sitting by me. I asked her if they all drank. She said yes, but that they were all drug free. I asked her if she had noticed any of them having drinking problems. She looked over her shoulder toward the

president of Sarda at the next table, then leaned towards me. She told me they are having a terrible problem. I asked how many. She said all of them. I explained to her our program of complete abstinence from all drugs, including alcohol. She agreed and said she wished they had understood that. The Sarda organization appears to demonstrate what could happen to the N.A. message in countries where they are seeking solutions and have heard of us, and of our success, but do not fully understand what we are about.

Furthermore, because of the nature of many of these Asian cultures, it is very unlikely that N.A. will find its beginnings with one addict simply hearing about Narcotics Anonymous. It is more likely that some professional or religious person will introduce the concept to addicts. This is where the danger lies. Without the necessary literature to explain what we are or are not about, in the native language and geared to the local cultural background, we leave ourselves open to misinterpretation.

I would like to relate one final experience I had while attending this conference. I met a man from Switzerland, the Executive Director of the International Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. The organization was founded in 1906, and is one of the oldest in the field. This man was in his late 70's or early 80's. We seemed to hit it off from the start. He had only heard a little about Narcotics Anonymous, but what he had heard excited him. He was very impressed with our program and our growth.

While talking about N.A.'s history, he mentioned A.A.'s beginning. He told me that he was one of the early

members of the Oxford Groups, the organization from which Alcoholics Anonymous separated when it formed its own fellowship. The basic spiritual principles that we presently use as the foundation for our program of recovery were originally inspired by the Oxfords.

One of the significant things this man told me about the Oxfords was that, as a movement, they had been

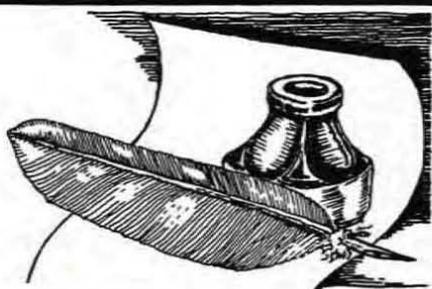
*We must reach out
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very aggressive. They would spend much effort tracking down a prospect to show him that as a result of applying certain principles he could produce a spiritual experience. He told me that one of the things he noticed after A.A. had been going for awhile was that this aggressiveness seemed to decay into a kind of complacency that passed for "attraction." That aggressiveness had been one of the most vital and challenging aspects of the Oxford Groups.

If there is a message here for us, I believe it relates to how aggressively we try to reach out beyond ourselves, our little regions and our own corners of the world. There are places where addicts suffering the disease of addiction have no idea of the wonderful freedom we have found—or if they have heard of us, they have no idea how to do what we are doing.

T.M., Hawaii

Editorial



From the editor

Please help us out!

Our subscription drive is in full swing. See the subscription form in the back of the magazine for the details. Please help us out during this month by announcing the offer at meetings, telling your friends about it, showing people the magazine—do whatever you can to help.

We really need to see some growth during this period. Not only do we need to pay the bills, but we feel that the value of the magazine is diminished if only a small percentage of the fellowship subscribes to it. Since we are limited in what we can do to “market” the *N.A. Way*, those of you who do read the magazine are our only “sales force.” We appreciate the calls and letters telling us how you enjoy the improvements in quality over the last several months. Now tell others about it.

One member looks at the Seventh Tradition

As a member of Narcotics Anonymous, I take great pride in our fellowship and the difference N.A. makes, not only in my own life but in many other addicts' lives as well. It is this chance I have been given to live a meaningful life that has motivated me to put a good deal of energy into my personal recovery and also into carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

In the four and a half years that I have made myself of service to this fellowship, I have had the opportunity to see amazing growth in my area, my region, and in world services. It is truly an exciting time for Narcotics Anonymous! I feel that my willingness to serve, and the energy and money

I've used to do it, are all part of my contribution to this fellowship. I do it freely, as do so many others, to be a part of helping N.A. be a viable alternative to active addiction. Probably the most important aspect of our Seventh Tradition is the willingness of our members to give of themselves. How could we carry the message otherwise?

Self support is the spiritual principle which guides our fellowship in regard to finances. As with all of the spiritual principles we learn in N.A., this is one that has practical application in all of our affairs.

Our fellowship has learned from some pretty hard won experience the importance of carrying our own weight. We, the individual members, are Narcotics Anonymous, and that means we are responsible for Narcotics Anonymous. There is no N.A. welfare line. We practice this principle of self support, not based on what would result if we didn't, but because that's the way we have chosen to live.

For some time I have been concerned about some of the practices that continue in N.A., perhaps out of convenience or perceived need, that relate to accepting outside donations. I am hoping that we can look at these practices. If they are not consistent with our traditions we can say, “This is not in line with the principles by which our fellowship is guided,” rather than, “It's not convenient right now, maybe we will change it later.”

When I attend conventions, dances and other functions of the fellowship I see donations accepted from people who are not members of our fellowship. Some are the family of

members, some are members of other fellowships just attending the function, and some are just members of the public who wish to see an N.A. event.

