

THE N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

February 1989

\$1.75 U.S.

\$2.25 Canadian

Shortage of women in N.A.?

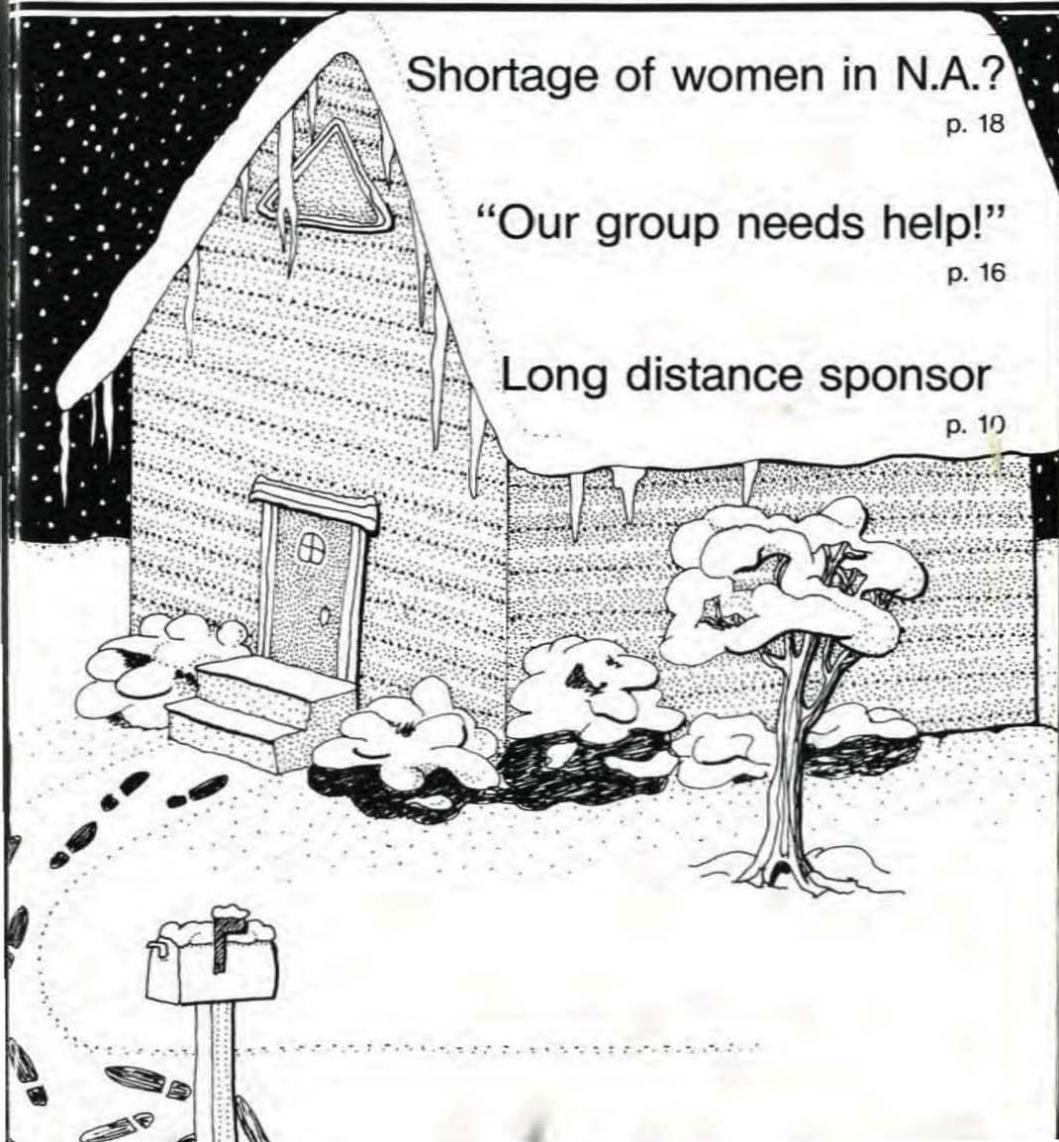
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"Our group needs help!"

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Long distance sponsor

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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

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U.S. and foreign subscription rates (except Canada), please remit in U.S. currency: 1 yr. \$15, 2 yrs. \$28, 3 yrs. \$39, single copies \$1.75. Canadian subscription rates (please remit in Canadian currency): 1 yr. \$19.25, 2 yrs. \$36, 3 yrs. \$50, single copies \$2.25. Please inquire about bulk rates.

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The N.A. Way magazine is published monthly by World Service Office, Inc., 16155 Wyandotte Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406. Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at Van Nuys, CA. **POSTMASTER:** please send address changes to The N.A. Way Magazine, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.

Surrenders

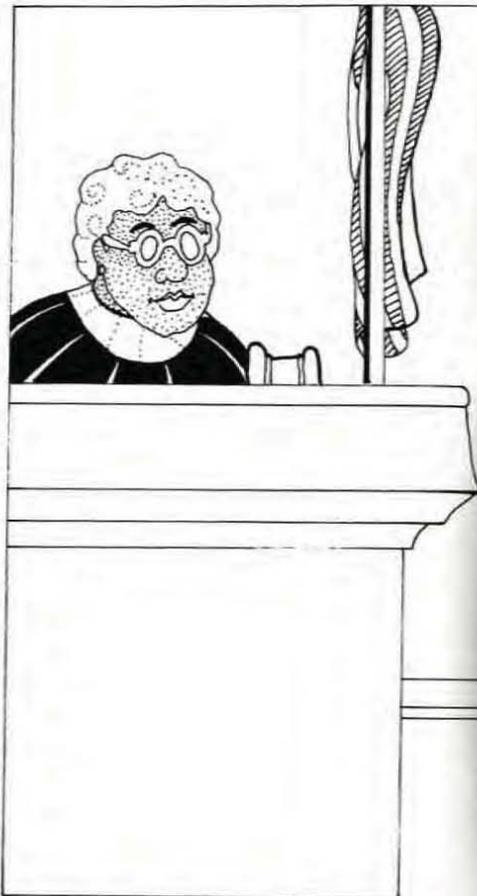
Recovery, I have found, does begin with surrender. I can have all the "facts" about addiction, but that means nothing if I don't make that initial surrender. And then it's those daily surrenders that follow that I find most important.

I've had to accept my personal powerlessness over many things besides drugs. I no longer have a drug problem; I have a living problem. I have known many "facts" about addiction since I was seventeen. Those facts were useless to me, because even as a full blown addict I thought my case was exceptional.

