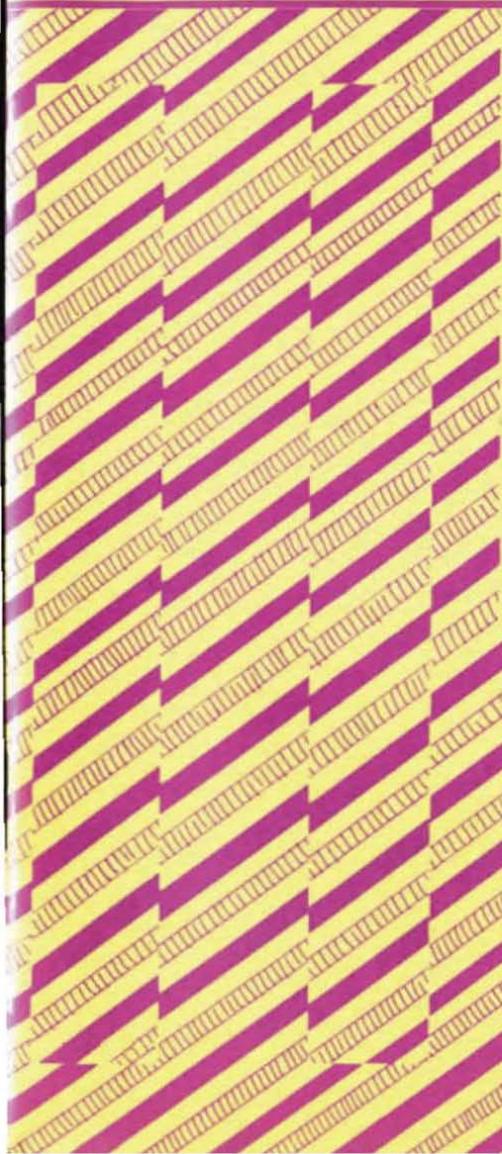




THE
N.A. Way
M A G A Z I N E

August 1988

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Coming of age:
the N.A. regions

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The computerized
sponsor

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Clean and green:
Irish recovery

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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.

THE N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
(818) 780-3951

volume six, number eight

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Close encounters of the clean kind

About two months ago I was sitting at my desk when a gentleman walked in. The first thing he said was that I looked very familiar to him. I looked closer, but he did not look familiar to me. "I'm with the Los Angeles County Probation Department," he told me. I laughed. No way could my name or my face or *anything* be familiar to him. I was never put on probation. All through my years of using, I was either in prison or out on parole. I never got such a break as to be on probation.

He told me he had been next door. There's some type of drug research and advocacy agency there, and he had been giving a "chalk talk" to the staff. While there, he had found out that the N.A. office (where I work) was next door and had stopped by to get some literature. Then he handed me his calling card. I looked at it, and it all came back.

He had been my son's first probation officer. It was this man standing in front of me who had recommended so many years before that our oldest son, John,* get snatched from my

husband and me because we were junkies. The judge had agreed with his recommendation, telling us he was going to make our boy a ward of the county because he would be better off there.

I looked at him and said his name, and told him what my name was, and told him whose mother I was. He was shocked. Then, considering the office we were in, he said, "Of course, you're clean," and I said "Yes." Then I said, "I've even got a better surprise for you. John is clean, too!" I explained to him how John had gotten clean first and had brought me to my first meeting.

John was smoking weed by the time he was nine years old. At sixteen he was a full-blown junkie, already on probation. He was pretty steadily in trouble with the law, right along with his parents. When my husband died of an overdose, John was eighteen. John became my crime partner, my using partner, you know. And that's how it was until he turned twenty-one.

This probation officer had really taken a big liking to John. I remember him placing John in some kind of recovery house when he was sixteen. It was a twelve-step adolescent program of some kind, and they were really

"I have a success story to tell you."

unheard of back then. He had done his best in a bad situation. John stayed only one day at the recovery house. He called home and said, "I need a fix." Being the addict father that he was, my husband went and got him.

This same man took him to another

recovery house when John was twenty-one. John stayed a couple of months, then he got clean at twenty-two, and he's been clean ever since. It's going on thirteen years now. To this day we're both clean through N.A. I told this P.O. that, and he was really just jazzed.

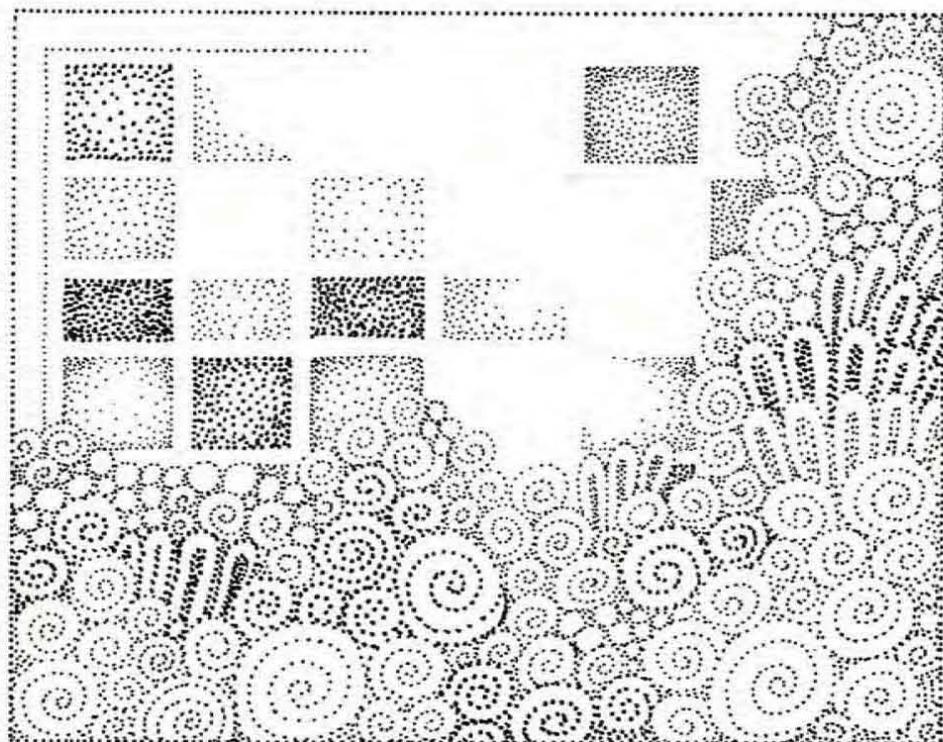
John took me to my first meeting. I call John my hope, and Jimmy—my youngest son—my bottom. I didn't even realize it until just now, but Jimmy was born about the same time that we went to court with John. It was looking at Jimmy that made me see what I had become.

My husband had already died of the disease, and I was a "methadonian." "I'm going to make an orphan out of this kid if I don't clean up," I thought. I mean, he had been born hooked. It

had almost killed him at birth. And now it had come to this.

It was looking at Jimmy that made me understand that I had come to a bottom. I was walking down the street, holding Jimmy's hand, when I just had to stop and call John, who was already clean. I said, "John, I got to do something." I didn't know what—I was totally hopeless—but I had to do *something*. I asked him if he could think of anything, and he brought me to N.A. So John was my hope, you know what I mean? My youngest my bottom, and my oldest my hope.

So much has happened, not only this big change, but little living changes. I always seem to see the change in me reflected in the changes in my family. My daughter now has two children of her own. I remember her when she



* "John" and later "Jimmy" are not the actual names.

was younger, as a teenager. She had acted as Jimmy's mother, because I really wasn't able to. She's the one who changed his diaper and saw that he ate.

It's so different today. Yesterday, they came by to pick me up from work to take me to babysit my two grandchildren. Today, I'm the only one my daughter trusts to watch her children. I mean, that's such a difference. She had to be "mom" years ago, and today she trusts me with her own children. That's quite a difference—the difference recovery makes.

When I'd finished telling him the story, the probation officer said it really did him good to see that I was *alive*—and that really got me. I mean, I got all choked up.

It took me back to what it used to be like—the kind of mother that I was, the kind of person that I was—and then standing right there in that office

"I'm going to make an orphan out of this kid if I don't clean up," I thought.

with him, being an N.A. special worker, being clean, being responsible. It's just where I am today, and I got grateful.

Then this gentleman went zooming back next door to where he had been. A man and a woman were sitting in there with the staff, giving their presentations. The woman was from the police department and the man was a judge, I was told later. They were in the middle of a conversation about failure rates for recovering addicts.

The staff of the agency was trying to convince them that there was hope and that addicts could recover, but they were up against that old thing about "once a dope fiend, always a dope fiend," and the failure rate being so high.

The P.O. just jumped in and said, "Excuse me, but I have a success story to tell you." He told them all about running into me next door, and about John, and about how he had been John's P.O. It made him feel good to know that we were both clean, and that it was all due to N.A. He said, "What a success story. It does my heart good."

A staff member at the advocacy agency later told me that at that moment there was nothing more that he needed to say. He really believed that was God's message and God's timing. It came in at just the right moment.

I mean, he could have had fifty pages of good stuff written down, and it wouldn't have made any difference to that police officer and judge. But he didn't have to say anything—the proof he needed to change their minds was in the story. They were impressed—and so was I when he told me about it! One more time I had felt the brush of God's hand as He reached into my life, and I felt the power of this program all over again.

V.M., California

Editor's note: Since we first received this article we've heard again from V.M. She told us that her youngest son, the one we called Jimmy—her "bottom"—had been admitted to a recovery house. At this writing, he'd been clean four weeks.

Service: small is just as important

For several months during the first year of my recovery, the idea of service work sparked apprehension and fear in me. Area and regional service involved too many personalities at that time for this addict, so I swept the idea of service work under the carpet.

As I approached nine months of recovery, I attended my first convention. The dimensions of service work came into perspective for me there. Service is something that is ultimately done for one's own recovery. With that knowledge I began to see that I indeed had been involved in service for several months, even though I wasn't involved beyond the group level.

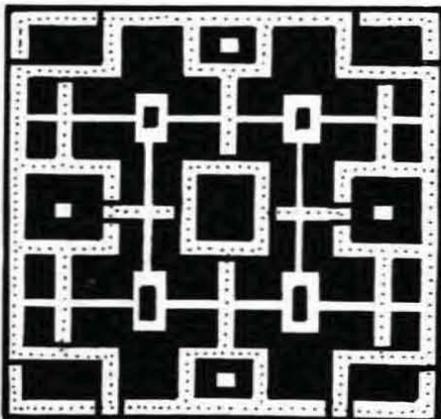
Presently I am completing a year as group secretary. Getting out of bed early, I have at times questioned my commitment to setting up my home group's Saturday morning meeting. Once I'm up and out, any question about that commitment is answered. I want recovery, and I can only find it at a meeting.

During a recent out-of-province trip I found an N.A. hug, hot coffee, and a meeting. Service in that part of the country was being discussed. I was

able to repay that community's hospitality by forwarding them literature and information from my region when I returned home.

Service is the communication link at all levels of my recovery. Just recently, during a period of being housebound, I was checking the N.A. helpline telephone log. The "poor me" feeling I foster when I'm sick was slightly amplified.

Within moments the helpline was requesting assistance in responding to a caller. The desperation and seriousness of that individual took me outside of myself. A quick check with another N.A. member confirmed that



professional emergency help was required. I later received a call back to say that the person was indeed being helped. A telephone call is a small part of service, but at that moment it was a vital one.

While talking with my Higher Power before turning in that particular evening, I expressed my gratitude for the message I had received. For today, as long as I remain willing to be a servant in the program of Narcotics Anonymous, my personal recovery feels secure.

B.K., Ontario

The computerized sponsor

It had been another long day at the office. I had been working endlessly on a project of my own—one computer program after another. I had been staring at those little screens for so long I was sure to go blind.

My office had become so automated in the last few years that few personnel remained for me to have conversations with during the course of the day. My lunches were taken alone. It wasn't until the evenings that I usually got to talk to someone, and that was at a meeting. I hadn't been to many of those of late.

Yes, I'm a recovering addict, and powerless over many things that occur around me daily. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to relax and unwind at a meeting with other addicts. But I'll go tomorrow, when I have more time.

The phone rings. It's my insurance agent. He's called to tell me that until he gets the correct chassis number off of my new car that I have no insurance. I run down stairs to find my car has been stolen. No chassis number—no insurance. I immediately call the police, feeling sure that they will be able to locate my car. It can't have been gone long.

The police arrive and place me under arrest for an old warrant. I manage to get bailed out, and when I arrive home via taxi I realize my wallet has been liberated of all its cash (I know these things never happen at police stations).

I'm sure my girlfriend is home, so I rush in the front door and find her in bed with my best friend. They both go screaming out the front door past the cab driver who is now certain I am a real loon. My piggy bank houses just enough to pay off the driver.

Back inside I plop down in my favorite chair, which collapses under my weight and deposits me spastically on the floor. I crawl to the phone and call the one number I know to find certain relief—*my sponsor*.

Rrring...rrring... "Well hello, this is George, your sponsor. I hope you've had a wonderful and enjoyable day; if

*Everything was
going wrong, and
when I called my
sponsor I got his
answering machine.
It was like a bad
dream!*

you haven't, stay on the line for further instructions." It can't be! It's a recording! My sponsor has taken on one too many sponsees, and now he's got a frigging recording.