It seems to me it would be correct to tell these people that we cannot accept donations from anyone who is not an N.A. member, and that they are welcome to attend (if it is open to non-members) but that we just can't take

The most important aspect of our Seventh Tradition is the willingness of our members to give of themselves.

any money from them. My area finally came to grips with this several years ago when having public carwashes to raise funds for the fellowship.

We realized that the money to provide our services must come from the fellowship. What was hard for us to see was that if not enough money was available to provide all of the services we wanted, we needed to let the members in the area know the situation. If additional monies still didn't come in, then perhaps it was not time do all of the things we wanted to do.

I see a direct parallel between this and what is currently happening with world services. The fellowship is growing and demanding that the WSC keep pace. We have finally realized that it is correct to pay the traveling expenses involved with service, even

though most members of WSC committees still must pay their own expenses.

This practice of paying for elected trusted servants of the WSC is a real step forward for us. It eliminates the "service of the elite" syndrome that occurs when one qualification for service is that you must be able to spend thousands of dollars a year for travel. I comment on this WSC expense because it has been a major portion of the WSC budget for the last several years.

In looking over all of the budgets it is obvious that there is nothing extravagant or out of line. In fact, if a comment were to be made about the size of the budget, it would be that it is very conservative in relation to the amount of work on the committee agendas. The problem is that when added up, the donations from the fellowship have sometimes not been enough to cover the budgeted expenses.

What is the solution? We are not able to operate with deficit spending. A solution that has been utilized is to borrow funds or even to accept appropriations from World Service Office literature sales revenues. Can the WSC do this when over 48% of these funds come from sales to non-fellowship customers? These funds are not donations from the N.A. fellowship and should not be accepted by the WSC. Over the last year there has been an expanded effort, especially from the WSC Administrative Committee, to let the fellowship know that we are having these financial difficulties. This has led to increased donations from the fellowship, but hasn't completely solved the problem.

As a member of the fellowship I have made an effort to try and inform members of our Seventh Tradition responsibilities. When my home group looked at this, we realized that many times there was no explanation about the basket that went around, and many times it had been passed and members didn't even know it. We decided that passing the basket was an important aspect of our meeting, and it merited its own place in the meeting format. Instead of passing the basket while members were still sharing, or when chips were being given out, or when announcements were being made, we would give an explanation of why we pass the basket and then wait while it went around the room before moving on to the next part of the meeting.

The explanation is not just that we need to pay rent and buy coffee. We explain that we have bills to pay for putting on the meeting. We pass on whatever's left over to the area, which has to pay bills for the helpline and H&I literature. After the area's bills are paid, the rest goes on to the region and the world. By putting a little money in the basket, members are making sure that we can live by our traditions.

By emphasizing this important part of the meeting we have seen positive response in the amount of donations we collect. Instead of making a larger prudent reserve or buying other things for the meeting with this extra money, we have passed the money along the service structure. We feel that our group is making the extra effort to help all of N.A. meet its responsibilities. We are glad that we can be a part of the solution today!

I feel that it is my responsibility to

put a little extra in the basket, because my recovery in N.A. has opened some doors for me that allow me to have some money in my pocket. As a trusted servant of the fellowship and a member of society, I know that the work we do in N.A. is important, and that we need to keep on reaching out to the addict that still suffers. The only way we can do this is together.

Anonymous, Virginia

level—and the world level in particular—have no business ignoring or circumventing whatever current policy or structure exists.

Well, I understand that a motion will finally be presented at the 1988 World Service Conference annual meeting to change the statement in the *Temporary Working Guide* defining the relationship between WSO,

In my personal recovery, such involved exercises in logic are called rationalizations.

Office and conference

I am concerned over the projected changes in the relationship between the World Service Office and the fellowship. Our current service guide states that the WSO is separate from the fellowship. In discussing this fact with a few people in world service, I have been told that this wasn't really true, that the statement was wrong, that it was so stated for the "wrong" reasons or motives and that it wasn't *really* the way we operated. I feel that all of these responses set dangerous precedents. If our service structure needs changing, the fellowship will change it. Trusted servants at any

the WSC and the fellowship. The issues involved will be debated in the open on the floor of the conference. How, exactly, would the proposal work? If the WSO is considered a service arm of the fellowship, will its budget appear as an item on the WSC budget? How much control will the conference have over WSO money and decisions? Will all WSO dealings be open to the fellowship as a whole? If the fellowship through the conference is not to have full access to WSO decisions, activities, and funds, how will this be prevented or governed? It seems to me that if the WSO were just another branch of service, and if push came to shove, the conference could exercise more control over the WSO than would be wise.

One particular concern I have has to do with the large percentage of office income from sources outside N.A.—48% of total WSO receipts, if I

recall correctly. The concern is twofold. On the one hand, a conference linked more closely to the office would also be more dependent on literature income. Can we feel sure that the conference would always retain the ability to make necessary decisions, regardless of their impact on outside literature sales income, if the accomplishment of large portions of the conference agenda depended upon that income?

On the other hand, it is important to the fellowship that the WSO be economically successful. Can a successful business be operated on other than sound business principles in its relationships with its key customers? And wouldn't the need to give the conference a free hand in decision making open the door to the compromise of those sound business principles? Considering this, would it not be wise to maintain some kind of separation between "the material and the spiritual"—that is, between the office and the conference?