I came into the rooms of N.A. already equipped with an attitude sprung from denial. I spent incredible amounts of time and energy focusing on minute differences between myself and others. I would cling to anything that could or would disqualify me from recovery. I know now that it was not the people in the rooms who wanted me to fail—it was me. I did not believe, deep within myself, that I even deserved to recover.

I was miserable, unable to find anything positive in any situation. I sabotaged all chances I had to recover. I was a habitual relapser, unwilling or unable to get honest about why I was in those rooms and why I kept coming back.

I was tired—tired of being arrested,



of feeling degraded. I knew I was an addict, but my thoughts and perceptions were distorted. Just knowing the facts intellectually did not mean anything, because I did not surrender.

I kept coming to meetings daring someone to love me, daring someone to care for me. When I found someone who would, I would run. I pushed people to their limits, yet with the grace of God they stuck with me. I had no faith in anything or anyone. I believed that nothing or no one could help me. I thought I would never, ever find recovery.

My initial surrender finally came in



one of those silent moments when I was waiting for the judge to decide what to do with me. I finally surrendered in my heart, and admitted that I was in this situation because of my addiction—and for no other reason. I knew this was my bottom. I did not want to go any lower. Even in those minutes, a peace came over me. My Higher Power was truly with me. I had finally surrendered. I was whipped.

I have had to surrender many more times throughout these last twenty-three months. Now on a daily basis I have to surrender my addiction and my recovery to my Higher Power. I see now why I had hung around the rooms

for so long: I wanted the absence of pain in my life. I wanted someone to make it all right. In my sickness, I thought that just being around would remove my pain. It did not. It only took the edge off.

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Surrender eases the pain. It brings a new freedom I had not known before. I thought I was really free in this life because I did what I wanted in all respects. I took what I wanted and gave nothing back.

Today I have true freedom because my actions, thoughts, desires and motives are no longer being underwritten and co-signed by my disease. I do not have to fight anymore. I'm free to be myself. I don't have to manipulate people and situations for my benefit. I do not live in fear of being exposed, because I am not doing things that are hidden.

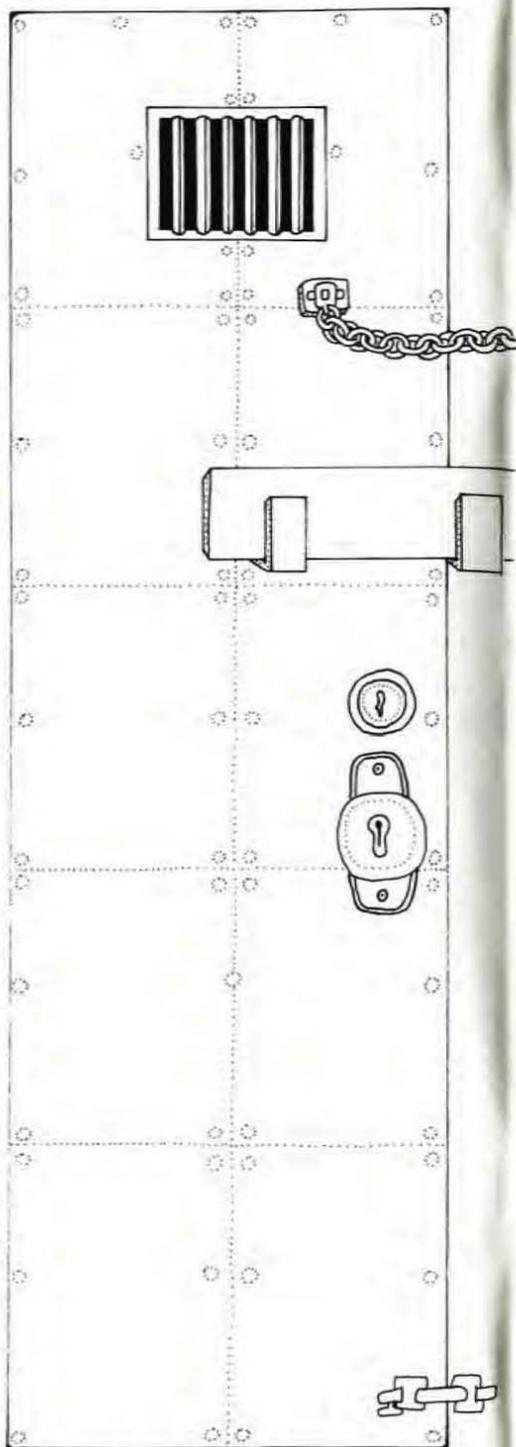
Once I realized that I am not the boss, that I'm not in control, I no longer had to hang on to life so tightly. I learned that surrendering means accepting life on life's terms. That does not necessarily mean that I have to like those terms, but at least I can accept them. And in that acceptance, I can be free.

D.M., Ohio

Give it away to keep it

I've been clean just a little over a year, by the grace of God, with the help of N.A. meetings. That first year was not an easy one for me. I went through a few crises and a lot of changes. I reached a point where I had not been working a good program, not really getting honest with myself and others. Several times I wanted to throw my hands up and quit. But I just kept coming back.

The turning point in my recovery came several months ago when I had the privilege of attending a prison meeting in my area. I can remember that night very clearly. I was very nervous as I walked through all the locked doors. But once inside the meeting room, I felt real comfortable. That was one of the best meetings I have ever attended. Going into the prison made me take a good look at myself and be grateful for everything I



have today. After the meeting, I spent most of the night praying and reading the Basic Text.

From that night until now I still have the privilege of attending the meetings in the prison. One night I was asked to tell my story to the inmates, and I really got honest for the first time.

I didn't think any of the guys had gone through a lot of the things I had as a child, and I was afraid they wouldn't be able to relate as I described the anger and humiliation I felt growing up. I can't tell you how surprised I was when the meeting was over and a couple of the guys approached me to tell me that they could relate, because they had gone through the same thing in their childhood.

**I feel as though
my Higher Power
sent me into
that prison to open
my eyes and ears.
I will be forever
grateful.**

Words can't express how much the prison meetings mean to me, and what they have done for me in working a program. I can't speak for anyone else, but I do know they have helped me to be more honest in my life. They have helped me to really grab a hold of the N.A. program and hang onto it. They have helped me to start working a better program, and to stop taking everything in my life for granted.

I feel as though my Higher Power sent me into that prison to open my eyes and ears at a time when I had hit a low point in my program. This is something I will be forever grateful to my Higher Power for.

I know today that if I thoroughly work the Third Step to the best of my ability, everything will be okay. Today, I don't have to use to be able to deal with problems; I have a Higher Power and the N.A. program to help me, along with the fellowship of recovering addicts.