"Remember," the recording continues, "no matter what, don't pick up, and go to meetings." *I'll kill him!*

The tape goes on. "If you're having

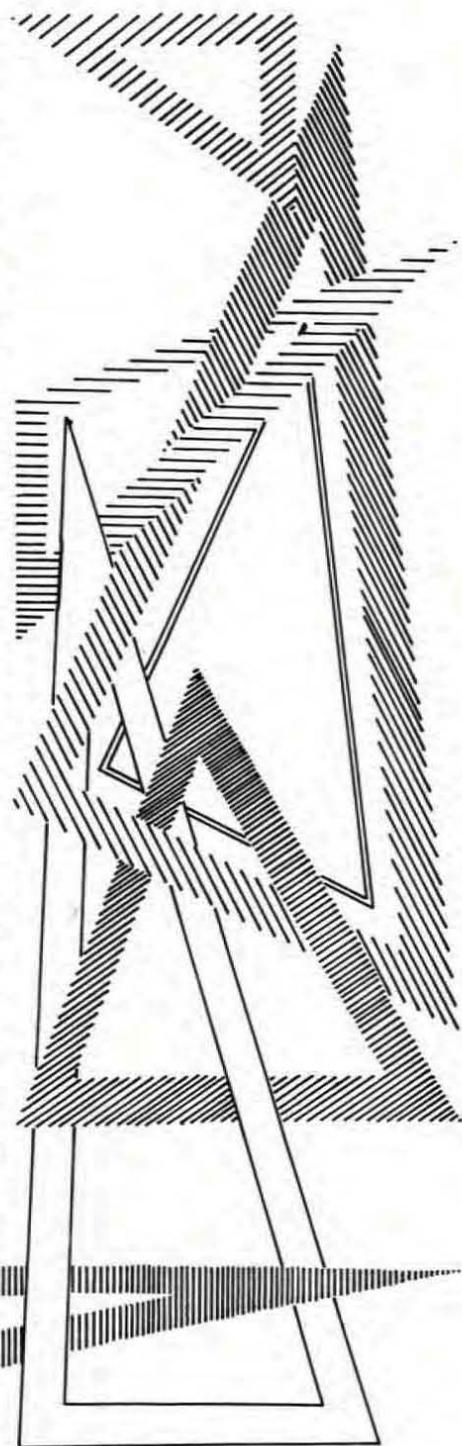
problems with a relationship, press 1 followed by the # sign. If you're having problems with money press 2, followed by the # sign. Lost your job, press 3 followed by the # sign."

I can't stand it. I'm losing my mind. I run to the nearest meeting, which should be starting any time now. I can hear people sharing as I approach the door. Ahhh—the warmth, the love, the caring. I burst through the door, only to find the chairs full of computers all hooked up to each other. "Mary" is sharing with the group about her new way of life, and there's not a soul in the room but me.

I sit on the doorstep and begin to cry. I feel a slight tug on my shoulder and look up to see my boss standing over me. "Russ, Russ, wake up, you're having a bad dream." I run screaming downstairs to my car—which has miraculously reappeared—yelling at the top of my lungs, "I will not become a number...I will not become a number."

The boss turns slowly and smiles knowingly as he reaches down under my desk, pulling out the tape which is just ending. "...if you're having a problem with an amends, press 9 followed by the # sign..." He sighs, saying to no one in particular, "I suppose his sponsor knew what he was doing when he gave me this tape." The tape label reads, "One crazy way to get Russ to a meeting."

S.R., Florida



Being there

Recovery is the best thing that ever happened to me. My friends and family will confirm this. When I got clean I had no options. I went to meetings, out to coffee and to N.A. functions, and I held on to the people around me for dear life. I couldn't stay clean or even function without the help and support of people in this fellowship. The other members were my source of hope, strength and experience. Thank god they were there to share it with me.

After a short time in N.A., a funny thing began to happen to me. I started to get better. As I learned some living skills and started to apply the steps, I found myself being able to do the things I needed to do without having to ask someone *every* time whether it was right. In fact, I went too far with that sometimes. Fortunately, I was able to make it through several bouts with self-reliance gone askew, where I wouldn't ask for help no matter how much my gut was tearing me apart from the inside.

Denial of my need for what N.A. has is a familiar aspect of my disease. Sometimes, with a few years behind me, the subtle idea that I'm all better now and don't need N.A. can be very powerful. This is an aspect of my disease that has mutated from the less subtle version of the same denial I suffered from when I was first coming around: "I don't have that bad of a

problem. I can quit whenever I want to."

Denial and self-deception are killers, and I have found personal interaction with other members of the fellowship to be critical to staying in touch with who I am and where I came from. I am grateful that I stayed involved with service work even when I thought I didn't need to. It kept me in touch with the fellowship and the newcomers.

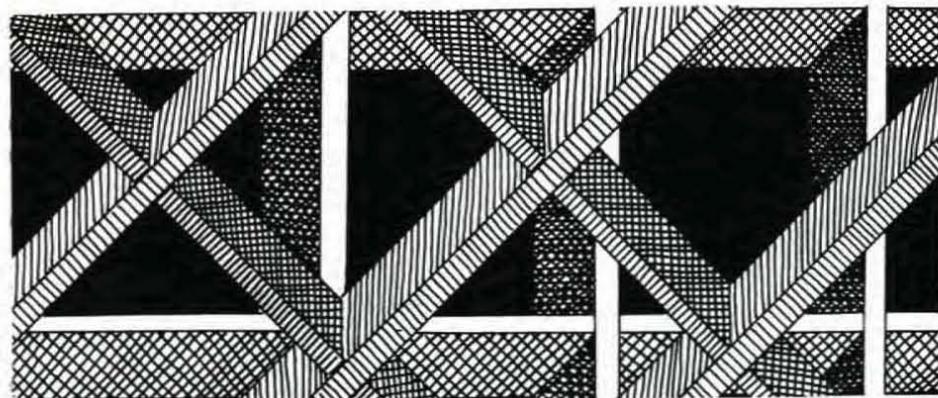
Another issue I need to keep addressing for my continued recovery is self-centeredness. I came to N.A. with some overwhelming needs. I have gotten some tools here that make my life more manageable. To just move on and leave the fellowship behind would be disastrous to my recovery.

When we say, "The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting," it's not just because it sounds cute. The new people keep us in touch with the pain and degradation of this

When I am unwilling to share my recovery, I am robbing myself as well as the new person.

disease. They are living examples of the kinds of dues to be paid for complacency in our recovery.

The newcomers keep me green and help to renew my commitment to recovery. For this reason it is important for me to attend meetings and be available to share (give and receive) with the newer members. When



I am unwilling to share my recovery, I call it theft. I am robbing myself, as well as the person like me who got here a little later, of the gift of recovery.

I was recently sharing with someone on this topic. I related that I am finding myself more willing today to work the steps and traditions at almost five years clean than at any other time in my recovery. When I got here I was desperate, but I found out quickly that I had a lot of reservations. At other times I was willing, but I got in my own way a lot (and still do; not as much though) and needed to be motivated by pain.

Today I am very much in touch with wanting to grow and enjoy the results of practicing the principles. It is this desire to grow spiritually, not to just keep paying the dues that are the expenses of my defects, that motivates me today.

I feel very fortunate that I am in this place, because I have seen quite a number of fellow members who were not able to move past that "I'm better now" stage and who found out through a relapse that they need N.A. I can learn and grow without waiting for my life to get to such a point.

Another point I want to address is balance. Even though I have stressed the importance of keeping my recovery number one on my priority list, and my involvement with the fellowship up near the top of that list, I have found that it is important for me to pursue other aspects of my life as well.

As a result of taking an active role in my recovery, I have found new goals and ambitions for myself. On a daily basis, my Higher Power gives me the guidance and strength to walk through

"My problem isn't that bad. I can quit whenever I want to."

doors that this new way of life has opened for me.

It gives me a great deal of pride (the right kind) to be able to recognize my assets and then go about accentuating them. By pursuing a formal education, becoming involved with my family and my community, and taking the steps to continue becoming a more acceptable, responsible, productive member of society, I am making amends to myself and all those nameless, face-

less people on my Eighth Step list.

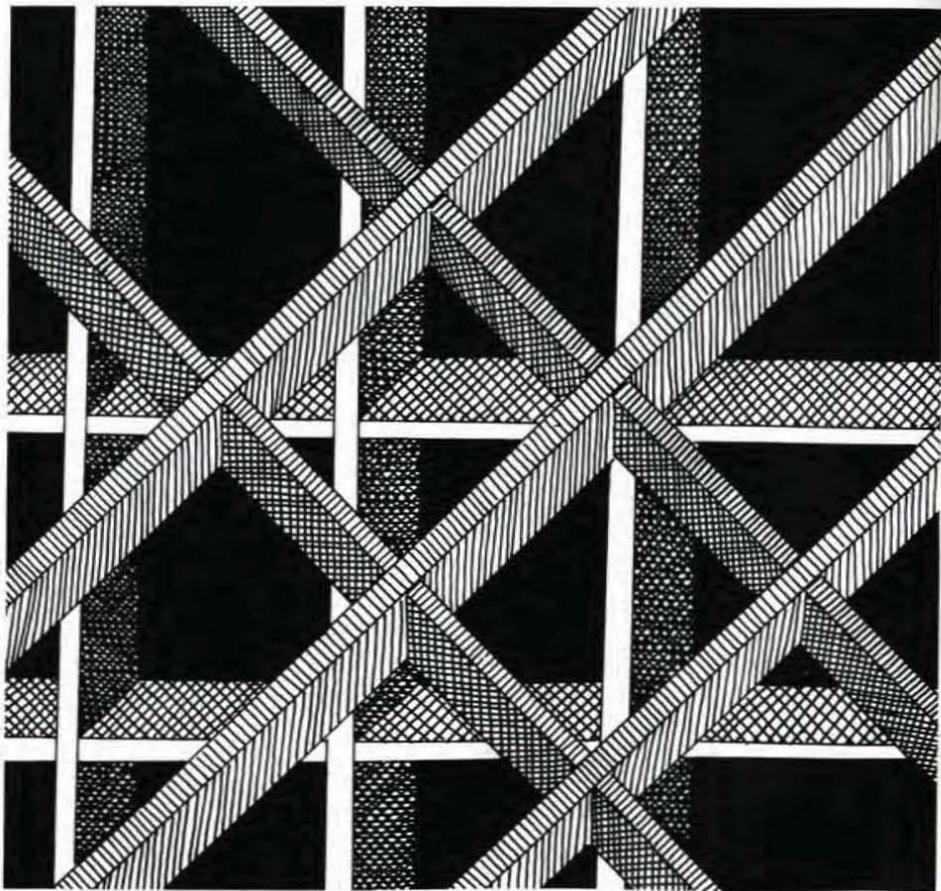
I am finally in the process of making right the mess this disease made as it tore through my life. This is what happens when that one promise, "freedom from active addiction," is realized. This is as it should be. Still, it is important to remember where that freedom came from and that I still have a disease that is progressive, fatal and patient, a disease that I must continue to recover from on a daily basis.

As all of us continue to put our lives back together, please let's remember that we need N.A. and N.A. needs us. By applying the steps to our lives, we

are an example of hope and inspiration for the newer members. But we serve as examples only if we are around for them to see it. Today I make the effort to share my recovery because I care, and I feel like it's one of the things I need to do in order to keep growing and learning.

I can not express in words how grateful I am that members were there for me when I came in. But that may be just as well, because words only go so far anyway. What really counts is that I followed their example, and I'm still here today. That *does* express my gratitude.

Anonymous



Sponsorship

"Just for today, I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery."

One of our earliest involvements with others in N.A. begins with sponsorship. I'd like to share what has helped this addict in sponsorship, both in sponsoring others and in being sponsored. I don't have all of the answers. These are just my own thoughts based on personal experience.

Sponsorship is a two-way street; it helps both parties involved. The sponsor uses his/her experience, strength and hope to help another addict. Sponsors can't pay your bills, or get your marriage back together. But they can be someone you can confide in. As the N.A. Basic Text states, "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel."

Seeking a sponsor

- * Check out various meetings among different N.A. groups and see who the winners are. Ask yourself: "Do I want what they have?"
- * Take the risk and talk to people. Remember, we must be willing to go to any lengths. It is recommended that a good sponsor should

be clean at least a year and seem to be enjoying it.

- * A sponsor should be of the same sex. This reduces the problem of distractions that may interfere with the newcomer's program.
- * Make sure this person will be available and will make the commitment necessary to sponsor you.
- * Talk with this person first to see what you both expect out of sponsorship.
- * Make sure this sponsor introduces you to others in the fellowship; get their phone numbers. Remember, your particular sponsor may not always be home.
- * Be willing to take your sponsor's suggestions. If the suggestion is not clear, then get clarification. You

*Sponsor by example.
Work the steps, use
your own sponsor,
and live the program.*

may not always agree, but remember that your sponsor has been clean longer. Talk about it if you don't agree, and share your feelings, thoughts and ideas.

- * If you make an appointment with your sponsor, *show up!* If you are unable to make your appointment, be courteous enough to call so they don't worry.
- * Don't just have a sponsor in name only; *use them!* Call them often enough to let them know how you are, in good times and bad times. If you have a problem, talk to them and share it. Don't keep anything inside.
- * Yes, you can have more than one sponsor, to get a wide variety of

experience, strength and hope. Be careful; don't tell one sponsor one thing and another sponsor something entirely different. Get honest and try to be consistent.

- * Trust your sponsor. If for some reason they betray your trust (and sometimes this may happen), it's okay to seek another sponsor. When appropriate, tell them why you are seeking another sponsor; it may help their program.
- * It's never too late to find a sponsor.