If World Service Office and World Service Conference funds are combined into a single account, then activities of nonprofessional conference volunteers practicing their Twelfth Step will be funded—at least partly—by income from literature sales to sources outside N.A. Under such circumstances, what happens to our tradition of self support? I have heard a few different responses.

One line of reasoning goes that our literature income is the direct result of N.A. members' contributions of experience and writing. Therefore, the sale of our literature outside the fellowship really *is* self support, since the money is earned from contributions. If we

accept this line of reasoning, couldn't we then by the same token use group, area or regional money to invest in stocks, bonds, or C.D.'s? Perhaps since the Crash we wouldn't want to—but couldn't we? Wouldn't the money earned from such investments be the result of our own contributions, at least indirectly? In my personal recovery, such involved exercises in logic are called *rationalizations*.

The second response to the question of N.A. self support goes like this: *we are not self supporting at any level and never have been*, for a variety of reasons. Is this supposed to make everything okay? I think that we still "ought to be fully self supporting," and that we ought to strive toward that goal rather than implement policies which endorse the use of non-fellowship funds to support our services.

Is it possible for the WSO to be a part of the fellowship without the fellowship also being considered a part of the WSO? Does this change in relationship open the WSO and/or the fellowship up to law suits or taxation? How would the proposed change affect regions, areas and groups, either directly or in their relationships with local offices? I am concerned about the fellowship being part of an incorporated entity and about group finances coming under scrutiny. If N.A. as a fellowship acquires legal identity, how could we avoid public controversy?

Would we talk any differently about the role of paid special workers in the conduct of N.A. World Services? It has been suggested to me that they are no different from trusted servants in the sense that they are a

part of our fellowship service structure. I have difficulty with this idea because I reject the concept of paid Twelfth Stepping in any form. For me, *service work* is an extension and expression of the Twelfth Step of recovery and "should remain forever nonprofessional."

When discussing special workers, it has been suggested that I take a look at A.A.'s long form of the Eighth Tradition. Some people feel that we erred in not adopting the long form of the traditions for our own use. I personally have no aversion to using any pertinent source of guidance available. But if we are going to refer to A.A.'s long form traditions, can we lightly pick and choose only those portions which support our particular point of view? The long form of the traditions have some *other* things to say that these people might not be so comfortable with. The long form Sixth Tradition says, in part, "that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual." And the Seventh Tradition: "The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully self supporting by the voluntary contributions of their own members." And the Ninth Tradition: "They [the General Service Board] are the custodians of our A.A. tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York."

Frankly, I'm not sure I see the need for any change in the current relationship between the conference and the office, especially when so many serious questions are opened up by such a proposal. The current rela-

tionship is a simple one. We have given our sole asset—our literature—over to the custodial care of WSO. In return, WSO provides clerical, organizational and communication services to the WSC. What overriding concerns make any change in that very simple relationship necessary? I am sure that the bodies responsible for the proposed motion are not going to just change or delete the lines in the *Temporary Working Guide* which define the current relationship, with no thought or provision for the ramifications of such a change. I look forward to hearing what those provisions might be.

B.J., California

Creative, resourceful, and fully self supporting

Our Seventh Tradition calls upon us to be self supporting. If we are standing with an outstretched hand today, it better be a helping hand extended to the newcomer, not the empty hand of a panhandler. That's the new order of things for us. That's recovery, the only way we can afford to live.

There is disagreement among us

about what constitutes "self support." To simplify this discussion, let's restrict it to a discussion of finances, because there is a great deal to be said about other aspects of self support. There's plenty of disagreement about money to keep us busy for one whole article.

A certain set of voices in N.A. asserts that when non-addicts attend a convention or dance, and at that dance they "donate" money to N.A., we have violated our principle of self support. Further, the argument goes, we violate that principle by using money from the WSO budget for WSC expenses (because our literature is sold outside the fellowship).

I must say that I have sharp disagreement with those assertions, and I will clearly spell out those points of disagreement in a minute. But first let's look at points of agreement between these two schools. We agree, for example, in the absolute importance of self support in this fellowship. It is imperative that N.A. as a whole remain self supporting, and it seems to me we are on much firmer ground as individuals when we are self supporting as well. We must not water down this principle; we must face it squarely.

We are also in agreement that the clearest, most important way in which we as a fellowship can remain self supporting is by each of us placing consistent, healthy contributions in the basket, and passing that money along through the service structure. Where we begin to differ, and eventually to differ quite strongly, is in our perception of whether or not that is the only source of money in N.A. that constitutes self support.

Let's look first at conventions. Is it true that when non-members attend our conventions and pay for the full registration we have accepted a donation from an outside source? That is only true if you consider the registration fee a donation. I don't. A convention is a very expensive event,

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and those who attend the convention pay that expense through their registration fee.

In that situation, we are not standing with our panhandling palm outstretched; that's our helping hand. Members have put hours upon hours of volunteer service into planning and hosting this event. That outpouring of service has produced a quality product—a weekend with a quality program held in a comfortable, clean setting. That registration fee is payment for that product, not a donation.