I have been given the privilege of co-sponsoring the N.A. meetings in the prison, and also doing service work on an area level. I know that is what my Higher Power wants me to do, and he will take care of me. I get so much out of these meetings; they have helped me when I needed help in learning how to work a good program.

It has really helped me to watch the meeting grow every week. When I first started attending, there were probably twenty-five to thirty inmates attending. We now have up to eighty. Most of the time there are not enough seats for everyone, so some have to stand, but they are willing to do that to attend the meetings.

I am happier today than I ever thought was possible. I would not trade my life today for all the riches in the world. I truly believe that God has blessed my life, and I will forever be grateful to him.

If the opportunity comes, I strongly suggest that anyone who gets a chance to attend a prison meeting do so. It might just be a turning point in your recovery, as it has been in mine.

K.P., Alabama

Birth

It took the birth of a child to finally break through the denial that was killing me, and to nudge me toward recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

I reached the point of hopelessness, loneliness and despair several years before I got clean. But I thought *I had* to live that way, that I was destined to be a dope fiend. I didn't know I had a choice.

I had spent years in several different forms of denial that allowed me to continue using. I switched drugs. My probation officer arranged for me to get a drug from the government (yes, court ordered denial). That was supposed to make me a responsible, productive member of society.

I surrounded myself with other practicing addicts so I could fit in. I justified every insane thing I did, spinning excuses endlessly. It didn't matter that I was living in a parking lot. It didn't matter that I wasn't eating. Nothing mattered but staying loaded.

I hurt everyone that crossed my path, and justified it with the same tired excuses: "They hurt me first." "If you play with fire you're going to get burned." "They should have known better than to give me money when I'm sick." "So what, he'll get

over it." But something happened that opened my eyes, and I couldn't pretend not to see.

When I opened my eyes in the hospital room, the first person I saw was my doctor. He told me they were giving my son medication to help him go through withdrawal more comfortably. I didn't see the kind of love and acceptance in that doctor's eyes that I've found in N.A. All I saw was disgust. Shocked to the core, I realized for the first time that I wasn't quite in touch with the truth.

I had denied what taking drugs continuously throughout my pregnancy might be doing to my baby. I also thought no one would find out. Yeah, sure. My arms were invisible, right? And the normal process of everything that goes in a mother's body being passed on to her child wouldn't happen with me.



They let me take my baby home, and I continued to use. I didn't know what else to do. I had never felt such bleak despair. I wanted to die all day, every day. I couldn't even pretend anymore; I just sat on the couch nodding and drooling, and let my mother-in-law care for my son.

Through a friend, I found Narcotics Anonymous and began the process of recovery. I lied about a lot of things until I wrote an inventory and trusted my sponsor enough to read it to her. I truly believed I was the only woman in N.A. who had done such a horrible thing to her child. I found out I was not. Just like I do now when someone trusts me with their Fifth Step, my sponsor let me know I was not alone and that I was loved for who I am.

One of the most wonderful gifts I have received is the opportunity to make amends. I believe in miracles,

because one has happened for my son and me. He was born hooked, with two addicted parents, and all he had to

I couldn't even pretend anymore; I just sat on the couch, nodding and drooling, and let my mother-in-law care for my son.

look forward to was a lot of neglect and very little love. Today, he has me to love him and be there for him. N.A. is teaching me how to be a good mother. Not only does he have me, he has my friends in this fellowship who always have a hug for him.

I know that what saved me was the unconditional love I found in N.A. When I'm angry, sad or depressed, I know that I can go to a meeting and get the love I need. And N.A. has taught me how to do that for my son when *he's* feeling blue.

My life has never been so rich and so full. Hopelessness and despair have been replaced by hope and joy. I look forward to each new day and the growth it will bring. My son and I are moving into a house soon, and we have a puppy waiting for us to pick up when it's old enough to leave its mother. Little things like that are what show me that the steps are working in my life. None of this would have been possible without N.A.

Anonymous, California

ence of drugs, I always dutifully apologized and made amends the morning afterward. Sometimes, I cleaned up the mess I made; other times, I repaired a wall or a door I had broken.

After awhile, my apologies did not mean much. The person I was apologizing to and I both knew that I would repeat the same aberrant act next week or so. My amends required more than words.

Actions speak louder than words. For me, the biggest part of making amends was staying clean. This kept me from wrecking the house, and improved my health so I seldom had to use sick days. On a day by day basis, I gave my boss an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. I went to work on time, worked all day, and stayed at least until quitting time.

Even though I've always been pretty honest as far as money goes, I did discover a few cases where I had

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cheated someone out of money due to my addiction. I used to work hard at making my parents and relatives pity me so that they would send me a few dollars which I quickly used for drugs.

Then there was the time when our fraternity house manager had to pay out of his own pocket for a piece of panel that blew off of his car during a