Being a sponsor

- * Show by example what being clean has done for you; work the steps, use *your* sponsor, and live the program.
- * Encourage the newcomer to attend various meetings at different N.A. groups to get different views.
- * Encourage open-mindedness about N.A., especially if the newcomer isn't sure whether he/she is an addict or not.
- * Introduce the newcomer to others in the fellowship, and encourage them to get phone numbers.
- * Stress the importance of working the Twelve Steps.
- * Don't be a "gestapo sponsor." Don't give orders; make suggestions. Use the N.A. text to back up the suggestions you are giving. This helps to give the suggestion more merit.
- * Keep an open mind and keep your ego out of it. Be understanding, patient, and willing to devote the time necessary to sponsorship.
- * Don't pretend to be right all of the time. Admit, "I don't know," and find someone who does. This is helpful when you find the addict who may need some professional

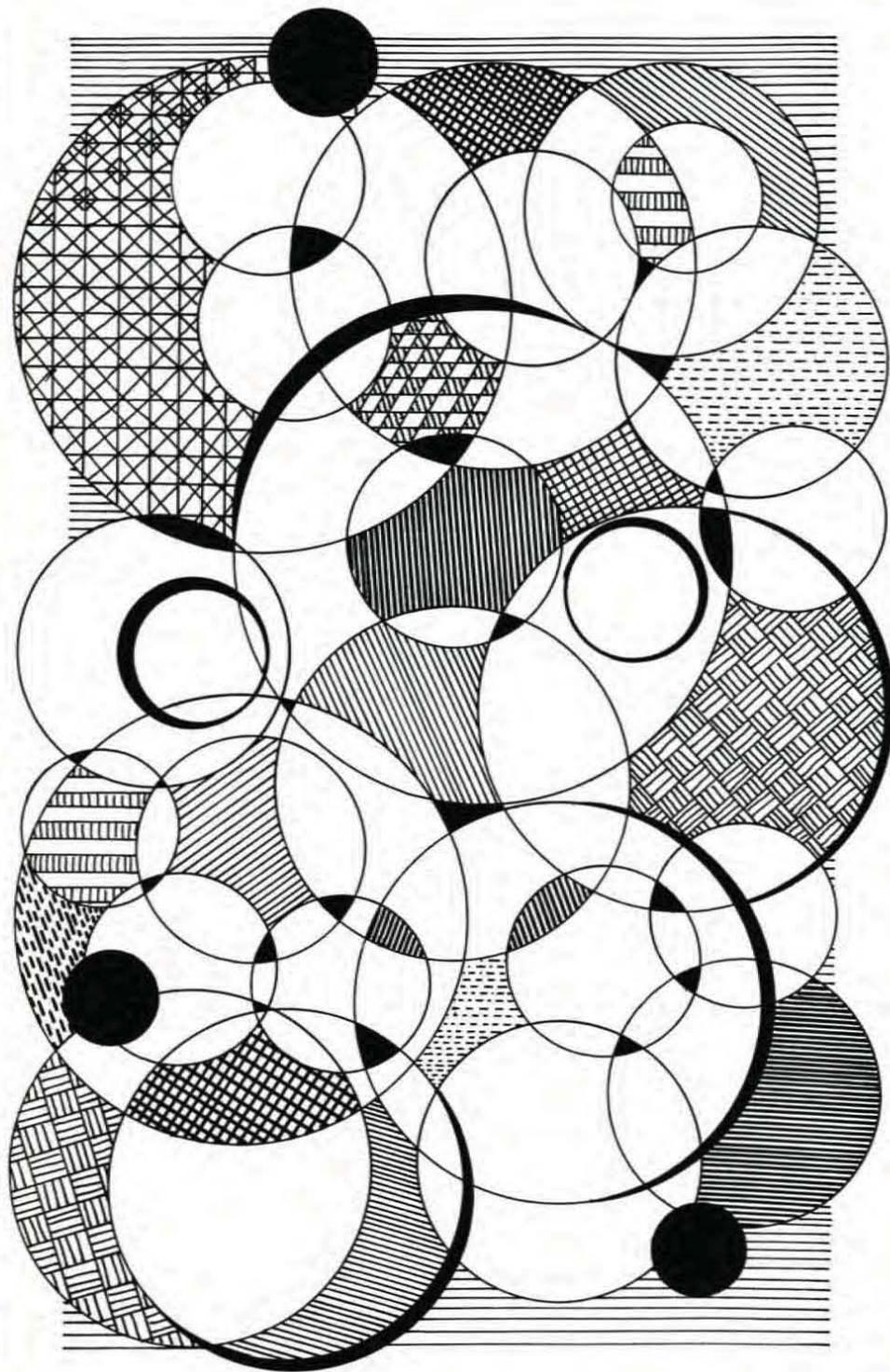
counseling. Encourage the newcomer to utilize any and all support systems available to his recovery.

- * Don't be insulted if the newcomer seeks out others for experience, strength and hope, or finds another sponsor. This is the true test of readiness for sponsorship: the willingness to place principles before personalities. Be okay with that.
- * Encourage the newcomer to lean on the program, not on you.

Check out a number of meetings and see who the winners are. Ask yourself, "Do I want what they have?"

- * As soon as possible, encourage the newcomer to get into service and group activities.
- * Stress the importance of the Twelve Traditions.
- * Stress the importance of going to meetings, no matter how long you are clean.
- * After having a session with the newcomer, be sure to thank them for helping you to stay clean one more day (because they have).
- * Try not to call the person that you sponsor a "pigeon;" it is a negative term implying someone who waddles around and defecates on their sponsor. Use terms like "sponsee" or "friend" or something more positive.
- * Take the person you sponsor on a Twelfth Step call when they are ready. This will help both of you.

R.B., Florida



Love, tolerance and the N.A. purist

I was going through some boxes my wife and I had in storage, and I came across my old Second Edition Basic Text, binding taped and "N.A." barely visible on the cover. This is one of quite a few Basic Texts I have owned; most have been loaned to newcomers or given away. God willing, clean addicts use them in their recovery today.

I also came across the May 1987 edition of the *N.A. Way*. HP saw to it that I reread "A Letter from a Recovering Purist" by J.D. of New Jersey. This prompted me to write to the *N.A. Way* and share my experience, strength and hope.

I consider myself an "N.A. purist" in that I attend the N.A. Fellowship only, use N.A. language at our meetings, and, yes, cringe when I hear outside enterprises endorsed in our meetings, whether in reference to other fellowships, treatment facilities, or anything else. I have in my recovery openly blasted these "offenders of our traditions," quoting from our Basic Text, "The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not negotiable"! I can empathize with J.D.

When I first sought recovery, I attended both N.A. and A.A. meetings. N.A. was young in our community, and there were very few, if any, "purists" in our area at that time. There were many "addicts and alcoholics," and we were "sober and clean" and "clean and dry."

I had been involved in service with both fellowships, and I had unknowingly broken many traditions of both fellowships during this period of what I call "riding the fence." I was announcing N.A. functions at A.A. meetings; I was passing out flyers for A.A. conventions at N.A. meetings. I was fanatical about recovery.

I had one year clean, and I was working the program—actually, *my* program. I had the two separate fellowships of N.A. and A.A. wrapped up as one, and I thought it worked just

*I took my purist
attitude and shoved
it down the throats
of other addicts for
making mistakes I
had made myself.*

fine—until groups started voting not to let me pass out flyers of another fellowship, and concerned members asked me not to announce other fellowships' activities at their meeting. I learned a lot about traditions by breaking them.

I was faced with a decision. I could not serve two fellowships. I don't know how to describe the feeling; I had to make a choice.

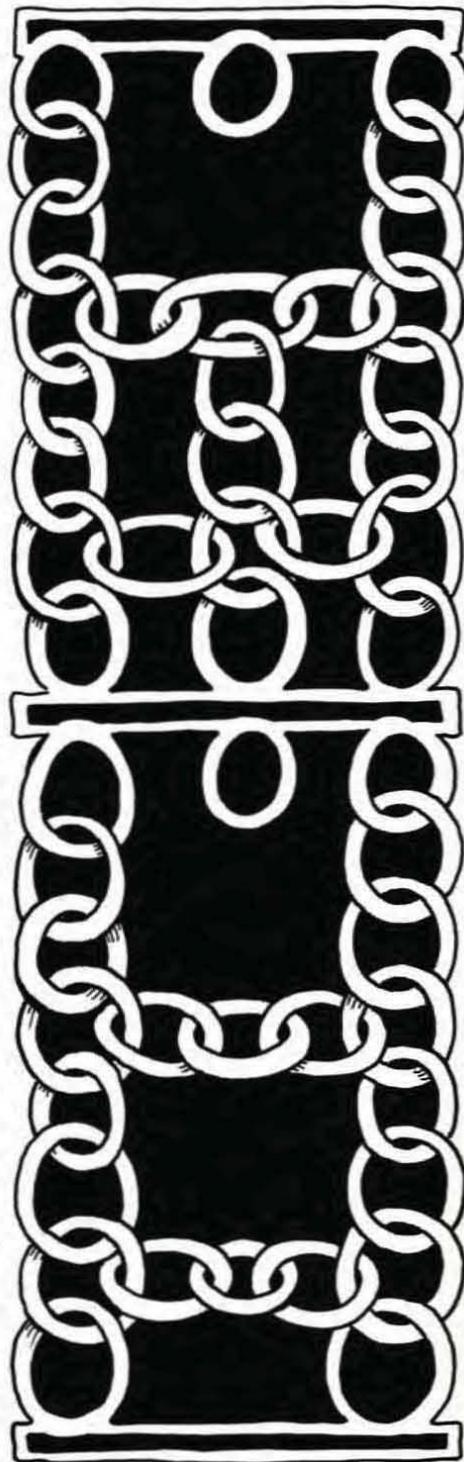
My Tenth Step journal reflects this change in the middle of my second year clean. Now I was expressing gratitude for being clean, instead of clean and sober. I chose N.A. as my fellowship because of the empathy between addicts. My recovery and my service to N.A. have both blossomed since I made that decision.

I have over four and a half years clean, and I gratefully give credit to the N.A. Fellowship for my recovery. I have been involved in N.A. service since before my clean date. I had two relapses before surrendering to the N.A. way of life. I find today that I can only serve N.A. faithfully if I am truly a committed member. I was only doing myself and others harm trying to serve two fellowships.

First, I had a hard time becoming an N.A. purist. Then I made it harder; I took my purist attitude and shoved it down the throats of other addicts for making mistakes I had made myself. I have used my love and concern for N.A. as a brutal weapon, self-righteously beating innocent addicts with it. I can see now that I was not very loving or tolerant.

I have mellowed quite a bit. I still feel the same about N.A., but I express my views a little more tactfully and practice some openmindedness. I try to take the love I've received in N.A. and pass it on to those following in our footsteps. It's taken me a long time to see that I can empathize with the newcomer, the most important person at any meeting, regardless of how they express themselves. Our primary purpose is to carry the message of N.A., not drill it into newcomer's heads.

J.P., Ohio



Clean and green

I was reared in a pub in Ireland which my parents owned. It seemed to me that the adults were having a great time downstairs as I lay upstairs in my bed. I was an only child, and lonely. I suppose all that helped me on my way to becoming a heavy teenage drinker.

I got into trouble with drink from the start and was expelled from school several times. Looking back on it now, I see alcohol as my drug of choice, as it was for most in small towns in Ireland.

I was hospitalized for alcohol abuse for the first time when I was eighteen. I got a fright from this, but resumed drinking some months after I had persuaded my parents to let me out of the hospital.

I went through the hell of car crashes, rows at home, failing at college and being banned from driving. But eventually I graduated, got a job and built up a reputation for absenteeism.

I had experimented with "street drugs" a few times in my teens, and I believed that pills could take away all pain. But my trouble was coming from alcohol abuse, so on the advice of a landlady I sought help and stopped drinking.

A few months later I met a girl I liked; within a year we were married. I drank on and off during our engage-

ment, honeymoon and marriage. I continued to be absent from my job.

I sought psychiatric help and was prescribed anti-depressants and tranquilizers, and over a number of years I became totally dependant on my pills.

I tried to stop taking them, but what with panic attacks and terrors, I could not stop. Eventually I was admitted to a detox centre, a locked unit where I was weaned off. Other patients coming off "heavy drugs" seemed very calm compared to me. I was terrified all the time. I must have walked over a hundred miles up and down the very short corridor.

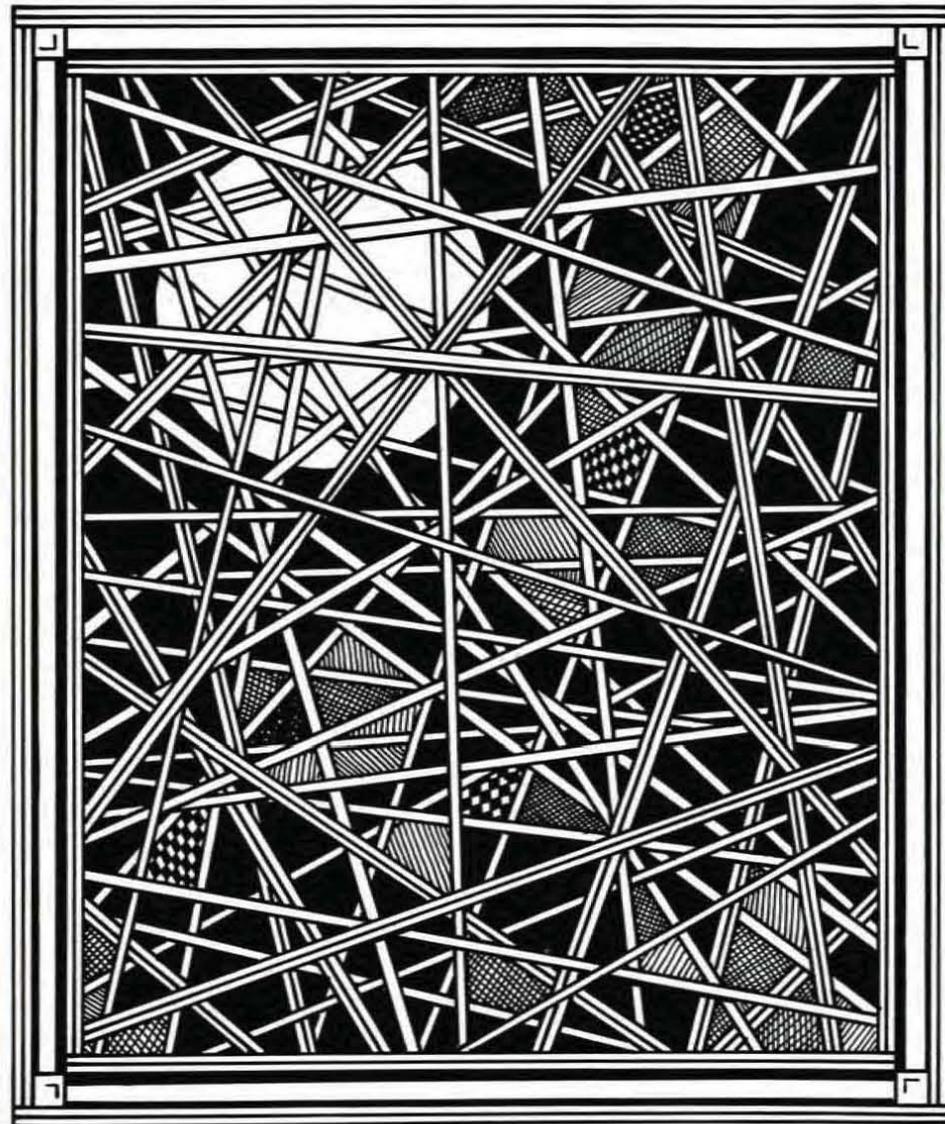
After a month I went to a treatment centre but was told to leave after five days as screaming panic attacks made me "not suitable." My wife had been told at the detox centre that I may have to be on some sort of medication for the rest of my life.