It's important to point out that it's not recovery from addiction or Twelfth Step work that's being paid for here. It's hotel expenses, administrative costs, travel expenses, etc. People who can't afford—or choose not to pay—the registration fee are still welcome at all meetings where

recovery is being offered. Most conventions even make allowances for a number of free or reduced price registrations for newcomers or members short of funds. Our Fifth Tradition calls on us to do that. The money we charge is not payment for the message—that's freely given here as it is at all meetings where a collection is taken—the payment is for the convention's operational expenses.

So our difference really boils down to our perception of the nature of the transaction that occurs when someone pays for their registration. It seems to me that such a transaction is a payment for a specific product, not a contribution. With nothing but our own collective resources, we have produced something of value: a convention.

We not only paid for the convention facilities, but in planning, organizing and hosting the event, our members have also provided an immense amount of what might be called "logistical support," which has a tremendous dollar value in the business world. The registration price is set to compensate—usually quite moderately—for these things that are provided by the convention committee.

When that convention is over and a prudent reserve for next year's event is set aside, there is usually still excess money left over. This money was not donated, it was earned—"value for value." It does not go to pay the members who earned it. It goes into the general fund of the appropriate area or regional service committee to pay for our continued effort to keep the helping hand outstretched. We have worked hard, converted some of

that work into money to further our services, and accepted no handouts. The addict who still suffers wins coming and going. I see no conflict with the Seventh Tradition whatsoever.

Another example of similar principles at work involves WSO subsidies of the WSC budget. I see a lot of dangerous implications in the point of view that our WSO is separate from N.A., is somehow immune from our

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traditions, and is not self supporting. It's my position that the WSO is in fact fully self supporting, declining all outside contributions. As such, money that the WSO generates through sales of literature can and definitely should be used by N.A. World Services functioning as a single team working toward the goal spelled out in our Fifth Tradition.

If the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous is not every bit as much a part of this fellowship as our World Service Conference, we are in much deeper trouble with our traditions than those who make that case ever imagined. Our Sixth Tradition, for example, states that we do not "endorse, finance or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside

enterprise." If the WSO is not part of N.A., then it qualifies as a "related facility or outside enterprise." But it uses our name! Have we "lent the N.A. name" to it? We have its address and phone number on our pamphlets! Do we "endorse" it? I'll stop. As you see, the argument gets progressively more ludicrous.

Of course the WSO is part of N.A.! That is obvious, and should go without saying. But is it self supporting? Well, try to get your company to send the WSO a check as a donation and see what happens. The check will be politely returned with an explanation that N.A. does not accept outside contributions. The WSO is fully self supporting through the sale of literature that was wholly produced by our fellowship.

Again we have the same principle at work: let's call it "value for value." When we as a fellowship have worked to produce a product, and we sell that product at a reasonable price, we have given something of value to a buyer, who in turn pays for that product of value. It's immaterial whether or not we have sold the item within or outside the fellowship. The money generated was not a donation, it was a "value for value" transaction.

The reason these funding sources work so well to stimulate growth and development in our fellowship is that they are spiritually sound, and not in conflict in any way with our Seventh Tradition.

Other ethical concerns are raised when we use these arguments to become overly mercenary, trying to raise more and more money at every turn. We all have a conscience, and in accordance with our Second Tradi-

tion, we must use it to receive guidance from a loving God in these matters; but let's not confuse these concerns about ethics and sensible judgement with concerns about the Seventh Tradition.

It is my opinion that we must exercise good judgement in our budgeting for N.A. services, never placing fundraising higher in importance than direct contributions at meetings. At the same time, we shouldn't allow narrow or weak arguments about the traditions to stymie our efforts to function in the most responsible, productive way we can as an organization. We can be creative and resourceful under the banner of "self support," and the addict who still suffers will surely be the benefactor.

R.H., California

Editorial replies

The following is in reply to the editorial, "Some Thoughts on Special Interest Meetings," published in the December 1987 N.A. Way.

From California:

With regard to the article about special interest groups, I would like to state that because of the fact that I am

gay I have not always been able to experience that "sense of belonging, of being the same," that N.S. of Louisiana refers to. For me, the fact that there are gay special interest meetings for me to attend is extremely important, and I am grateful for their existence.

It has been my experience that many members of the N.A. Fellowship have no awareness of the pain and turmoil it can bring up for the gay seeking recovery in this fellowship to hear insulting and derogatory terms used in reference to the gay and his or her lifestyle—in my case, making it necessary to seek out gay meetings for the supportive atmosphere I find there.

A very recent example of this was the speaker at a convention who, in stating his "progress" in recovery, claimed that at the time he entered the fellowship he hated "black people and faggots." To me, the use of the term "faggots" does not suggest acceptance, tolerance or a truly loving attitude toward the addict "regardless of...sexual identity." This kind of thing seriously affects my serenity and faith in the program of N.A. It affects my serenity for what I think are obvious reasons, just as a black person would be insulted to hear blacks referred to as "niggers." It affects my faith in the program to think that insensitivity of that magnitude would be in such blatant evidence in a person who claims nine years of recovery in N.A.