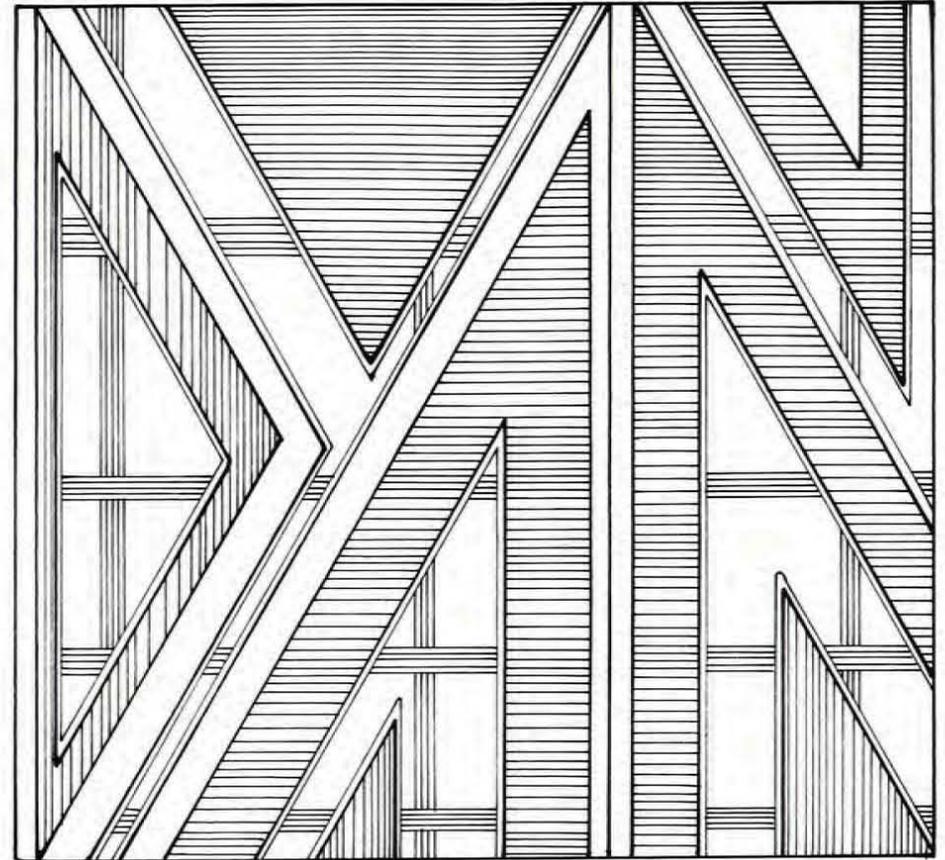
Making amends

Step Nine: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

When first hearing the Ninth Step read, I thought it made perfect sense for people who were criminals, who broke into people's homes, or who shoplifted. But I went to work every day. I paid all of my bills. "I'm different," I thought. "I don't need this step."

But after taking Steps Four and Eight, I found I had many amends to make. True, I did not directly steal from society. But due to my addiction, my efficiency as an employee, father, and husband had been greatly impaired. My using also affected my physical health: I seemed always to be sick with colds and strep throat. I had to use most of my generous allotment of sick days each year, although few others in my company ever did.

Being ashamed of my sick and insane behavior while under the influ-



rain storm. He was getting the panel for me to replace the wall I had destroyed during a frat party. At the time I did want to pay him for the panel, but I lacked the money.

I got clean several years after graduation. Now I do not know where he is. For years I have carried ten dollars hidden away in my wallet, just in case I run into him.

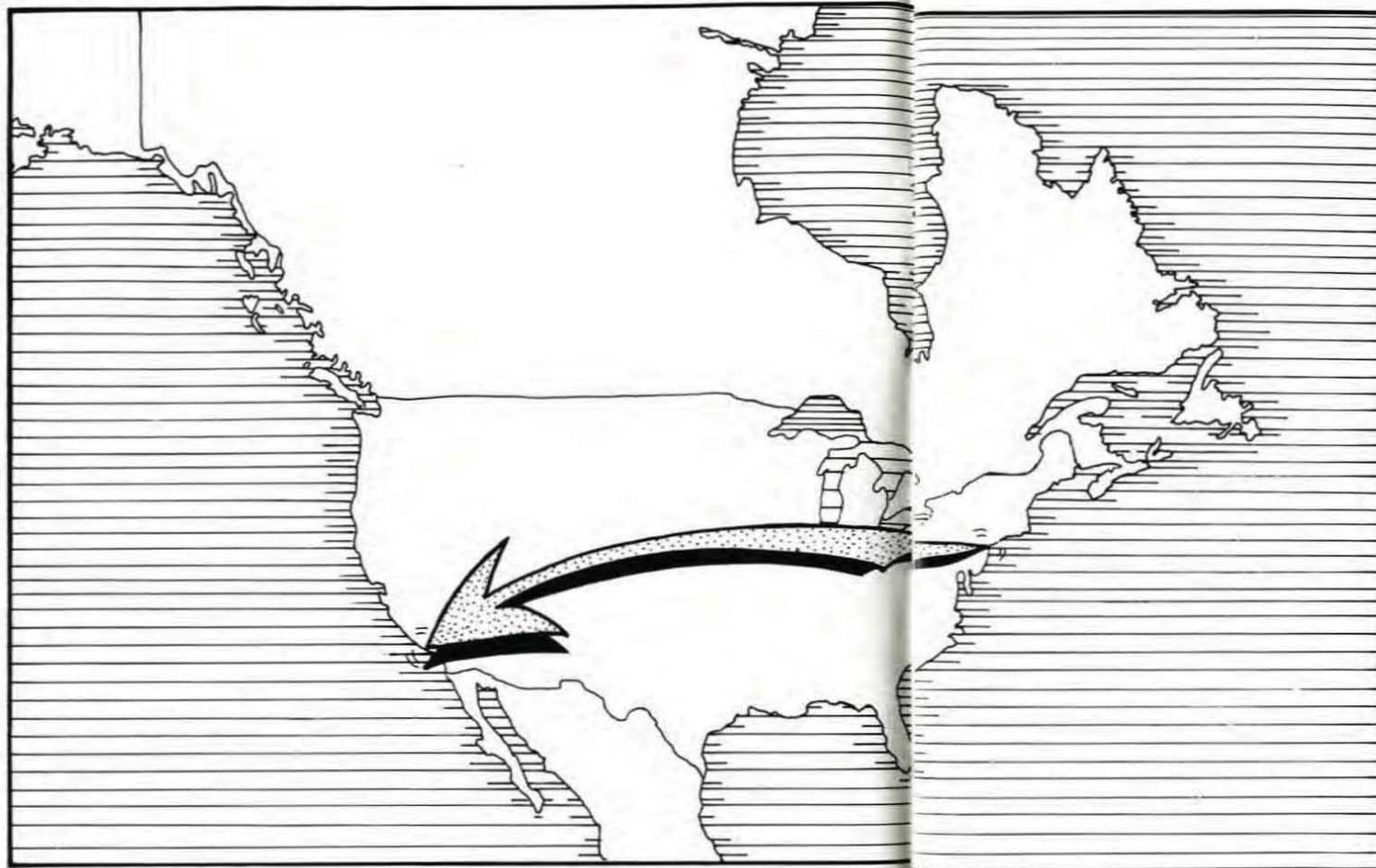
Much of the damaging, hurtful part of my drug use occurred in college in another state. In working my Ninth Step, I wrote to the people I had harmed back then. Some of the letters were returned, but I felt good for having tried: I had the all-important

willingness.

When I was using, I believed that I was only hurting myself, so no one else should ever complain. If I got sick from mixing different drugs, I was the one who was suffering. And although there was only a little truth in that, it is true that today I have to make amends not only to others, but to myself. I try to take care of my body by exercising, eating good foods, and getting enough rest.

For years, I burned the candle at both ends in order to mask my drug problem. Today I take some time for myself: to rest, to meditate, to laugh, and to smell the roses.

Anonymous, New York



Long distance sponsor

When I had about ninety days clean, I learned that my sponsor had decided to move to another city. Today, I can honestly say that I am grateful for this move. We have strengthened our relationship by practicing the spiritual principles of this program more in-

tensely.

My faith in her program has never been in question. But when she moved, I had to learn to accept that she was not going to be at my beck and call at all hours. I also had to accept that I would not be able to get that very special hug and smile from her, telling me that everything would be all right. These things were very important to me, but my God has replaced them with principles that are truly dear to my heart. One of these is respect, and the feeling that goes along with it.