I came home, but due to extreme anxiety I had to enter another hospital. Soon, pills were prescribed. I had been off all chemicals for six

I was reared in a pub in Ireland which my parents owned. I could hear the adults having a great time downstairs as I lay upstairs in my bed.

months then. Rather than fall back, I managed to get a contact number for Narcotics Anonymous.

I had been at one meeting during my brief stay at the treatment centre



and now I knew it was my last chance. I went to a meeting, which required a round trip of one hundred miles. (This was the only N.A. meeting in the Munster region of Ireland. Now we have five meetings in Munster and our own ASC.) I kept going back. I worked the program as best I knew how. I got a sponsor.

I truly believe I owe my life and my

sanity to the program of Narcotics Anonymous, through which I found my Higher Power and my precious friends. I haven't had a mood-altering chemical since that first N.A. meeting five years ago. I recently had my first day's absence from work in three years, due to the flu. I am back in the mainstream of life.

J.H., Ireland

Step Three

“We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

In Step Two, I came to believe in some sort of power that could help me. I got some faith and hope by observing others. Another way of describing Step Two is, “If they can do it, so can I.” Then in Step Three I made a decision to follow their path. That decision is the main part of Step Three.

Our Basic Text lays it on the line: “We made the decision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. We made it!”

Preceding the decision, I experienced great amounts of pain through many failures at control. A little bit more pain would have probably led to death, irreversible brain damage, or a decade in jail. On the other hand, less pain may not have been enough to motivate me to change.

My methods of control included religion, psychiatry, self-hypnosis, exercise, and self-help books. Years ago when I came into the fellowship, there were only a few self-help books on the market; today there are hundreds. Perhaps I would never have made it to our meetings if I was having a drug

problem in today's world; I would have had to study each and every book available.

Like most of us, I did not do this step perfectly. I surrendered my drug addiction but not my entire life. I turned my will and my life over to the care of our H.P. one day, but took it back the next. Sometimes I would surrender totally, for instance during a convention, where I have experienced a feeling of complete peace. Then came Monday morning when I took control again and snatched back my same old misery.

Why did I have such trouble with this step? One reason is that I had so many years of running the show myself. Even though I had failed for years, I had years of experience at rationalizing and blaming in order to

I was afraid that the life my Higher Power had in store for me would be bland and boring. “No thank you,” I thought.

avoid facing the true causes of my poor success.

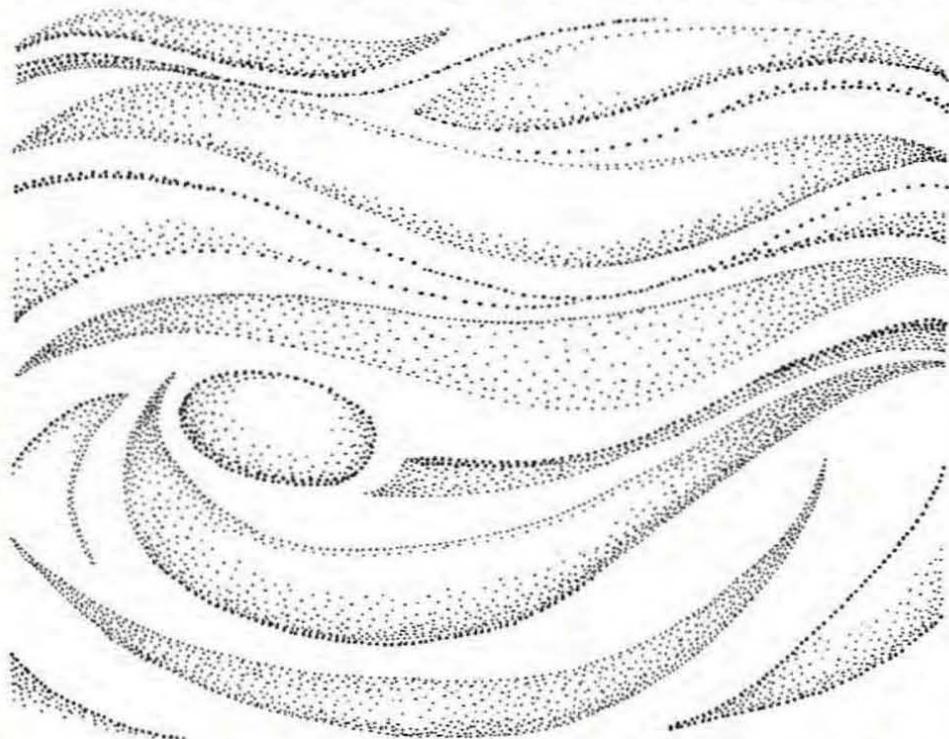
I believed that the life which my H.P. would contrive for me would not be to my liking. I was afraid it would be bland and boring. I could envision little fun or prestige in a life handed to me by a God. And, boy, do I love fun and prestige. I knew people who turned to religion, then became dull, bland, hard-working bores who preached incessantly about their “good life” since they turned to “the

Good Book.” No thank you, I thought; I don't want any.

But our program of recovery is not a religion. This step and others refer to a God as we understood him. So we are free to choose the concept of God that we understand. Many choose the group as their higher power because the group enables them to stay off of drugs, something that addicts can not do alone; hence, the group is a power

A vision of what recovery really means is made quite clear in our Basic Text. Chapter Ten, “More Will be Revealed,” to me is one of the most powerfully written in the book. The chapter says, “...we are freed to become who we want to be.... Our dreams come true.... We have found that joy doesn't come from material things, but from within ourselves.”

Now that I have accumulated some



greater than ourselves.

We do not have “commandments;” we have steps. We are admonished with “Easy Does It.” It seems that we just need some willingness to try.

N.A. is a program of recovery. We recover from our addiction and go on to live a full life, our course determined by what we discover to be our dreams.

clean time, I know that these words from our Basic Text are true. I have seen my dreams and the dreams of my fellow members come true.

Chapter Ten also says, “If we had written our list of expectations when we came to the program, we would have been cheating ourselves.... Our disease has been arrested, and now anything is possible.”

J.S., New York

In God's time

I just recently celebrated five years clean. Congratulations to me! It's really exciting for me, not because of the amount of time, though clean time does mean something to me. It's exciting because I was one of those addicts who would keep coming in and out.

I've been around the program for twelve years now. I think I've had a year or two here and there. I really don't know, because I lied so much when I first came around. But, when I came back to the program this last time, it was a humiliating experience for me.

I knew a lot of people with a lot of clean time, and I was embarrassed for the amount of time I had. At conventions, I hated to stand up for the

If I truly practice these principles in my life, I am going to change. I can't stop it, or decide when or how. I just have to accept it.

countdown. When I had four years, I finally reached a point where I was proud of the clean time I had acquired. Then I realized that it really didn't matter how much I had; what

mattered was the quality. I'm always hearing that in meetings. I finally experienced it.

How I feel about *me* also matters. I had better enjoy these years and experiences, because ten years is going to come up real soon. Right now I'm in the process of working the Twelve Steps over again from the beginning. I want to experience the steps on a deeper level.

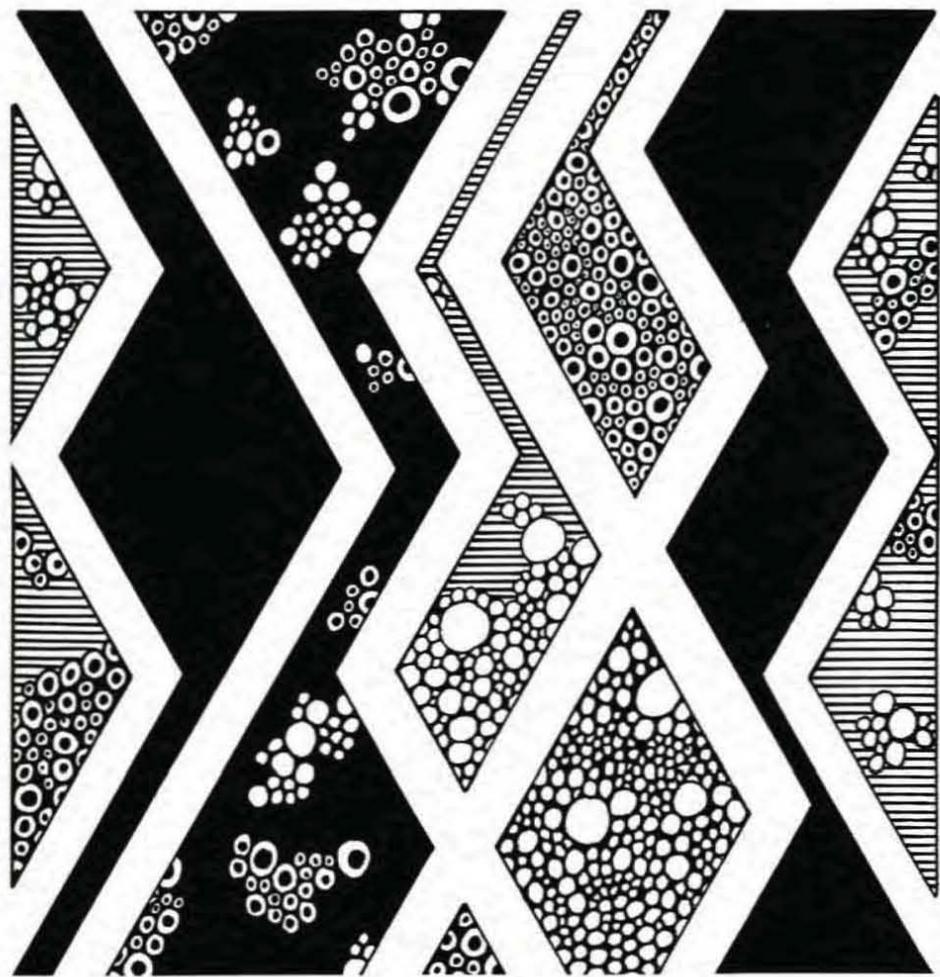
So far it has been a real experience. I'm starting from the beginning. I'm reading everything I can find on each one first, then I write on each step. It has been neat for me to see how I feel



about each one now, and comparing that to how I felt then. I really didn't understand the steps or feel them when I first worked them.

When I had about two years clean I thought I was at a point where I really knew who I was, finally. I felt good about myself; I could share openly in meetings; I had a job and was dependable; I was handling the responsibility of being a mother of two children. I'm at the point now—and have been for about four months—where I feel like I don't know who I am anymore. In reading the Second Step before I wrote, I realized something. Let me try to explain it.

I believe right now I'm in the process of changing. The way I look at people and life is changing, and I now believe that I have no choice in change. If I truly practice these prin-



ciples in my life, I am going to change. I can't stop it, or decide when or how. I have to work through it and accept it before I can understand what's happening. If I fight it, I'll be in turmoil and confusion.

"In God's time." I think I finally understand what is meant by "in God's time." But I also realize I have to do the footwork by working through it, instead of doing nothing. This is the only way I'll find out who I truly am and be able to accept and love.

You see, for about four months I

was fighting my process of change. I didn't want to change the way I felt about life and about certain people. I felt like I was being untrue to myself by changing my opinions. I really wasn't; I was just changing because of my participation in the program, applying spiritual principles in my life.

I want to experience more miracles, and I want to know who I am today. There is some fear in change. But I've gone through enough situations in my recovery to really know that no matter what, I will be okay.

Anonymous, California

On the beam

An addict finds a path to balanced living

On January 5, 1973, I experienced the biggest event of my life. You might even say that my life as I know it began on that day, because that is when I got clean.

My father had planned for a long time to put me in an institution. He and my mother were frustrated and confused with my using behavior. They had sent their son off to college to get an engineering degree, and now had a person at home they did not recognize.

While I was using, my thinking and actions had become very destructive and self-centered. The lengths to which I went to fulfill my needs had been blown out of proportion. I could never get enough of anything, and was never happy with what I had.

I had become a master of self-deception. I went to all the places that other using addicts went, telling myself that I was not as sick as they were. I did all the things they did, but it was somehow not as bad.

I could not see my disease progressing, because I was so intent on maintaining "controlled using." I did not know that someday I would reach a point at which I could not stop using on my own.

After so many years of playing these

games with myself, I finally kept using just because I was afraid to stop. I had to take more drugs to get the same effect, and eventually the drugs wouldn't make me feel as they once did anymore at all.

Six months before I got clean, I stopped using for two weeks. I wasn't thinking about the withdrawal that I would go through. I just wanted to see if I could figure out what to do with myself and my life if I did stop. After two weeks, the fog began to lift a little, but fear overtook me and I went back to using once more.

My final detox in 1973 was very painful. I needed it to be that way in order to conclude on my own that I was an addict. Once I believed that in

I slowly began to appreciate the simple things, and to see a Higher Power at work in them.

my heart, much of the battle was over. I could then put a lot of the insanity to rest. I finally had a perspective on what the real problem was.

Over a period of time I became willing to let other people into my life and my thoughts again. Being clean, I experienced a full range of feelings, which included being able to like other people and to receive their love. I became spiritually reunited with my family. I slowly began to appreciate the simple things in life and to see the beauty of a Higher Power at work in them.