What was particularly ironic is that at this convention it had been decided not to schedule any gay special interest meetings. Some members of our fellowship decided to hold an impromptu gay meeting in the time

slot immediately following the speaker referred to earlier. At the gay meeting I heard beautiful recovery expressed by the man and woman who shared. It was very healing for me to be able to experience identification and to really be in a group of equals, people who have felt the same rejection—subtle,

I know that for me it has been a life or death matter having gay groups to attend.

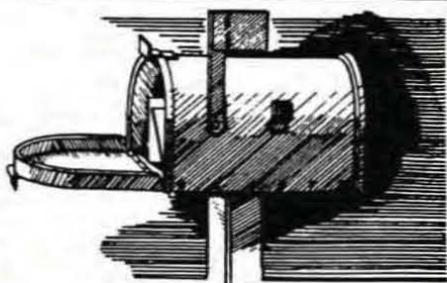
unsubtle, intentional or not—that I have felt many times, and that I had just felt one more time.

While I in no way advocate keeping myself—or anyone else for that matter—separate from the fellowship as a whole, I know that for me it has been a life or death matter having gay groups to attend. I continue to go to them now to give back what has been given me and to extend the love and understanding that should be present everywhere in N.A.

Special groups? You bet your life! The groups I go to *are* special, but only because of the love that is present there, love for being who I am, not in spite of who I am.

M.M.

From Our Readers



Not afraid to show it

I am an addict. For many years, I used various drugs to run from life, from myself, and from a lot of other people. With my low self esteem, drugs were the only thing that made me feel okay.

The painful awareness of my disease caught up with me, and I had to admit I had a problem: I was powerless over the disease of addiction. One of the most difficult tasks I have today is to accept life on life's terms.

With the help and guidance of a loving and caring God as I understand God, and the steps, traditions, and members of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I experience all the emotions, behaviors, and the like that human beings have—positive, negative, and a few that are neither. We don't need to be afraid of these emotions and feelings. Rather, we need to experience them and try to deal with them. It's not as difficult as I thought it would be (thanks to God and N.A.).

A lot of us find ourselves with the gift of an ability to truly love and care about others, for which I'm very grateful—an ability to care a great deal about other people, to not be

afraid to show just how much we care, and to allow others to care about us.

The Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is the best thing that's happened to me. Recovering addicts are God's greatest gift to me. *I need you. We need each other. Keep coming back.*

J.B., Wisconsin

Blessed

I am prompted to write by a letter that appeared in the January 1988 issue of the *N.A. Way* magazine ["God's Will," pp. 29-30]. I identified strongly with the woman who wrote it. She is married, as I am, and has two children, as I do, one of whom she had while using, the other while she was clean. This is also the case with me. One statement she made in her letter is something that I have been known to say. It was, "I used to say we've been lucky. Now I say we've been blessed."

For me, gratitude itself is a spiritual experience. I was taught that it is in fact the principle behind Step Twelve. It is often said that an addict grateful to be clean does not relapse. I believe this is true. I have also come to believe that a true and deep gratitude, the kind that makes tears run down my face at the most unlikely moments, is

the first dimension of a spiritual awakening.

Gratitude is a conscious contact with our higher power. How can a person be grateful if there is nothing to be grateful to? This is the difference between "lucky" and "blessed."

If you are grateful to be clean, then you have had a spiritual awakening. I like to say my spirit was comatose when I came into N.A., but now it is awake. It may appear drowsy from time to time but it hasn't passed out yet!

D.J., Texas

Sharing the N.A. way

I have been working professionally in the treatment field for the past eighteen years. I have been well pleased by the sharing attitude of the N.A. community. As the director of a treatment center, I have received letters from the chairmen of both local and state N.A. conventions. The group had elected to invite my patients and staff to be their guests (no charge) at the various conventions. This is a wonderful way of sharing with others what you have been so freely given. To the best of my knowledge, no other self help group in this area has been so caring and sharing.

L.R., Virginia

Obsessive jealousy

Most of the time when my jealousy flares up it has a lot to do with not trusting. Anyone understand? For a long time in recovery, I never had trust in myself, so it was difficult for me to trust another. After several bouts with mistrust and jealousy, I put a lid on it, working my steps very hard.

Yesterday, for the first time in over a year, it flared up again. The difference this time was that when my

mistrust and jealousy acted up, I was immediately aware of it. I called an N.A. member, went to a meeting, talked to addicts about what I did, and spoke with my sponsor again. After doing all these things, I called my boyfriend and shared how I felt and told him I was working on my character defect.

Had this happened three years ago, I would not have known to do all the above things to get me better. I still feel a little jealous today, but I'm better than yesterday. I came to work and have plans to meet my sponsor after work.

This is how the fellowship works. I am so happy to be an addict today. Everything I ever learned about relationships, obsessions, love—everything—came from all of you. I love the *N.A. Way*, and I love all of you, especially my friends who pointed out this defect to me. Thanks, God.