When I call her on the phone, I know that it is important to my recovery to hear what she has to say. I respect her enough to listen to her, and not overreact. I don't whine to her. She has not only taught me to work the steps of Narcotics Anonymous, but she has shown me how to live life on life's terms.

For me, the answers are found in the experience, strength, and hope of those who came before me. My sponsor gives me this and more. I often need to hear how it worked for her,

and how she has applied the spiritual principles in her life. I find that I can learn even from her mistakes. I need not go through the same insanity, though at times I still do.

I have another added benefit. Any time of the day or night I can pick up a piece of paper, one of the many letters she has written me. That piece of paper has some very special words written on it, words written just for

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me. Through that piece of paper I can feel the warmth, love, and spirituality of my sponsor, even though we are separated by over two thousand miles. Sometimes words spoken aloud go in and out of my head, but I can hold onto these special words she writes me forever.

By having a long distance sponsor, I have had to broaden my personal support system within my area. This has enabled me to build several strong relationships with men and women locally. These relationships are also very special to me.

I have nine months clean now, and my relationship with my sponsor grows deeper and better with each passing day.

D.B., Nevada

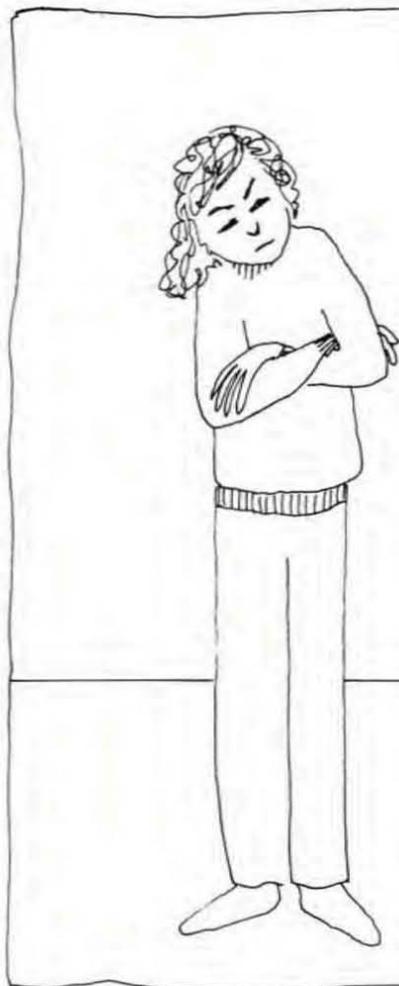
Learning to love

It seems that the miracles of recovery sneak up on me when I'm not looking. They take me by surprise. I work hard, follow direction, work the steps, live the spiritual principles to the best of my ability. Then one day, when I least expect it, the gift arrives: the gift of change from my Higher Power.

I've been looking for love for a long time. I've searched for someone to love and—let's be honest here—for someone to love me. I tried to let go of my old ideas about what love "should" be. I heard about unconditional love and couldn't understand it. I was so stuck in judgment and so full of my own wants, I didn't think I would ever experience something so wonderful.

But if I've learned anything here, it is to suspend my own disbelief and do the footwork anyway. So I worked the steps, took direction from my sponsor, practiced the principles, and tried not to hope too hard that love would find me. I learned to accept the loneliness of my life, and turned my focus away from people and onto my Higher Power.

Of course, living spiritual principles (and allowing them to work on me)



always brings the gift, the change. The gift came this time when my only sister, who lives in another state, came to visit me for two days.

I have lived alone for most of my recovery, and I'm very selfish about my personal space. I justify that by congratulating myself on my new-found assertiveness, and by reminding myself that I deserve to have a clean and quiet home. But my loving H.P. has taught me once again that there are more important things.



My sister is a smoker. I have finally managed to quit smoking cigarettes after twenty-one years. I had decided to let her smoke in my home. It was harder than I thought. The apartment got so smoky I couldn't sleep at night, and I got up in the mornings with a sore throat.

As I lay awake at night, I turned it over in my head. How could I assertively tell her I had changed my mind, that she couldn't smoke in my home? Each time I thought of it, a quiet voice in my heart said, "I love my sister.

This is not important. I don't want anything to come between us." Each time I became irritated over her behavior that weekend, the same quiet voice repeated itself: "I love my sister. I want nothing to come between us."

What a revelation! I had never consciously loved someone so unconditionally that my comfort was not important. My sister wasn't like other visitors I've had; she didn't go out of her way to behave; she was just who she is. And even though it was a small struggle, I found that loving her was more important than my desires. It was my first small triumph over self-centeredness, and a major triumph for the spirit.

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I have to remember always that our primary message is one of hope. Today I have hope that I don't have to use drugs. I have hope that my life gets better each day that I use the tools of this program. I have hope that I can learn how to love others, how to let people into my life. Today I know that love is possible, and that with H.P.'s help it can start with me.

Anonymous, California

The wind

Upon my introduction to N.A. and the Twelve Steps, I knew I was in trouble. I heard all the talk of God and a Higher Power but I felt I had to take care of myself, because no one else could do as good a job as I could. I did know, on the other hand, that my life had become unmanageable, and that if I couldn't do something to change the situation, I would surely die.

With the help of a treatment center, I had to grudgingly admit that there were things more powerful than myself, things beyond my control. Some of these were earthquakes, volcanos and the wind. Thinking this way gave me a belief in a Higher Power. But how could this power restore me to sanity?

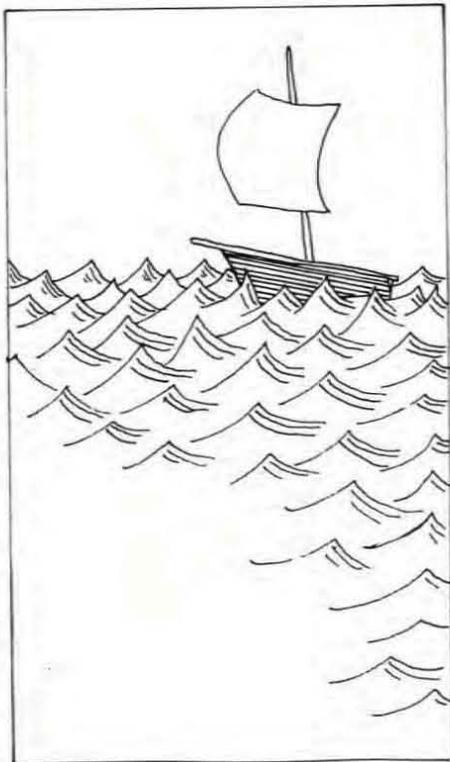
As I struggled with these thoughts, I began to think of sailing and how I use the wind to move the boat along. I started to think of how the wind was like my Higher Power. I cannot control the wind. I cannot regulate how hard it blows, or the direction it blows from. But by paying attention to these two factors—force and direction—I can use the wind to move my boat forward.