I eventually went back to work in

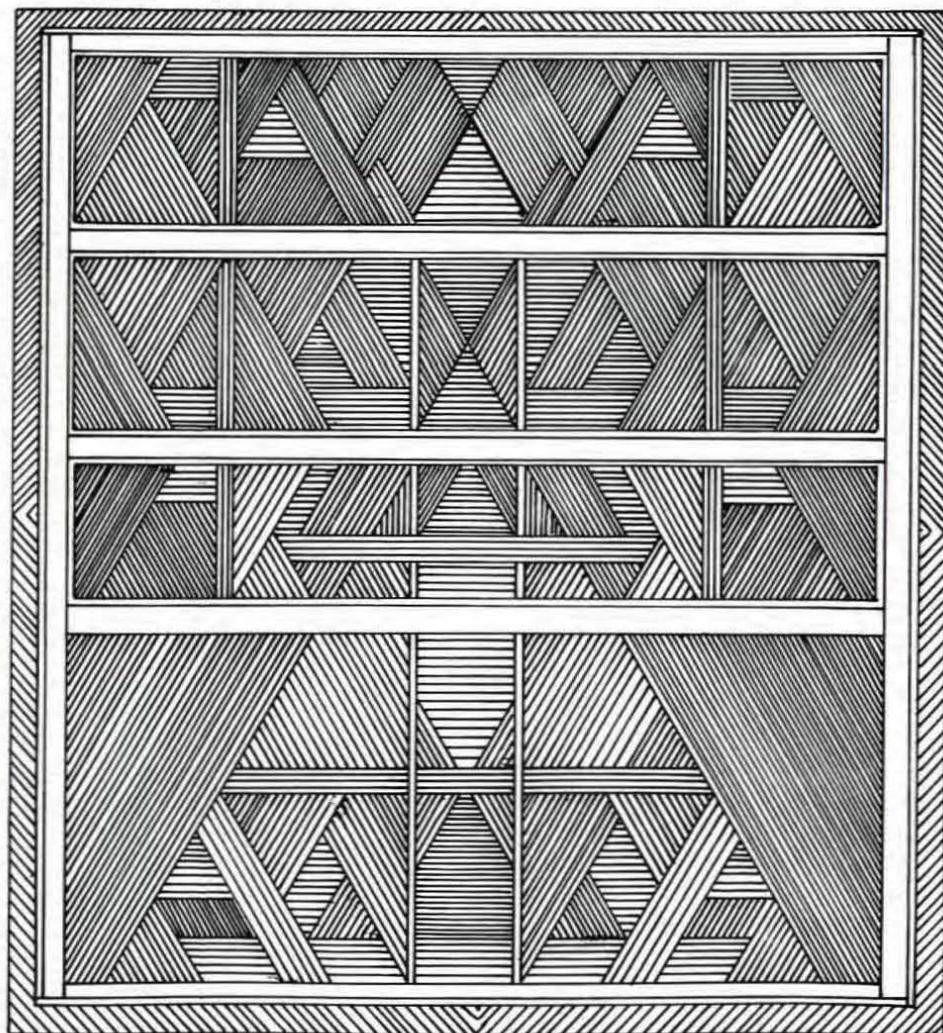
my chosen profession. This was hard for me at first, because years of active addiction had beaten down my self-esteem. I had to have a lot of support and a lot of tough love to be able to build my life back.

Today, I try to achieve balance in my life between the job, community and time spent involved with N.A. I maintain my personal recovery by going to meetings and getting involved in service. I am willing to take risks

and grow in my career situation. I enjoy participating in outside community functions because I feel that I have something to offer in them.

All in all, it has paid off quite well to stay clean a day at a time. I hope that anyone reading this who is wondering if they can make it will take something I have shared to heart and try to make the N.A. program a way to a whole new life.

J.M., Georgia



Praying through the pain

One of the gifts that came from being a responsible, productive member of society was that, after three years of clean time, I got a job which offered medical insurance. I decided to take advantage of the insurance last month. I needed surgery to repair a knee which I had injured several years earlier.

After I had made plans to go to another state and set up appointments with the doctor and the hospital, I began to feel fearful about the upcoming surgery. When I explored the feelings I was having, I found that I was not afraid of the surgery itself as much as I was afraid of the drugs I knew would be available to mask the pain of the operation. Although on the surface I had the best of intentions, the addict in me was looking forward to the opportunity to use. I was aware of this voice inside my head, telling me I had an ironclad justification for using on the occasion of my knee surgery.

That I could so easily slip into those old ways of thinking, even with many days of good recovery to my credit, frightened me enough that I sought out my sponsor before I left. I knew from experience that I would be unable to hide this obsession from

her, and over lunch I put words to my fears. I told her that I was afraid of what my head would tell me to do when I was weak and in pain.

My sponsor twelve-stepped me like a newcomer that day. She reminded me that my last days of using were a nightmare, that my disease would pick up right where it had left off the day I stopped using, and that since I was suicidal when I got to N.A. I probably would not live long if I began to use again.

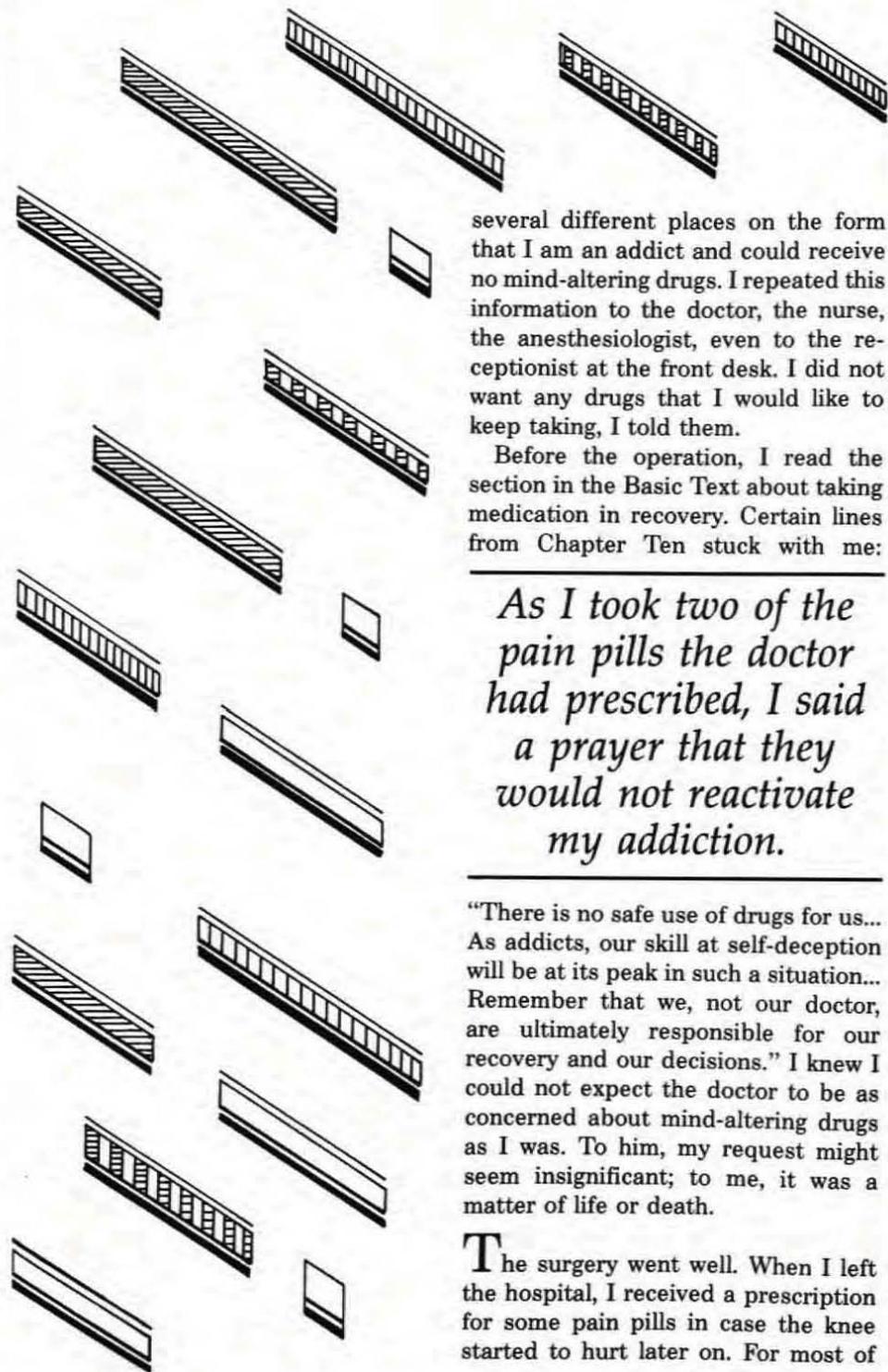
She reminded me that I could take my Higher Power with me, and suggested that I go to meetings while I

I knew that I had bought some "program insurance" by putting my fears into words.

was gone so other addicts could keep me on the right track. I gained hope from my friend during that conversation. Also, I knew that I had bought some "program insurance" by putting my fears into words.

I could not plead ignorance as an excuse, because I had admitted out loud what was going through my head. And I have learned in this program that once I talk about a problem out loud, its power is taken away. With slightly more confidence in the program and slightly less fear, I went to have the surgery.

At the initial doctor's appointment before I went in to the hospital, I filled out medical history forms. I wrote in



several different places on the form that I am an addict and could receive no mind-altering drugs. I repeated this information to the doctor, the nurse, the anesthesiologist, even to the receptionist at the front desk. I did not want any drugs that I would like to keep taking, I told them.

Before the operation, I read the section in the Basic Text about taking medication in recovery. Certain lines from Chapter Ten stuck with me:

As I took two of the pain pills the doctor had prescribed, I said a prayer that they would not reactivate my addiction.

"There is no safe use of drugs for us... As addicts, our skill at self-deception will be at its peak in such a situation... Remember that we, not our doctor, are ultimately responsible for our recovery and our decisions." I knew I could not expect the doctor to be as concerned about mind-altering drugs as I was. To him, my request might seem insignificant; to me, it was a matter of life or death.

The surgery went well. When I left the hospital, I received a prescription for some pain pills in case the knee started to hurt later on. For most of

the day, the local anesthetic they had applied to the knee kept me from feeling anything in that area. But that evening, as the anesthesia wore off, the pain in my knee became severe.

I tried for several hours to manage the pain. It got worse and worse until finally, after a couple hours of nonstop crying, I took two of the pain pills the doctor had prescribed. As I took them, I said a prayer that these pills would not reactivate my addiction.

Nothing happened. The pills did not help the pain, and they did not

*God had heard this
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I could almost hear
her laughing as I
said this futile
prayer.*

affect my head. It was as if I had not taken anything. Even in the midst of my anguish, I admit I was a bit depressed. I had expected them to spark a miracle; after all, drugs always had done so in the past.

But I was stuck with the pain. All night, I was awake and suffering from the hurt in my knee. I could not relax; all the muscles in my leg were tense, and the throbbing pain would not abate. As I lay there in the dark, I began again to think of all the drugs which would help me get through this pain: if I had some Valium, some hash, some morphine, even some whiskey, I would be better off. I was angry at God because I could not have any of these things.

Finally, the idea of praying my way through the pain occurred to me. I was not sure exactly what to pray for. I told my Higher Power that I did not want to deal with the pain; I just wanted it to go away. God had heard this line from me before; I could almost hear her laughing as I said this futile prayer.

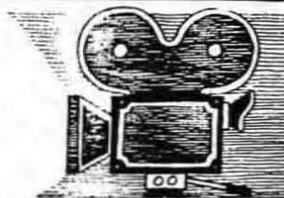
Eventually, I settled on the only prayer that ever works for me: God, help me get through this, one minute at a time. I seized on the one-minute-at-a-time idea, which had taken me through so many difficulties in the past. Concentrating on it, I received the strength I needed for the moment. The minutes went by slowly; but slowly I was able to pray my way through the pain. I hung on to the knowledge that eventually, the pain would pass.

By the next morning, the pain in the knee had subsided, and I was on my way to recovery from the surgery. It was a difficult experience, but I believe that we get exactly the experiences we are able to handle with God's help.

I still do not like pain—physical or emotional—but I learned through the surgery experience something about pain. I am forced, in this program, to deal with pain; to face it and ask for help. The help comes when I ask for it and have faith that God will provide what I need.

And now that the ordeal is over, of course, I am grateful for the experience. Like everything else that has happened in my life, I would not want to go through it again, but I do not regret it. In the experience was a great growing lesson for me.

K.K., Alaska



Feature

Coming of age

A review of regional annual reports reflects the strengths and pains of a rapidly maturing fellowship

Earlier this year, the World Service Conference released the annual reports submitted by the regions of Narcotics Anonymous. They discussed in frank, detailed terms the scope of services being offered locally by N.A. communities in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and North America.

While we cannot offer here the same detailed presentation of the state of N.A.'s local services (the annual reports ran 103 pages), we can take a quick survey, touching on some of the high points (as well as a few of the low). The variety of ways in which members of Narcotics Anonymous are carrying our recovery message is increasing, as are the levels of experience, maturity and sophistication.

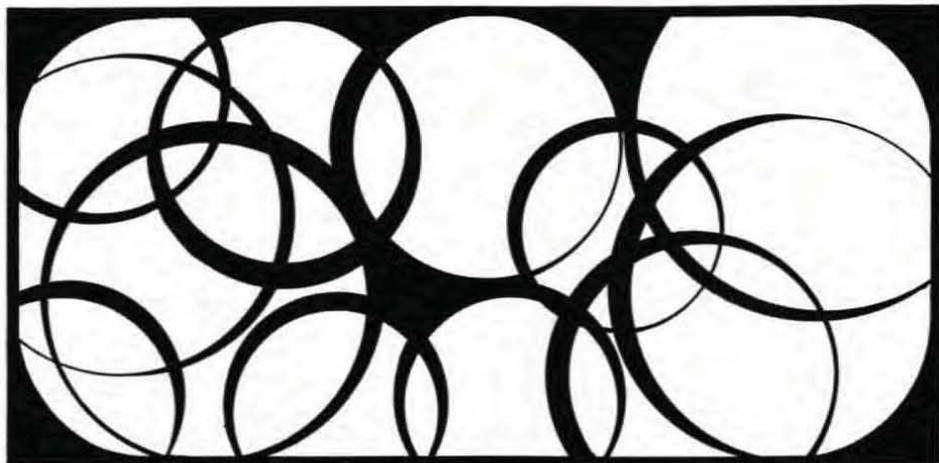
We were excited about the material presented in the regions' annual reports. We've seen this worldwide fel-

lowship develop from a loosely affiliated network of small, isolated individual groups. As those groups grew, their members considered again and again how they could best carry the recovery message to those still suffering from the disease of addiction. They organized the necessary services, established the committees to administer those services, and developed contacts with neighbors doing similar work so that their experience could be shared.