Anonymous, New Jersey

"Yet" syndrome

When I got to this program in January 1983, I had already been using since I was fifteen. I heard in those meetings all the bad things that had happened to people because of their addiction. They said they had lost their homes, jobs, marriages, businesses, been in jails and institutions, etc. "That hasn't happened to me and it's not going to," I told them. But they said if I was an addict like they were, and I kept on using, these things would happen. They just hadn't happened yet. This "yet syndrome" helped me to reach my bottom.

When I got back to this program three and a half years later, I had experienced a lot of those "yets." I had lost my family, a number of good jobs, my home and my self respect. I

couldn't count the number of times I'd been in jail. I was left alone with the one person I hated the most: me. Even the drugs that had for so long taken away the pain of daily living no longer worked.

I know today that, because of the progression of this disease, I can always reach a new bottom; anyone can. What I'm trying to say is that if you've reached a bottom but still haven't lost all the material things in your life—yet—if you keep on using, you will. Go to meetings and look for the similarities; stop trying to be different.

I have also found a "yet syndrome" in recovery. If the good things that the program offers haven't happened to you—yet—if you keep working the steps and going to meetings, they will. I am deeply grateful for the seed of recovery that has given me my life today, and for all the "yets" in recovery to come.

J.F., Alabama

N.A. and God

I am grateful that when I walked through the doors of N.A., I was not bombarded with theological ideas. Rather, after some time, it was lovingly suggested that I might best work the Twelve Steps by coming to believe in a loving and caring power greater than myself. I was given the choice to call this power by a name with which I felt comfortable, and was not told whether I was "wrong" or "right." Instead, I was told I was right where I was supposed to be.

During active addiction, I sought many "gods" to make me feel better. Money, drugs, food and sex had become the "gods" that ruled my existence. I also tried many different

religions to make me feel better, each time trying to believe as others told me I must. Nothing seemed to relieve me of the misery of addiction for any length of time. Self centered, egotistical, distrusting, I felt hopeless, lost and confused. In desperation, I sought help "one last time" in Narcotics Anonymous.

I was welcomed with non-threatening words. I heard it read, "Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion." Finally I had found a place where no one was going to tell me what or how to believe! I finally felt free enough to lower the walls of defensiveness that I had built for so many years. Other members freely shared how they came to believe and how they continued to grow with the aid of God as we understood Him. Yet, through respect for me and others, no specific religious beliefs or theological names were mentioned.

As a recovering addict, I have become aware of my responsibility to the Fellowship of N.A. and specifically to the newcomers, to remember the primary purpose of N.A. I cannot afford to cloud the message of recovery by mentioning personal religious beliefs or affiliations, for that could keep the suffering addict from lowering the walls of defense and thus keep out the message that there is hope for recovery.

J.R., Illinois

Surrender

I am an addict. I live in a spiritual world today thanks to Narcotics Anonymous. Part of this world contains an awareness of the disease of addiction which once held me prisoner. From the start of my involvement in N.A.—from Step One—I have been

set free from this disease. Now it is my *recovery* which holds my *disease* prisoner. This is how I've been able to live the First Step.

I cannot recall ever saying when I was young, "When I grow up I want to be a recovering addict." No, that wasn't my life's dream or goal. I just wanted to be noticed and awarded for things I did in life. Although I was basically quite happy, I had a constant desire to be the one person that everyone knew and liked. I never liked being second best, and if I was, there was something wrong.

I believe that I have had this disease all of my life. The only way that I found N.A. was through the help of my Higher Power.

By the time my disease progressed into compulsive use of drugs, the lie I used to carry on with daily living grew larger. Also, I discovered my own weaknesses by witnessing a close friend choose the road to recovery. The truth was out. Deep down inside me, my friend's example connected with my almost dead spirit, hidden away behind my fear and pride. The way I was living was a lie. I wanted to find out what my friend was doing to make his life look more favorable than mine.

I did not have an honest desire to stop using, but I did have a desire to stop hurting. I lived my lie a few more weeks, always being reminded in the back of my mind of my friend's way of life. I had to manipulate myself into another lie: I said that I needed help for other reasons, not for my addiction. After all, I was different—or so I thought. But the process of surrender was beginning.

One night as I stood outside and let my mind wander through a multitude of thoughts, I wanted to know if I had

anything to lose by at least trying this new way of life. Through all of my justifications and rationalizations, the answer always came up NO!! On my own there was only one unbroken view of the days to come that left me wondering if I had anything to gain.

I began my quest by following direction. There never seemed to be a shortage of people who wanted to help by sharing their experience, strength and hope. They suggested this and said to try that. The one direction I followed well was to go to meetings, meetings and more meetings to gain a foundation. I felt like I was riding a roller coaster of feelings. The one thing that I constantly reminded myself of was that as long as I don't "pick up," it's going to be okay. Someone in N.A. came up to me and said, "You never have to use against your will again." That sounded real good!

I did not surrender to the Narcotics Anonymous program right away. After experiencing freedom from drugs for a period of time, I got in touch with the real problem: the disease of addiction. The obsession to use drugs was lifted, yet I still had obsessions to manage my own life. I still wanted to be the center of the universe. The internal turmoil I was feeling began to surface. The admission of powerlessness over my disease and manageability came next.