As I became more comfortable with this comparison, I could start to

understand the idea of “turning it over.” When the wind has too much force for the sails I have up I must change the sails, or at the very least reef them (reduce the amount of sail area), or I will find myself in serious trouble (as I did). In applying these thoughts to the understanding of a Higher Power, I began to see that by working with a Higher Power I could start to move my life forward again.

Today, my Higher Power and I are sailing toward a much brighter horizon. I even have days that I can truly say are serene. I hope I will always pay attention to the direction and force of the wind my Higher Power sends me. I never again want to be adrift in the sea of life with no wind because I sailed too far in the wrong direction.

M.T., Idaho



Home Group

“Marge’s moment of clarity”



An interview with the staff coordinator for WSO's Group Services Department

Serving the groups

I was scheduled to do an interview with Steve S. about one of the most productive—and least discussed—departments of N.A.'s World Service Office: Group Services. As I walked into his office, Steve motioned me to take a seat. He wrapped up what he was doing, put his file folders aside, turned his chair to face me, leaned back...and the phone rang. Twenty minutes later—and another area trusted servant provided with the guidance he had sought—our interview began.

N.A. Way: What exactly is the WSO Group Services Department?

Steve: The WSO has evolved a great deal since the time when its only function was to sell literature. A lot of the services that the WSO provides today are directly connected to a World Service Conference committee, but a lot of things that the fellowship inquires about aren't. Those things have kind of fallen to Group Services.

N.A. Way: What kinds of things?

Steve: Well, group registrations were the first need, and helping new groups get started. Meetings are the primary way that our message gets carried, so giving them support is very important.

Group registrations

N.A. Way: What difference does it make if groups register or not?

Steve: I think it's important for several reasons. One is so the group can be connected to N.A. as a whole. Registered groups can receive new information as soon as it's available, and be contacted immediately if something comes up that affects the entire fellowship.

Another reason is that, by registering groups, we can get some idea of N.A.'s overall growth—how big we are, and where. That kind of information helps us predict the needs of the fellowship in terms of how much literature to produce, which areas are going to be needing what kinds of special services, and those kind of things. It also helps the outside world know how big we are, and gives an indication of our credibility.

Group registrations also help people looking for N.A. meetings. We can help addicts find N.A. only if we know where the groups are. Accurate, current group registrations help us not do a *dis-service* to those we are trying to serve, like giving out incorrect meeting information—either directly to addicts or to someone else who may refer an addict to that meeting.

N.A. Way: Do we have any realistic idea of how many groups are meeting, or where they are?

Steve: It's better now than it has ever been. But the fact is that, at this point in time, we do not have a reliable group counting method at the World Service Office. Our best estimate of the number of groups comes from the regions. And out of fourteen thousand groups, we have current information for less than half. But now that we have improved our ability to keep track of that information, we will soon be asking all groups to re-register with us annually so that we can get both things: meeting information and group contact person.

The WSO mailbag

Your group has a problem—too little money, too few people. Or you're starting a new group, except you don't know where to start. Or your area committee wants to know how other ASC's do their work. So you—and fourteen-thousand other groups around the world just like yours—write to the World Service Office. And every month, WSO's Group Services Department responds to an average of 239 such letters.

Starter kits—including White Booklets, information pamphlets, a literature catalogue, copies of the *N.A. Way* and the *Newsline*, and N.A. contacts in the area the inquiry is sent from—are sent to about 150 new groups every month.

Another hundred letters—with questions ranging from the problems of addicts with additional needs and the application of N.A.'s Twelve Traditions to the intricacies of establishing a fellowship service center—are also answered each month.

“Group registrations help us not do a dis-service to those we are trying to serve.”

World directory

N.A. Way: You used to publish a world directory of N.A. meetings. What happened to that?

Steve: There was a great deal of sentiment attached to the *World Directory*. There was something special about having a world meeting list right in your hand—you could go for recovery to all *these* places on *these* streets at *these* times, anywhere on the globe! So in the discussions about the *World Directory*, there was strong sentiment.

But after the Group Services Department had been going for awhile, it became obvious that we weren't getting all the information we needed, and that a substantial percentage of the information we had was inaccurate. In addition to that, we found that as soon as the *World Directory* was published it became obsolete, because meeting information changed so rapidly.

The decision to scrap the directory was based on our desire to put something out that would really be useful, both to N.A. members and to those outside of N.A. We were very hesitant to send our *World Directory* to treatment centers or other people dealing with addicts, because of the disservice it could provide and the lack of credibility it could portray for the fellowship.

Where to find a meeting

N.A. Way: So, if an addict or a professional wants to get in touch with N.A., what should they do?

Steve: We now have, in my view, the most efficient system we've ever had for giving that information. It's threefold, really.

One is our *Phoneline Directory*, which provides all the information we have about how to contact local N.A. telephone services, where they exist—both inside the U.S. and, to a limited degree, outside America.

Second, we intend to publish a meeting list

for N.A. outside the United States. Oftentimes, phonelines outside the U.S. are more difficult to deal with than those in the States. Many of them are personal numbers, or in some other way are difficult to keep track of.

And third, we have local meeting lists on file, at least in cases where they have been provided to us. Many regions give us a meeting list every time they publish it, and we want them to keep on doing that. We have all those meeting lists on file at the office, so we can photocopy the most recent one and provide it to anyone who needs it.

N.A. Way: The *Phoneline Directory* is something that people can order for themselves from the World Service Office, isn't it?

Steve: Yes, and we're distributing a lot of them right now. It's proving to be something that treatment centers and doctors and social agencies and lots of people, including some non-N.A. phoneline set-ups, are using for their own referral purposes. I think the *Phoneline Directory* is going to serve us real well.

The mailbag

N.A. Way: I imagine you have a good bit of mail coming in every day. What are the most asked questions?

Steve: We get a variety of questions. One of the most common, I think—and one of my favorite ones to answer—is, “What can I do to help keep our meeting going? Not many people are coming, and we don't have much money—but I really want N.A. to persist.”

There are a lot of groups that grow slowly at the start. People often feel frustrated if their group is not growing quickly, or if they don't have enough money to do what they want to do. This is usually in places where N.A. itself is relatively new, or where the population is sparse.