"To put things in perspective," the World Service Office General Manager wrote in his conference report, "there are now over 470 area committees. Ten years ago, there were not even that many groups."

*We may soon be able
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The N.A. program is spreading like wildfire. These reports show N.A. services rapidly approaching the point where, soon, we may well be able to make recovery available to any addict, anywhere on the globe, who seeks it. We hope that this presentation of



annual highlights of local N.A. service will help you, too, catch the fire and help it spread.

Public Information

A wide variety of methods are being used to increase public awareness of N.A. In Australia, several typical N.A. meetings were staged for radio broadcast. Radio talk shows, interviews, bus benches, billboards, and radio and TV public service announcements are also being used widely in other regions.

Some regions are having difficulty getting support for this relatively new field of service. One region went through five P.I. chairmen in a single year. In Georgia, members with other commitments pulled together to participate in regional P.I. events, hoping to stimulate enough interest to generate a permanent committee.

In Southern California, P.I. is almost nonexistent at the regional level. Most P.I. work is done by the areas. They are thinking about restructuring their region's approach to P.I., consolidating area public information work

and developing a regionwide phone-line service.

Learning days and public meetings were two of the tools of choice in regions with developing public information programs. *Public meetings* are sometimes simply open N.A. meetings. Community leaders are invited to attend and see first hand what Narcotics Anonymous is all about. This kind of public meeting has been used widely in Australia.

Another kind of public meeting is set up as a seminar, with N.A. speakers explaining our program to govern-

*At public meetings,
N.A. speakers explain
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government, civic
and professional
figures.*

ment, civic and professional figures. This kind of meeting was held numerous times this past year in Brazil.

One variation on the public meeting

concept involves N.A. speakers addressing school assemblies and classes, civic meetings and professional gatherings. A number of regions provided such speakers to their communities this year.

In Japan, public meetings have been used to inform the community that N.A. is not a religious organization. In a country where, we are told, many are indifferent to religion—most are Buddhist, but in name only—this has been very important. Many of the community's questions about N.A. have been settled by the stories of recovering addicts.

P.I. learning days, a tool for internal growth, have been used for a variety of purposes. In the New England Region, learning days have been used to teach new areas how to start their public information committees. In the Greater Philadelphia Region, P.I. has sponsored three workshops intended to nurture *internal* unity.

Phonelines

Phonelines are telephone services which provide general information about N.A., times and locations of N.A. meetings, and in some cases direct contact with N.A. members. They are primary means of access to Narcotics Anonymous. Some regions staff their own phonelines through their regional service office. In Chicago, the local office handles 100% of the job of coordinating phoneline volunteers. Hawaii's Honolulu office handles the phoneline most of the day, contracting an answering service to take up the slack.

Other regions work directly through an answering service. In Ireland, the Dublin Area has a 24-hour answering

service that either refers callers to the nearest meeting or patches them through to an N.A. member's home phone. For the amount of use their phoneline gets, they feel such an arrangement is both effective and inexpensive.

800 numbers

A newer development in N.A. phonelines is use of the 800 number. Those contracting for 800 service pay greatly reduced rates for large blocks of incoming telephone time. These phonelines serve broad areas from which callers would otherwise have to pay a long-distance toll.

When combined with TV or radio public service announcements, news-

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paper ads, billboards or bus bench posters, 800 phonelines allow large numbers of people in sizable areas quick, inexpensive, direct access to N.A.

Until recently, each area in Virginia maintained its own phoneline. Then one area acquired its own 800 line. Other areas began joining the service, and finally a regionwide phoneline was created. Virginia is now in the process of updating its regional meeting list and its file of Twelfth Step volunteers to keep pace with the expanded phoneline.

New Jersey's 800 line received four-

teen-thousand calls in 1987. The cost: \$8000, less than half that of operating ten separate area phonelines.

Other regions, such as Iowa, have investigated 800 lines but have decided that they are not yet in a position to be able to either afford the lines or use them effectively.

H&I after "the can"

Local hospital and institutions (H&I) committees send panels of N.A. members into treatment and correctional facilities to present the recovery message to clients and inmates. They also customarily provide literature to those attending their meetings.

A major change in the way H&I committees are funded had significant impact this past year. Prior to last year, most H&I work was financially supported by separate collections taken at N.A. meetings—the "H&I can." By a 1987 decision of the World Service Conference, work in hospitals and institutions is now supported directly by area and regional general funds.

Most regions reported that the transition went smoothly. Southern California reported few problems at the regional level, and only isolated difficulties in the areas. The Greater New York Region, however, went through a major shakeup with the changeover from using the can to having each area support their respective H&I committee. That confusion, however, eventually smoothed itself out.

One of the things that helped New York's transition was a mailing circulated to hospital and institutional facilities in their region, asking that the institutions purchase their own litera-

ture for their clients. As a result of the mailing, substantial numbers of facilities now purchase literature directly from the regional office.

Sharpening the focus of H&I

Georgia's H&I services began closing their institutional meetings to outside participation last year. They experienced a reduction in the number of meetings they could support, but felt that the remaining panels were able to carry a clearer N.A. message.

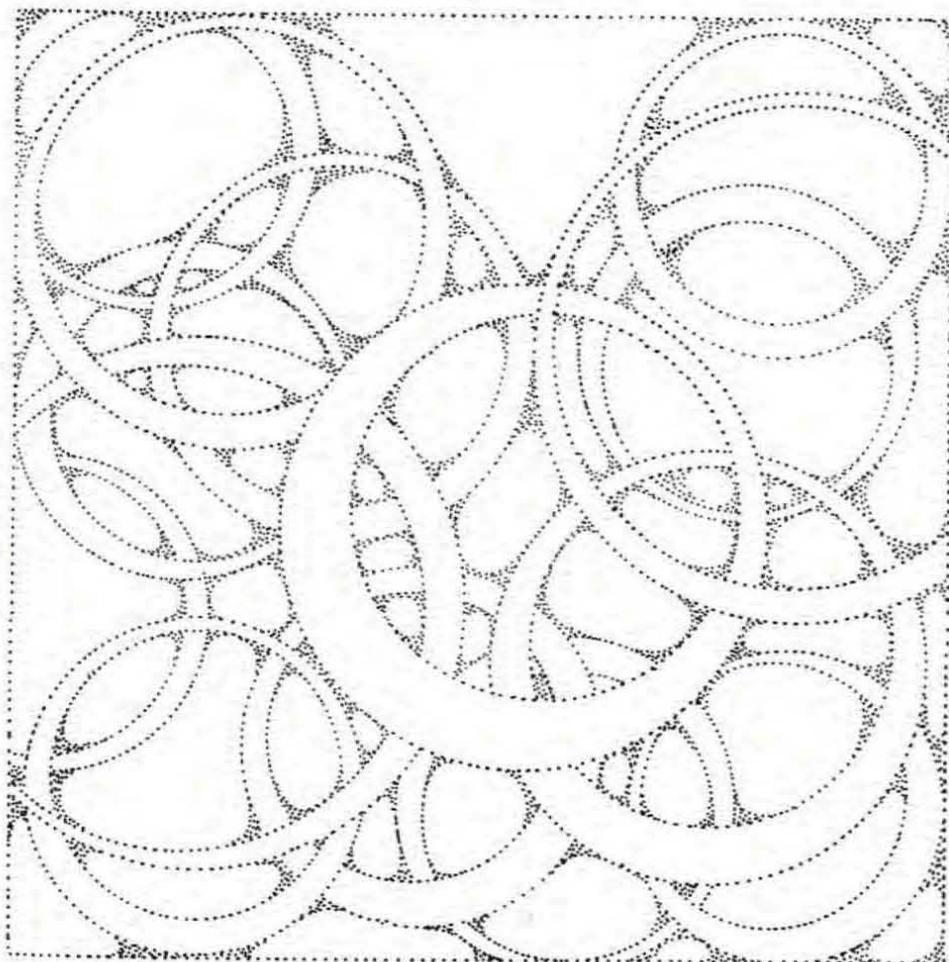
There were reports of significant advances in N.A.'s ability to carry the recovery message to hospitals and institutions. The Show Me Region (serving Missouri and some border areas in neighboring states) has concentrated on identifying institutions not yet served by H&I and determining how to reach them. In addition, they have created a fund designed to assist less developed areas in obtaining literature for institutional work.

Two regions reported major improvements in relations with correctional officials. The Lone Star Region established a good rapport with the Texas Department of Corrections. That rapport aided in development of a new standardized application and clearance procedure for outside participants in N.A. prison meetings.

And in Ohio, state correctional authorities have invited the H&I committee to hold its annual Awareness Day workshop *inside* a maximum security facility.

Local service offices

A few short years ago, the only N.A. office—our *World Service Office*, at



that—was composed of a post office box and a case of pamphlets in the trunk of a member's car. Today, in addition to the WSO, there are twenty-nine national, regional or area offices, most of them less than three years old.

Local service offices serve a variety of functions. Almost all supply literature to the local N.A. community. Some are merely central storage depots for pamphlets and books. Others offer over-the-counter literature sales during regular business hours, in addition to supplying dozens of areas and

hundreds of groups with Basic Texts and IP's. Sales figures range from a couple thousand to a couple *hundred* thousand dollars a year.

Offices provide other services to the local N.A. fellowship as well. Many offices serve as the base of the regional or area phoneline service. Some provide meeting space for service committees in their communities.

Some service offices are operated by local volunteers. Others are staffed by paid workers, some part-time, oth-

ers full. A few offices even reported being able to raise their staff's salaries this year!

The advent of the personal computer has enabled a few offices to take advantage of the machine's capacity to better organize their work. Com-

A few short years ago, the only N.A. office was composed of a P.O. box and a case of pamphlet's in the trunk of a member's car.

puterizing inventory, local address lists, newsletters and phoneline aids are among the most typical applications. Some offices use their special workers and their computers to aid in the administrative work of local service committees.

Additional needs

Additional needs—service to addicts with impairments of sight, hearing or movement—is the newest type of outreach in Narcotics Anonymous. Only a few regions reported any kind of service at all to addicts with additional needs. A couple, however, have made substantial headway in removing some of the barriers to recovery.

The Tri-State Region (serving areas in Western Pennsylvania and border areas in Ohio, New York and West Virginia) has one of the most active additional needs programs. It is administered by the regional H&I com-

mittee. Regional meeting lists have been specially coded to indicate wheelchair accessibility. The regional office stocks N.A. literature tapes and Braille material. A meeting has been established in a local facility for the hearing impaired. And contacts are being made with local agencies that serve those with additional needs, including a telephone "bulletin board" of community services for the hearing impaired.

Service committees: making them work

Some regions have been experiencing problems in making their service committees work effectively. In one region several areas have established high quorums, making it difficult for them to conduct business. *Quorums* are attendance levels, usually a certain percentage of the total number of eligible voting members. If attendance at a particular committee meeting falls below the quorum level, the committee is not allowed to conduct business. Committees who regularly do not achieve a quorum have one of two problems: their quorum level is set too high, or the participation level of their members is too low.

Because of the amount of business being dealt with, more than one region takes two days to conduct its regional service committee meetings; others are considering it. In Iowa, where emotional issues have created time-consuming disagreements, the region now holds a two hour open forum before the regular RSC business meeting. This clears the air and allows the committee to perform its regular work in a less highly charged atmosphere.

Other regions addressed the problem of "service burnout." In Alaska, a relatively new region, there has been a large turnover of trusted servants. People new to service often become overburdened with commitments, which leads to discouragement and then burnout. The committee often finds that it simply cannot do everything its members would like to do, at least not all at once.

The ties that bind

Regional outreach committees have been tracking the development of new groups in territories not yet served by an active area service committee. In northern Michigan, the region has been informed of the registration of a number of new groups with the World Service Office. The region offers assistance to these isolated groups, and by tracking their development hopes to be in a position to assist in helping form new area committees to serve them in the future.

In British Columbia, a single regional outreach committee has been broken up into four separate units. Each will be responsible to maintain contact with unaffiliated groups in the more distant parts of the province.

"Going with the world"

Though Narcotics Anonymous has mostly been quite successful in maintaining a unified fellowship, there have been a few isolated pockets of recovery that have developed independently, only recently joining the mainstream of N.A. growth. Toxicomanos Anonimos, the Brazilian N.A. fellowship, is one such pocket. (See the June 1988 feature article for more on Brazil.) Another is N.A. in Winni-

peg.

Winnipeg, a city of 600,000, has the only known N.A. meetings in the province of Manitoba. They recently decided to form an area and join the Upper Midwest Region.

Winnipeg has had meetings of Narcotics Anonymous for many years. When the Upper Midwest Region was first forming in 1982, Winnipeg was a part of the region, although no area was established there.

It seems that Narcotics Anonymous was seen as a need in Winnipeg, but it was also seen as being quite immature. Before we had an N.A. Basic Text, Winnipeg N.A. used a slightly

A few regions have made substantial headway in removing barriers to recovery.

revised version of another fellowship's basic text.

When our book was first printed, the Winnipeg N.A. community chose to continue using the literature they were familiar with. Since then, addicts from other regions have shown up at Winnipeg N.A. meetings from time to time, leaving pieces of N.A. conference-approved literature.

Finally, beginning a few years ago, some addicts in the Winnipeg groups began contacting the WSO. People from different regions visited to see how they could help. With their support, most of the N.A. community there decided to "go with the world," as they've put it. Winnipeg now has an area committee with a full compliment

In God's time

I just recently celebrated five years clean. Congratulations to me! It's really exciting for me, not because of the amount of time, though clean time does mean something to me. It's exciting because I was one of those addicts who would keep coming in and out.

I've been around the program for twelve years now. I think I've had a year or two here and there. I really don't know, because I lied so much when I first came around. But, when I came back to the program this last time, it was a humiliating experience for me.