There was no more hanging onto old ideas or old ways of thinking. There were no more excuses for being an addict. There was no more reservation for any other way of life than a clean way—mind, body and spirit. My mind has now made the decision that I can't help myself. I believe I can get *all* the help I need in the Narcotics Anonymous program.

R.U., Pennsylvania

Comin' Up



ALBERTA: Jun. 3-5, 1988; Third Edmonton N.A. Convention; speaker Jack B., Los Angeles; Highlands Community League, 11333 62nd Street, Edmonton; Barb H. (403) 423-0850; Barb H., #3-9321-101 A Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 0C4

ARIZONA: May 27-29, 1988; ARCNA-2; Sheraton Phoenix Hotel (800) 325-3535; Richard R. 247-2076, Rosemary H. 293-3706, Ann R. 285-0869; AZ Convention Committee, P.O. Box 11422, Phoenix, AZ 85061

ARKANSAS: May 20-22, 1988; Fourth Annual Beaver Roundup; Lake Leatherwood, Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Kathryn P. (501) 253-7602; Velma R. 423-2765; Eureka Springs Group, c/o Kathryn P., 32 Benton, Eureka Springs, AR 72632

AUSTRALIA (WA): Apr. 1-4, 1988; Combined Areas Convention, "Courage to Change"; Fremantle Technical College, Marine Annexe, Fremantle, Western Australia; Kay (09) 335-9542; Seb 328-8909; Mary 339-7237; Convention Committee, Box 668, Subiaco, W.A. 6008, AUSTRALIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Jul. 1-3, 1988; British Columbia N.A. Rally; send speaker tapes; Henry B., (604) 434-8314; BCNAR, 4650 Fernglen Place, Barnaby, BC V5G 3W1

2) Aug. 12-14, 1988; Third Annual Northern Lights Outdoor Campout Roundup; Bidnisti Lake Resort, 35 mi. w. of Prince George; send speaker tapes; contact Phil H. (604) 562-2931; Warren, Chris 563-5719; ROUNDUP, c/o Warren & Chris M., 2510 Upland Street #113, Prince George, BC CANADA

CALIFORNIA: Apr. 25-29, 1988; World Service Conference Annual Meeting; AirTel Plaza Motel, Van Nuys, CA, corner of Valjean Avenue and Sherman Way -- for information and

reservations contact Trinka, (818) 780-3951; World Service Conference, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999

2) July 8-10, 1988; San Diego Regional Convention; speakers with 5 yrs. clean, strong N.A.-oriented message send tapes w/return address and phone number; Harold D. (619) 283-7220; San Diego Convention, 3768 El Cajon Blvd., San Diego, CA 92105

3) Sep. 1-4, 1988; World Convention of N.A.; Anaheim Hilton and Towers, 777 W. Convention Way, Anaheim; Information: World Service Office, (818) 780-3951; or Anaheim Convention Bureau, (714) 999-8939; WCNA-18, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

COLORADO: Apr. 9, 1988; 6th Annual Regional Service Workshop; Masonic Lodge, Boulder, CO; dance follows; Gary O. (303) 744-8482; Pat R. 443-4083; Colorado RSC, 1290 Williams, Box 9, Denver, CO 80218

FLORIDA: June 30 - July 4, 1988; FRCNA-7; Stouffer Hotel, 6677 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando FL 32821, (305) 351-5555; contact Charlie M. (305) 588-6273, Lovell H. 291-6138, Richard C. 891-1867; Florida RCNA, P.O. Box 17807, W. Palm Beach, FL 33416

HAWAII: May 27-29, 1988; "Ride the Miracle," Second Annual Gathering of the Fellowship; Black Sands Beach, Kalapana; Big Island Gathering, P.O. Box 10842, Hilo, HI 96721

2) Jul. 1-3, 1988; Fifth Western States Unity Convention, Beachcomber's Hotel, Honolulu; Tom C. (808) 262-4631, Steve S. 254-1647, RSO 533-4900; WSUC-5, 1305 Aalapapa, Kailua, HI 96734

ILLINOIS: June 24-26, 1988; 4th Annual Flight to Freedom; Coy & Wilma's Campground, Rend Lake, Sesser, IL; Earl (618) 735-2409; Jim (217) 347-0306; Lawrence (618) 829-5387; Campout, 107 E. Lawrence, Effingham, IL 62401

INDIANA: Apr. 1-3, 1988; KRCNA II; Executive Inn, 6th & Walnut St., Evansville, IN, (800) 457-3841; Mike W. (812) 424-1673; Donnie A. 422-5815; Bernie T. 426-0357; KRCNA II, PO Box 3184, Evansville, IN 47730

KENTUCKY: Apr. 1-3, 1988, KRCNA II, Evansville, IN--see under INDIANA

MASSACHUSETTS: May 7-8, 1988; Martha's Vineyard Area 1st Annivention; Martha's Vineyard Island; Tony L. (617) 693-5976, Jessica S. 693-3002, Don C. 693-5850, Steve G. 693-3384; Martha's Vineyard ASC, P.O. Box 2754, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