N.A. Way: What do you say?

Steve: We try to give them as much encouragement as we can. And we reassure them that the best single thing they can do to

Portland ASO

Ours is an area office. It's run by the Portland Area. We're open six days a week, from nine o'clock in the morning to one o'clock in the afternoon.

The office has pulled the area together by being a central place where we could get literature and have our area meetings and our subcommittee meetings. We run our phoneline out of the office, too—and that's saved us lots of money. Having physical presence in the city has done a lot of good, too, for community awareness of N.A.

We started investigating the office about four, five years ago. It's a business, and it has to be run like a business—we're licensed, we keep books, we pay taxes, everything. I came on board when we were just setting up shop, doing all the incorporation stuff, and it was a little hazy—I mean, not that many other local offices had gotten that far yet.

I made a point to come to the first office workshop put on by Group Services. We

didn't really have the money to pay my way, but I wanted to make sure everything was right, so I just went ahead. And that workshop gave us everything we needed. Everything was right there in black and white.

I've found the workshops to be real helpful. They get local office people together where they are able to talk their problems out with others who've been working on the same things. And of course, on top of that, there's all the information the WSO brings, which is essential.

How would it have gone, getting the office started and keeping it going, just on our own local information? It wouldn't have happened. There is just so much legal stuff that unless one of those involved had previously opened some other kind of non-profit organization, I don't think it would have happened. We couldn't have done it without WSO Group Services—our area just wouldn't have an office.

T.M., Oregon

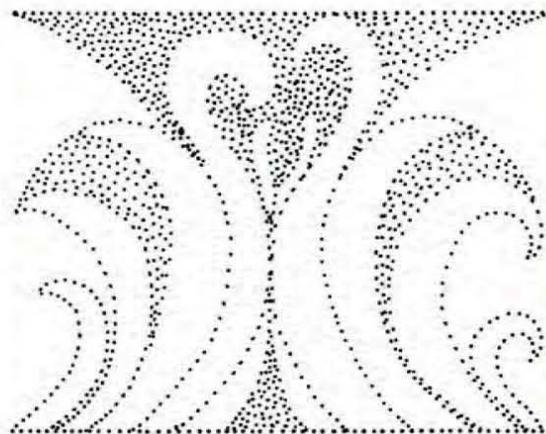
help their group is to pursue their own recovery, and to share that recovery in their meeting. In doing that, addicts are eventually attracted to what's going on in the meeting. The group grows, and the Seventh Tradition collections increase. But that all comes in God's time—and, sometimes, you just have to be patient and hang in there.

Conflict resolution?

N.A. Way: What do you do when someone calls you up saying, "Tell us the right answer so we can set this situation—or this person—straight?"

Steve: Usually what we do is ask them what they have done so far to resolve their issue themselves, whatever it is. We always try to get them to go through the local service structure, rather than come to one individual or committee at the world service level to solve their problem.

Someone came forth at the conference last year, and said how just that kind of approach had forced them to think for themselves and to form their own understanding of our principles, instead of just depending on "the authorities" to provide them all the answers. Now they *know* the answers to the questions they had, because they are *their* answers.



Local office support

N.A. Way: As N.A. has grown—particularly in the U.S., but also in the United Kingdom and in Australasia—lots more local N.A. communities have felt it important to set up offices. When did Group Services begin to provide assistance to local offices?

Steve: I think in 1986 we had our first workshop. At that one we had about thirty people, and the second had about sixty. Now we're at the place where we have planned three of them for this year, in different parts of the U.S.

N.A. Way: What kind of support are you able to give to these people?

Steve: We often get requests for assistance from people who want to open an office, but who really haven't done very much homework. It seems like such a simple thing to just rent a space and call it an office. What we try to do is help them become aware that, by doing so, they are actually opening a business of sorts. There are a lot of things to think about that are very important, things that reflect upon all of N.A.—income and sales tax, insurance, licenses, those kinds of things.

We try to help them know what those things are, and then help them in the preparation of everything involved in opening their office, if that's what they decide to do. We spend most of our time encouraging them, and helping them to assess whether an office is feasible in their area or region or not.

When to open your office

N.A. Way: What makes it feasible for an area or region to open an office? What makes it not so feasible?

Steve: Well, several things. One criterion is the reason for opening. There has to be a need for it, some service that's not already being provided.

"It seems like such a simple thing to just rent a space and call it an office—but it's not."

“We aren’t hired at the WSO to work our Twelfth Step. We spend eight hours a day doing a job and making a salary.”

There needs to be a big enough N.A. community to make it happen. And there need to be enough members with enough recovery and service experience to follow through on the project, because once you begin this sort of thing you can’t just stop. It’s continuous. There are those legal things we talked about. Many of those are quarterly or yearly things, and if you don’t comply with the law, you’re making the fellowship open to fines and public controversy.

N.A. Way: It’s not like you can go halfway through the process of filing for tax exemption and say, “Oh, sorry, we lost interest, never mind.”

Steve: There needs to be a certain stability in an N.A. community’s already-existent service structure, in terms of services already being provided in a sufficient and stable manner.

It’s also important that the fund flow is working, because an office is expensive. It takes several years for an office to get close to being financially self-supporting from literature sales alone. And the difference between the money the office *makes* and the money it *needs* will come from the local service committee or the membership in one way or another. So if there’s already a fund flow problem, an office can’t work. The office will end up being a drain on the local N.A. community, either financially or in other ways.

N.A. member/special worker

N.A. Way: What about the personal side of your work? How important is your background as a recovering addict?

Steve: Well, I have found personally that my recovery has been real important to me in my work. I have some personal experience with almost everything we deal with in Group Services, although that experience has by nature been limited by where I’ve lived and

what groups and committees I’ve been involved with. But at least it’s been a foundation. And as I’ve worked the steps and learned more about traditions, both in my own recovery and in my work experience, I’ve been able to better identify and understand the things that people talk about when they contact the WSO.

On the other hand, while my background of personal experience in recovery is essential—I don’t know if you could do this kind of work without it—you have to stop short of having that be your only resource. In trying to do my job, I can’t use only *my* experience or *my* opinions or *my* interpretations of things. I must always realize that, while I have a strong opinion on nearly everything happening in N.A., I really can’t reflect that in my work—it’s just not the right thing to do. I might be convinced that my way is the best, but I’ve learned that’s not necessarily true, or helpful.

N.A. Way: Do you consider your job a form of Twelfth Step work?