I knew a lot of people with a lot of clean time, and I was embarrassed for the amount of time I had. At conventions, I hated to stand up for the

If I truly practice these principles in my life, I am going to change. I can't stop it, or decide when or how. I just have to accept it.

countdown. When I had four years, I finally reached a point where I was proud of the clean time I had acquired. Then I realized that it really didn't matter how much I had; what

mattered was the quality. I'm always hearing that in meetings. I finally experienced it.

How I feel about *me* also matters. I had better enjoy these years and experiences, because ten years is going to come up real soon. Right now I'm in the process of working the Twelve Steps over again from the beginning. I want to experience the steps on a deeper level.

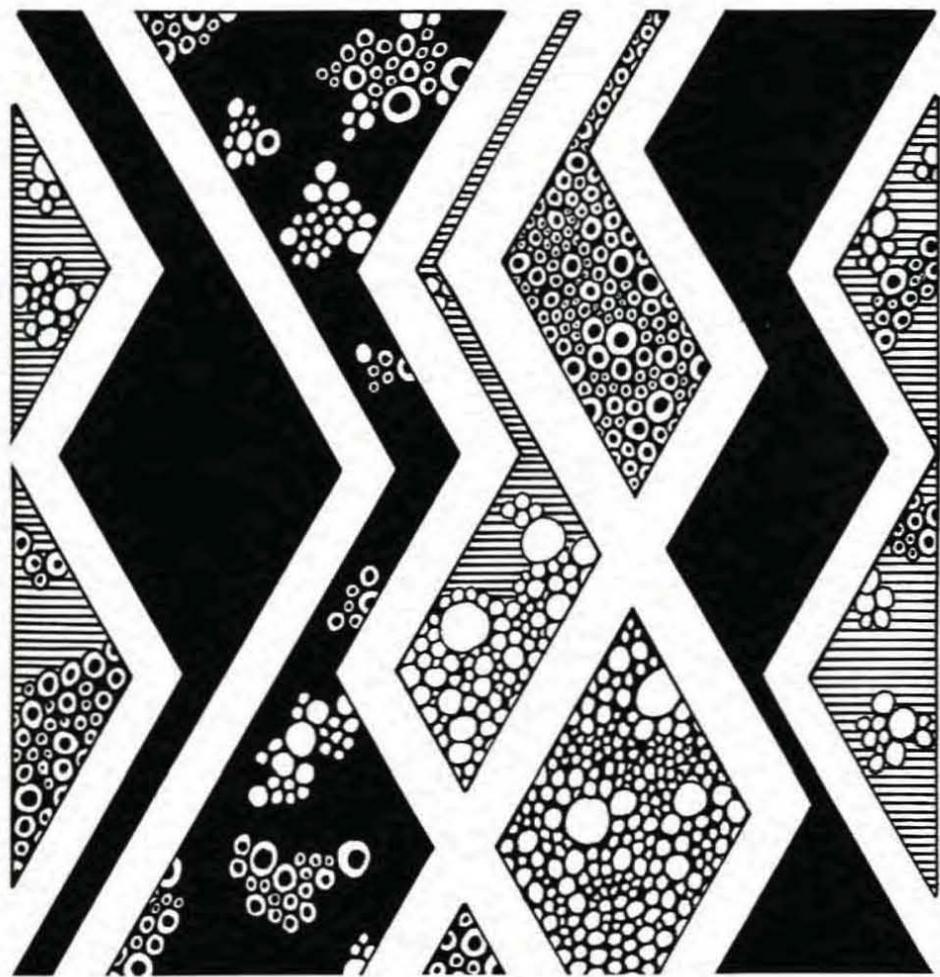
So far it has been a real experience. I'm starting from the beginning. I'm reading everything I can find on each one first, then I write on each step. It has been neat for me to see how I feel



about each one now, and comparing that to how I felt then. I really didn't understand the steps or feel them when I first worked them.

When I had about two years clean I thought I was at a point where I really knew who I was, finally. I felt good about myself; I could share openly in meetings; I had a job and was dependable; I was handling the responsibility of being a mother of two children. I'm at the point now—and have been for about four months—where I feel like I don't know who I am anymore. In reading the Second Step before I wrote, I realized something. Let me try to explain it.

I believe right now I'm in the process of changing. The way I look at people and life is changing, and I now believe that I have no choice in change. If I truly practice these prin-



ciples in my life, I am going to change. I can't stop it, or decide when or how. I have to work through it and accept it before I can understand what's happening. If I fight it, I'll be in turmoil and confusion.

"In God's time." I think I finally understand what is meant by "in God's time." But I also realize I have to do the footwork by working through it, instead of doing nothing. This is the only way I'll find out who I truly am and be able to accept and love.

You see, for about four months I

was fighting my process of change. I didn't want to change the way I felt about life and about certain people. I felt like I was being untrue to myself by changing my opinions. I really wasn't; I was just changing because of my participation in the program, applying spiritual principles in my life.

I want to experience more miracles, and I want to know who I am today. There is some fear in change. But I've gone through enough situations in my recovery to really know that no matter what, I will be okay.

Anonymous, California

of servants and subcommittees.

The N.A. Basic Text now enjoys wide use in the area, but some members and groups still hold to the way it had been up until recently. Change is in progress, but there are still groups who do not want to get involved in the area.

The languages of recovery

A number of regions reported on problems and advances in making Narcotics Anonymous accessible to those speaking languages other than English. In Chicago, N.A. has recently made headway in the Spanish-speaking community, enabling our fellowship to help addicts who previously had to go elsewhere to hear the message of recovery.

"That no addict seeking recovery need ever die, from this day forward may we better provide the necessary services."

The venture has not been without its problems. In many ways it has been like starting N.A. all over again, with tradition violations, meetings turning into group therapy sessions, and the reading of outside literature. Bilingual N.A. members from the older English-language community have begun attending the Spanish meetings to offer the new community their experience.

N.A. in Quebec has been focussing on the translation of literature into French. The first translations were, by their own estimates, of poor quality.

They tried many approaches to remedy the situation. Finally, a translation agency was hired and everything was retranslated from scratch.

But the work was far from over at that point. It became obvious that a critical review of any translated material had to be undertaken by N.A. members before it would be ready for publication. This was so simply because an outside professional translator, not being an N.A. member, does not go to meetings and has no knowledge of certain ways of saying things common to the fellowship.

A regional literature revision committee was formed in Quebec, and a similar one was formed in France. The two committees worked separately on the agency's translations. In October 1987, members of both committees got together and produced final versions.

This has brought to completion the first half of the French translation project, which focussed on thirteen IP's and the Little White Book. Next is the translation of the Basic Text. Those involved don't foresee this being completed for a while yet. When it is, the committees in Quebec and France will get together again to review and polish the final draft.

It was a productive year for the N.A. regions. N.A. communities were strengthened internally. Efforts to carry the N.A. message, both to other addicts and to the community at large, were diverse and effective. We've drawn a large step closer to fulfilling the dream of our service pledge: "That no addict seeking recovery need ever die, from this day forward may we better provide the necessary services."

Editorials



Don't cause disunity

I would like to take the time to air my views regarding the N.A. "purists" who cause disunity within our fellowship.

I do believe in the importance of carrying a pure N.A. message. However, I don't want to make an "outsider" or someone from another fellowship feel unwanted at our meetings just because of the way they might say things. Where is the unconditional love we are taught?

People who would insult others in that way must not realize that those

Maybe an addict sitting in another fellowship's meetings might decide to never check out N.A. on the basis of their reports.

people will take their impressions about that kind of behavior back to the outside or back to their home fellowship. Maybe an addict sitting in

another fellowship's meetings might decide to never check out N.A. on the basis of their reports.

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority." Whatever goes on in our fellowship is in his hands, but we must still do the footwork. I do not pretend to run N.A., nor do I care to. I do care to be of service to the fellowship and to the addict who still suffers. I've been given a service position to fulfill, and I must be in conscious contact with a loving God as he expresses himself in our group conscience and in my own heart.

Therefore, inside or outside our fellowship, I must be on guard as to what I say and what I do. My behavior is what people will see as N.A. I must try to have a program of attraction, always looking for the will of that loving God before I act.

R.M., Pennsylvania

A Power beyond gender

As we sat on a slip looking at Mount Turiwhate in Westland, we considered our Higher Power.

Why the words "God" and "Him" in the steps? Out of respect for the past? Don't these words put preconceptions on "a Power greater than ourselves"?

Why the words "God" and "Him" in the steps?

The past gave us a message. It was not wrong then, but is there not a better way of saying it today?

Why does the Third Step not read, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of the Power greater than ourselves"?

D.C. and J.M., New Zealand

Editorial replies

Changing our name

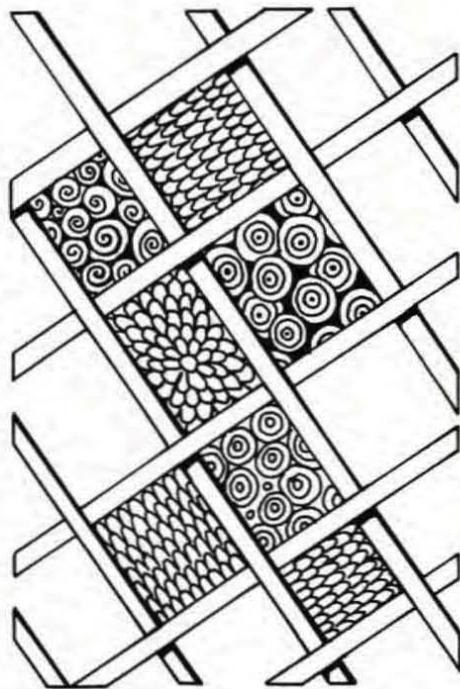
The following are responses to the editorial article, "What Does 'Narcotics Anonymous' Mean?," published in May 1988.

From Tennessee:

I found the editorial "What Does 'Narcotics Anonymous' Mean?" to be a revelation. It enlightened me to the fact that Narcotics Anonymous members are "discriminatory, closed-minded, lazy and unwilling to face difficult issues." And to think all these years I have been laboring under the illusion that N.A. members were lov-

ing, caring individuals who dedicate their lives and recovery to helping other dying, desperate addicts find recovery.

I find the entire piece heavy-handed and bombastic. To suggest that we are killing people because of the semantics of our name is patently ludicrous. I will use the old adage, "If it works, don't fix it." For over three decades, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has worked marvelously, as the drug-free, clean lifestyles of thousands of our members will attest. It is not the name "Narcotics Anonymous" that has saved so many from degradation and ruin: it is our message. The message of total abstinence from all drugs, the experience of working our Twelve Steps, the empathy and sharing of one addict helping another—this, not our name, is our heart and soul.



I fail to understand why it was necessary to be as insulting as the article was to get the message across. The article told me that recovering addicts don't know how to use the English language, and that we are poor and dumb. I contest the author's assertion that "our name can keep many from getting here at all," and I ask, if this is the case, how did the literally thousands of us whose primary drug was not "narcotics" find our way here?

I also take exception to the article's implication that our name violates the

The empathy experienced when one addict helps another—this, not our name, is the heart and soul of N.A.

Eleventh Tradition, especially when the article then makes no attempt to explain how it does so.

Finally, I object to the underlying tone of the whole editorial. It seems to suggest that any of us who are not prepared to immediately jump on a bandwagon to change our name are "self-centered," "afraid," "short-sighted," or "in denial." I find such intimidating tactics to be unspiritual and inconsistent with the principles that bind our fellowship together.

A name change would have a profound effect on our fellowship and should be considered very, very care-

fully by the entire fellowship. I fervently hope that if indeed our fellowship's name is changed, the fellowship will not allow intimidating and insulting arguments such as those contained in the editorial to be the basis for its decision.

D.L.

From Massachusetts:

I feel moved to reply to the editorial urging us to change the name of our fellowship. Some of the points the writer makes are valid. For instance, it's true that, strictly speaking, "narcotics" means opiate-type drugs. We are a fellowship of people, not a collection of chemicals. Indeed, I understand that our name is untranslatable into some foreign languages, which creates a dilemma in reaching out to the worldwide community of sufferers.

Still, even granting all that, the most serious point that the writer makes starts out as a question in the first paragraph: "Because [our name] is misleading, are there addicts out there who aren't finding us?" This very serious question has, somehow, by the third from the last paragraph, become a certainty: "We are condemning addicts to death..." In between there is no evidence to support this statement, only speculations.

Today, N.A. doubles in size every eighteen months. We are obviously reaching a lot of addicts—addicts who were not exclusively, or even primarily, opiate users.

The writer also glosses over the problem of what to change the name to. The question of changing our name is inseparable from the question of what to change it to, because it is

pointless to make a change that doesn't improve the situation. The new name would have to be so obviously and convincingly better that the whole fellowship would agree to it, or we might suffer a blow to our unity that we would never recover from.

Before we can take action, we must have the facts. Are there addicts who are somehow kept away from recovery in our fellowship because of the word "narcotics"? Or is the name "Narcotics Anonymous" becoming identi-

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fied in the public mind with recovery from addiction?

How are we viewed by professionals (doctors, lawyers, police, etc.) who might direct the suffering addict to a source of help?

How are we viewed by the addict in the street who has not yet found help? And more difficult still, how would we find these things out?

If the fact that N.A. stands for recovery from addiction is not understood in the public mind, would changing our name be the best way to publicize what we stand for? It sounds like we need to get some facts.

We could perhaps begin with a

survey of professionals, who are much more accessible than the addicts who are still using. (Using addicts, if I remember correctly, are not known for talking fully and frankly about their problem.) We could also conduct a survey of N.A. members, asking if they had heard of "Narcotics Anonymous" while they were still out there and, if so, what they thought of it.

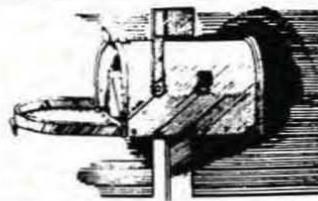
I have noticed a disturbing trend in N.A. I see it in small matters and large. The trend is to identify a problem or need or some kind of difficulty, no matter how great or how small, and to propose some sweeping change to cope with it. No thought is given to the possible downside of the proposed change, nor are other alternatives really explored. We do not give ourselves time to let the whole situation sink in. It is as if we still live with our old patterns of tunnel vision, impulsive behavior and instant gratification. Rome was not built in a day.