MICHIGAN: Jul. 1-4, 1988; Freedom IV; Hope College, Holland, MI; Bob W. (616) 857-2583, Carl D. 344-7530; tickets, John F. (313) 987-8620; 4th Michigan Convention, 523 Butternut #106, Holland, MI 49424

NEVADA: Jul. 15-17, 1988; Sixth Annual Stampede for Serenity campout, Stampede Reservoir, Truckee, Nevada; proceeds to Sierra Sage RSC and the World Service Conference; information call hotline (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage RSC, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510

NEW HAMPSHIRE: June 24-26, 1988; "Vision of Hope," 9th ECCNA; University of NH in Durham; Jay N. (603) 437-5501; Brian (617) 452-7875; Shirley (617) 458-4808; 9th ECCNA, PO Box 388, Pelham, NH 03076

NEW MEXICO: May 28-30, 1988; High Hopes ASC Campout and Retreat; Bandiler National Park; for fliers and info call (505) 662-0669; Hal, 2130 A 37th, Los Alamos, NM 87544

NORTH CAROLINA: Apr. 15-17, 1988; Grtr. Charlotte Area Convention; Marriott Hotel, Charlotte, NC (704) 527-9650, (800) 228-9290; Andy 892-3288; Debbie 892-7206; James 527-2091; GCACNA, P.O. Box 32262, Charlotte, NC 28232

2) July 1-3, 1988; 9th Carolina Regional Convention; Sheraton Greensboro Hotel, 3 Southern Life Center, Greensboro, NC; contact Marc (919) 855-3294, Ed 565-4913; C.I. Chair, 9th Carolina, Regional Convention, 6518 Dusty Road, Liberty, NC 27298

NORTH DAKOTA: Apr. 9, 1988; "Service Begins With Me" Mini-Banquet, Fargo; contact Steve F. 293-7501; Pam F. 236-5199; Fargo-Moorhead ASC, P.O. Box 3213, Fargo, ND 58108-3213

OHIO: May 27-29, 1988; OCNA VI; Holiday Inn Eastgate, 4501 Eastgate Blvd., Cincinnati, OH 45245; Carolyn R. (513) 863-9870; Buck F. 752-8281; send speaker tapes; OCNA VI, P.O. Box 9234, Hamilton, OH 45014

OKLAHOMA: Apr. 1-3, 1988; Oklahoma Regional Convention; Camelot Hotel, 4956 S. Peoria, Tulsa, OK 74105, (800) 331-4428, (918) 747-8811; Leo S. (918) 664-4883; Sarah L. (918) 742-4816; Chuck G. (405) 372-4007; Tonja H. (405) 787-4007; OKRSC, PO Box 52465, Tulsa, OK 74152

2) Jun. 24-26, 1988; Seventh Annual Clean'n'Crazy Campout; Cherokee Landing, Wildcat Park (Area C), Lake Tenkiller, OK; Mike A. (405) 382-8741; Chuck G. 372-4007; Patrick D. 372-1875

ONTARIO: May 13-15, 1988; 1st Ontario Regional Convention; Toronto, Ontario; Rachel (416) 789-0264; Susan 821-7562; ORCNA I, 5468 Dundas St.W. Box 620, Toronto, Ontario, M9B 6E3

OREGON: Aug. 6-8, 1988; 3rd Oregon-Southern Idaho Regional Convention; Eugene Hilton Hotel; send speaker tapes; Laurie P. (503) 726-2449; OSIRCNA-3, 3255 Gateway #68, Springfield, OR 97477

PENNSYLVANIA: Apr. 17, 1988; Greater Philadelphia Unity Breakfast; Holiday Inn, 4th & Arch Streets; Gary K. (215) 483-9864

RHODE ISLAND: Apr. 1-3, 1988; NERC III; Marriott Hotel, Providence; Info-Sandy (401) 849-5602, Ken N. 728-2714; NERC III, Attention, Mishell L., P.O. Box 3009, Newport, RI 02840

TEXAS: Apr. 15-17, 1988; Texas Unity Convention, Whitney, TX; David (713) 332-8236; Texas Unity (Whitneys), 1612 Second Street, League City, TX 77573

WASHINGTON: Apr. 8-10, 1988; 3rd Annual Washington-Northern Idaho Regional Convention; Holiday Inn, 1515 George Washington Way, Richland WA 99352, (509) 946-4121; to submit a tape contact Rhonda A., 6622 W. Yellowstone, Kennewick, WA 99336; gen.info. Crystal (509) 735-3952, Rhonda A. 783-4060; WNIR Convention Committee, 7403 W. Canal Drive #400, Kennewick, WA 99336

WEST VIRGINIA: May 6-8, 1988; Mountaineer Regional Convention, "Back to Basics;" Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, W.Va. (304) 372-7000; pre-registration by April 1; Jim D. (304) 525-8411, Danny W. 925-7088; Mountaineer RSC, P.O. Box 2381, Morgantown, WV 26502-2381

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. 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.
7. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. 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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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*My gratitude speaks
when I care
and when I share with others
the N.A. way*



What Is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a worldwide 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 stay clean. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover.

It costs nothing to belong to N.A.—there are no fees or dues. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs. 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.

For more information about N.A., see your local phone directory, or write us at the address inside.