I love Narcotics Anonymous. I know what it means to be desperate and afraid, battered by addiction, overwhelmed by the loneliness that no addict needs to explain to another addict. The God of our understanding took me out of that dark and tangled woods and put me on the broad highway of recovery.

In the coming weeks and months I will be asking that loving God to open my heart so that I may know His will to better reach out to the addict who still suffers. I will ask Him for help to root out my selfishness and my opinionated attitudes. I hope that my fellow N.A. members will join me in taking our inventory as a fellowship. May God bless us all.

J.F.

From our readers



I'm not lonely anymore

After thirty years of active addiction, suicide attempts and mental institutions, God showed me the way to N.A.

I came in at a convention. When I was leaving late Saturday night I was very confused. Why, I kept asking myself, do people who do not know me tell me to keep coming back, and why are they so nice to me? They're all smiling! Why, why, why?

It bothered me enough that I kept coming back, and saw something I've never had all my life: smiling, happy people who gave me their phone numbers—and nobody used drugs.

I used to think they were crazy. I detoxed in the rooms of N.A. People said, "Drink Gatorade, drink water, put a wet cloth on your head, I could not sleep for months," and I listened. I was scared, confused, and my brain rattled from all the pills that I put in my body.

But I listened. I now know why these people are so happy, joyous and free. They are learning to live life on life's terms without the use of drugs. They work the Twelve Steps of N.A. to the best of their ability.

We have lots to smile about today, thanks to the Fellowship of N.A. Yep, me, I finally have friends, people who love me and call me. It's unbelievable that I'm not lonely any more. I too have learned to smile today, to be

happy, joyous and free. N.A. has taught me—and is teaching me on a daily basis—how to live life on life's terms. I feel I want to stand atop the highest building in the world and shout, "It works, it works!"

I'm so grateful to be a part of this fellowship. I have seventeen months clean, and each and every day is a miracle. I sleep at night (thank you, God!). I work my program to the best of my ability. I have a wonderful sponsor. I write, sometimes, and go to meetings. But to me the most important thing is that I listen and learn from others who have been there before me. I truly know the meaning of "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel."

Thank God and all of you for N.A. I'm not lonely anymore!

S.C., Florida

My gratitude speaks

There are so many things in my life today to be grateful for. I won't try to list them all, but I will tell of one: my higher power, the God of my understanding. Today, all the things I'm grateful for are only made possible through my loving God and maintenance of a conscious contact with my higher power.

I've learned to draw the strength I need from my daily program. The bridge between me and my God is but an arm's reach or a moment away from

me at all times. I have to work to not take away that bridge, that moment. I have to cross it to draw my strength.

I have to work on my faith so that it becomes a habit, living, striving, growing inside of me until I am filled with my God's will and way of life for me. I want to be the best example my higher power has for carrying the message to the still suffering addict, an instrument of hope, a carrier of love, of joy, peace and happiness, the spirit of God's will for us all.

I pray I be all that I can be, and that God provides the strength for this human adventure. The bridge to God is faith. Let me take the steps often, so I may do it blindly, without fear. Let my journey to God be daily, for in God's loving spirit I shall have the gratitude to give freely, making room for continuous growth.

R.C., Ohio

Dear N.A. Way,

Well, it's that time of the year again, time to gear up for the Pacific Northwest Convention. This year, once again, it's in Vancouver, Washington.

This convention has been in existence for eleven years. It is said by some oldtimers to be the second oldest N.A. convention. It now includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia, and attracts people from all over the country.

I first became involved in this convention in 1984, the last time it was in Vancouver, Washington. Vancouver isn't really a big city, but the members there have never been short on ambition. I didn't really have much ambition at the time; what I had was an overwhelming fear of going back to using drugs, so I got involved in everything I could. As the saying goes,

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"You can fall off the edge but not off the middle."

Through the weeks and months of joy, hope, anger, frustration and confusion, I grew. I can't begin to list everything I learned through that experience, but the most important thing was that there is nothing that a room full of addicts can't accomplish if they set their minds to it, in spite of (or maybe because of) their differences. And for the first time since huddling in a bunker with twelve other G.I.'s in Viet Nam, I felt really close to and a part of other people.

Needless to say, the convention was a smashing success.

Give yourself a chance to experience these things, whether through a convention or just holding your hand out to that scared, lonely, confused newcomer.

I'm looking forward to all the friends I have yet to meet. See you all October 7, 8, and 9, 1988.

M.H., Washington

Getting better, the N.A. way

The N.A. Way has given me a lot of hope. I got clean in an area where there was only one N.A. meeting, and all the literature really helped. The articles in the magazine taught me a lot, and I had the opportunity to watch our fellowship grow. I live in Oahu now, where there are a lot of people in the fellowship. I'm happy to say that Kauai now has five regular meetings and a working A.S.C. Many of the members are celebrating anniversaries and sticking around.

We are growing and recovering by leaps and bounds here in the Hawaii Region, and I feel blessed to be a part of the fellowship.

N.A. works!

R.M., Hawaii

Comin' up



ALABAMA: Sep. 8-11, 1988; Alabama-Northwest Florida Convention; Gulf Shore Park Resort; Regional Convention, P.O. Box 115, Decatur, AL 35601

AUSTRALIA: Sep. 30-Oct. 3, 1988; Australasian Regional Convention; Petersham Town Hall, Sydney, New South Wales; phone contacts (Sydney) Melinda 698-2563, Brett 309-2135; Australasian Convention, P.O. Box B88, Boronia Park, Sydney, NSW AUSTRALIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Aug. 12-14, 1988; Third Annual Northern Lights Outdoor Campout Roundup; Bidnisti Lake Resort, 35 mi. west of Prince George; 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: Sep. 1-4, 1988; World Convention of N.A.; Anaheim Hilton and Towers, 777 W. Convention Way, Anaheim; convention info (818) 780-3951; addl. info. Anaheim Convention Bureau, (714) 999-8939; World Convention of N.A., P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999

COLORADO: Aug. 5-7, 1988; Colorado Regional Convention; Clarion Hotel, 1345 28th St., Boulder, (303) 443-3805; Jon F. (303) 642-3273

ILLINOIS: Aug. 5-7, 1988; Fourth Midcoast Convention; Continental Regency Hotel, Peoria; Susie & Steve H. (309) 274-5675; Linda E. 382-3742

INDIANA: Aug. 19-21, 1988; NW Indiana Area Campout; Lake Eliza Resort, US 30, Lake Eliza; Lisa (219) 464-1296; NW Indiana Area Campout, 753 Cyrus Street, Valparaiso, IN 46383

IRELAND: Oct. 28-30, 1988; 3rd Annual Irish Convention; N.A. Ireland, P.O. Box 1368, Sheriff Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

KANSAS: Aug. 12-14, 1988; Fellowship Campout; Thunderbird Marina, Junction City, (913) 238-5864; Marte D. (913) 762-3596; Steve T. 776-5123; Mike 537-7682

2) Feb. 17-19, 1989; Second Mid-America Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Holidome Convention Center, Salina, (913) 823-1739; Jim M.

(913) 825-9510; Mid-America Convention, P.O. Box 383, Salina, KS 67401

MAINE: Sep. 9-11, 1988; We're A Miracle V; Bruce & Kim (207) 772-4558; Stan & Jane (207) 784-5863; Bill (617) 563-5885; ASC of Maine, Convention Committee, P.O. Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

MISSISSIPPI: Sep. 30 - Oct. 2, 1988; Fellowship Campout; Roosevelt State Park, Morton; Joe H. (601) 922-0759, Van S. 352-1266

NEBRASKA: Oct. 7-9, 1988; 5th Nebraska Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Northeast, 5250 Cornhusker Hwy., Lincoln; Mike B. (402) 475-8985, Jenny H. 474-1544, Jenny J. 796-2333; NRCNA-5, P.O. Box 80091, Lincoln, NE 68501-0091

NEVADA: Jun. 23-25, 1989; 2nd Sierra Sage Regional Convention; Nugget Hotel, Sparks; phoneline (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage RSC, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510-1191

NEW YORK: Aug. 5-7, 1988; Second Annual Recovery in the Woods; Yorkshire, NY; Lynne B. (716) 895-4916; Dan Z. 825-5334; Recovery in the Woods, Buffalo ASC, P.O. Box 64, Buffalo, NY 14207

OREGON: Aug. 5-7, 1988; 3rd Oregon-Southern Idaho Regional Convention; Eugene Hilton Hotel, (800) 452-8017 (ask for N.A. convention rates); Laurie P. (503) 726-2449; OSIRCNA-3, P.O. Box 1929, Eugene, OR 97440

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct. 28-30, 1988; 6th Annual Tri-State Regional Convention; Vista International Hotel, Pittsburgh, (412) 281-3700 (specify N.A. convention); Roz (412) 361-6250, Bob 661-5799, Gloria 521-1086; Tri-State RSO, P.O. Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

QUEBEC: Oct. 7-9, 1988; 1st Quebec Bilingual Convention; Crown Plaza Hotel, 420 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal; Lyne (514) 443-0804, Sophie 353-4822; Quebec Regional Convention, P.O. Box 141, Stn. Yvoville, Montreal, Quebec H2P 2V4

SASKATCHEWAN: Aug. 19-21, 1988; 4th Regina Area Convention; Glencairn Neighbourhood Recreation Centre, 2626 Dewdney E,

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Regina; Dave G. (306) 525-2686, Gina M. 586-1065, Shannon L. 775-1645; Regina ASC, P.O. Box 3563, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3L7

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 11-13, 1988; Serenity Festival; Landmark Best Western, Myrtle Beach; Bedford M. (919) 392-4412, Ron H. 867-5006; Serenity Festival, P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

TENNESSEE: Nov. 23-27, 1988; 6th Volunteer Regional Convention; Garden Plaza Hotel, 211 Mockingbird Ln., Johnson City, (615) 929-2000; registration (615) 638-4385; VRC-6, P.O. Box 353, Greeneville, TN 37744

TEXAS: Nov. 4-6, 1988; Best Little Region Convention; Koko Palace, 5101 Avenue Q, Lubbock TX 79412; info Kerry W. (806) 745-4309, N.A. Helpline 799-3950; BLRCNA-1, P.O. Box 3013, Lubbock, TX 79452-3013

UNITED KINGDOM: Aug. 27-28, 1988; 2nd U.K. National Convention; Lightfoot Hall, Chelsea College, Kings Road, London SW3; in London contact Peter 723-5867, or U.K. Service Office, P.O. Box 704, London SW10 ORP, England, 352-8356

UTAH: Aug. 19-21, 1988; Utah Campvention; Granite Flats Campgrounds, American Fork

Canyon (outside Provo); Steve S. (801) 359-6607, Lou B. 467-8776

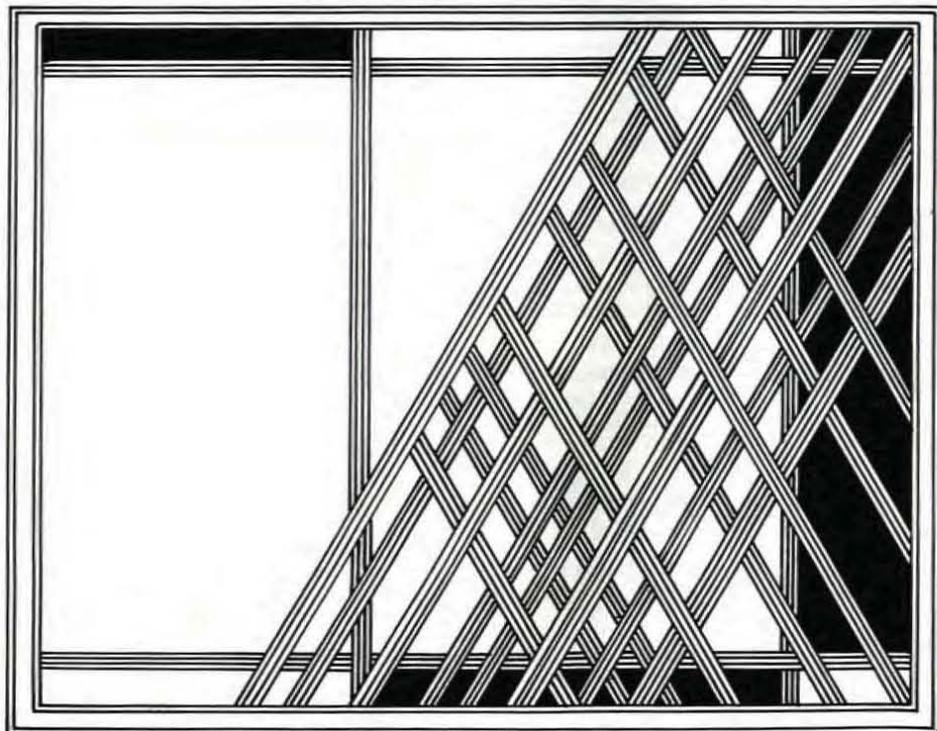
VIRGINIA: Aug. 12-14, 1988; Almost Heaven Area Convention; Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Center, Front Royal, Virginia, (703) 635-7171; Jeff L. (301) 791-0830, Vicki G. (304) 263-5827, Kevin M. (703) 667-1814; Almost Heaven Convention, P.O. Box 1595, Martinsburg, WV 25401

2) Jan. 6-8, 1989; 7th Annual Virginia Convention; Williamsburg Hilton and National Conference Center; Virginia Convention, P.O. Box 1373, Hampton, VA 23661

WASHINGTON: Oct. 8-10, 1988; Eleventh Pacific Northwest Convention; Red Lion Inn at the Quay, Vancouver, (800) 547-8010 (ask for PNWCNA rates); Helpline (206) 573-3066; Pacific-Northwest Conv., P.O. Box 5158, Vancouver, WA 98668

WEST VIRGINIA: Aug. 12-14, 1988; Almost Heaven Area Convention; see VIRGINIA

WISCONSIN: Oct. 28-30, 1988; 5th Wisconsin State Convention; Ramada Airport Inn, Milwaukee, (800) 272-6232; Ned H. (414) 289-9997, Bob K. 258-5961, Michael D. 546-3688; WSNAC-5, P.O. Box 1637, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1637



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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.

*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.