Steve: In Group Services, we’re performing a function for the fellowship, with certain responsibilities, but it’s very different from volunteer commitments like working the phoneline, or going on a Twelfth Step call, or helping a newcomer. We aren’t hired at the WSO to work our Twelfth Step. We spend eight hours a day doing a job and making a salary. We all spend time addict-to-addict, carrying the message in our own N.A. meetings on our own time. That’s our *personal* lives; but it’s not our job. That’s an important difference.

Special workers, special conflicts

N.A. Way: Do you ever find your work and your personal program in conflict?

Steve: I think every special worker has ups and downs with those things—I know I do—but overall, it’s our recovery that gives us the base to keep going, with those ups and downs and with the others that everybody has.

As a special worker myself, if I go to a

Virginia Convention

Before we looked at a corporation, the convention was run by area service committees. The committee people signing the hotel contracts were personally responsible for the debt to the hotel. At our fourth convention, we took a big loss. And a couple of people went out and used over it. We formed a regional corporation shortly after that.

We incorporated our service structure. We did it on our own—no help from anybody. Our RSC became a board of directors. If we had gotten into any legal trouble, N.A. as a whole would have been affected. When we realized what we had done, we were shocked.

We then started discussing the problems—with the convention, and with the corporation—with WSO Group Services. They sent a couple of people out for an initial meeting, and we talked about what we *really* wanted the corporation to do for us.

We were dealing with

some big convention budgets. We knew we needed some kind of guidance and protection. Group Services gave us that guidance. They explained all the business stuff—corporate structure, IRS regulations, state tax laws, surety bonds, liability, attorneys, everything.

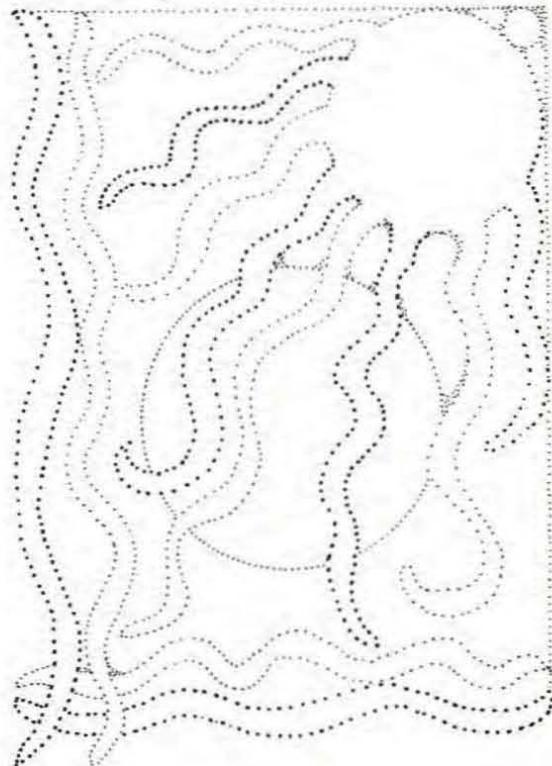
Sure, we have capable people on the corporation board, but without Group Services, I don't think we would have drawn those people together. Group Services took the time to teach a lot of people inexperienced in this special sort of undertaking all the things we needed to know.

And it's worked. With the convention corporation—separate from the RSC—taking care of the business end, the host committee is left free to concentrate on the recovery celebration. Because of the revamped corporation—and Group Services—we expect our next convention to be a spiritually fulfilling, financially responsible event.

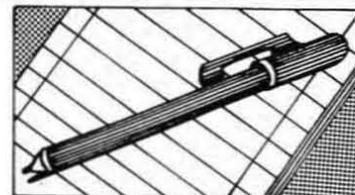
T.O., Virginia

service committee meeting in my community, I might be viewed differently than anyone else there, because of where I work and what I do. Or if I were to be elected to a position on a service committee, I might be seen differently than other officers. And sometimes when you just attend meetings as a regular member, and people want to talk to you about office-related things, it becomes a personal issue. You have to find a way for yourself to participate in your recovery, and in the life of your own N.A. community, without bringing your role as a special worker into it. All those things can be difficult, depending on the circumstances.

I might add that there is a lot of personal reward in doing this kind of work, especially for those of us who have always wanted to help people. The opportunity to be a recovering addict, and then to do this kind of work, offers a lot of fulfillment. I feel grateful, and honored, to be working in Group Services.



Viewpoint



Where are the ladies?

I'm in pain right now. That's probably a good place to write from—identification is basic and honesty is a relief. What am I in pain about? I feel alone. I've been travelling through the Southwest for the last two weeks. The population is far more sparse here than in the East Coast area I come from. That makes me feel grateful for the unity in my hometown.

I have met wonderful, loving, committed members of our fellowship in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous everywhere. But most of them have been men, and that makes me sad. It seems to me that, in general, the men are more active in recovery. That is not to say that there aren't places where women are strong, vocal, committed, loving and spiritual members of the N.A. community, but for the most part, men are disproportionately represented in the rooms. I have shared this feeling with many, many women from all parts of the country. I would like to know why this imbalance

exists, and what I can do to right the balance.

I know when I first came into recovery, I was the only woman in my area to commit herself wholeheartedly to N.A. That caused me a lot of pain and feelings of isolation. It also forced me to reach out to greater N.A. in a way in which I might not have otherwise. Out of my pain came a vow that I would be the last woman in my area who would go without at least the *option* of a local N.A. sponsor.

Many of my A.A. friends were disgusted with my commitment to N.A., and accused me of being rebellious and trying to be "unique". But I can now say that the rewards of my persistence, faith and commitment have far outweighed any pain I may have experienced.

Men are disproportionately represented in N.A. Why does this imbalance exist—and what can I do to right it?

I believe with all my heart that, underneath, all recovering men and

women are the same. We suffer from the same disease, and we rejoice in the same fulfillment from surrender to spiritual principles. But this is a plea to the women of this long relationship.

We're all pioneers at this stage of our fellowship's development, and that makes it more difficult. Our rewards are neither immediate nor obvious. A new meeting gets started, or a newcomer keeps coming back. These are the things we have to hold onto, to keep us going somehow.

I know when I get discouraged, or stray in my commitment to a positive attitude, I need the support and encouragement of a good strong example that I can identify with. *Stick around, ladies.* Reach out to each other, even when you don't feel like it. Express your feelings in meetings. Hug a new friend and make them feel welcome. Sponsor each other and expose your truest self. That's how it works. And that's how we can *all* grow in God's love.

Anonymous, Massachusetts

To the men of N.A.

At four years clean, I am just beginning to deal with the anger that I feel toward men. While I take full responsibility for the part I might have played in becoming a victim of abuse, this self-acceptance in no way decreases the tremendous, often over-

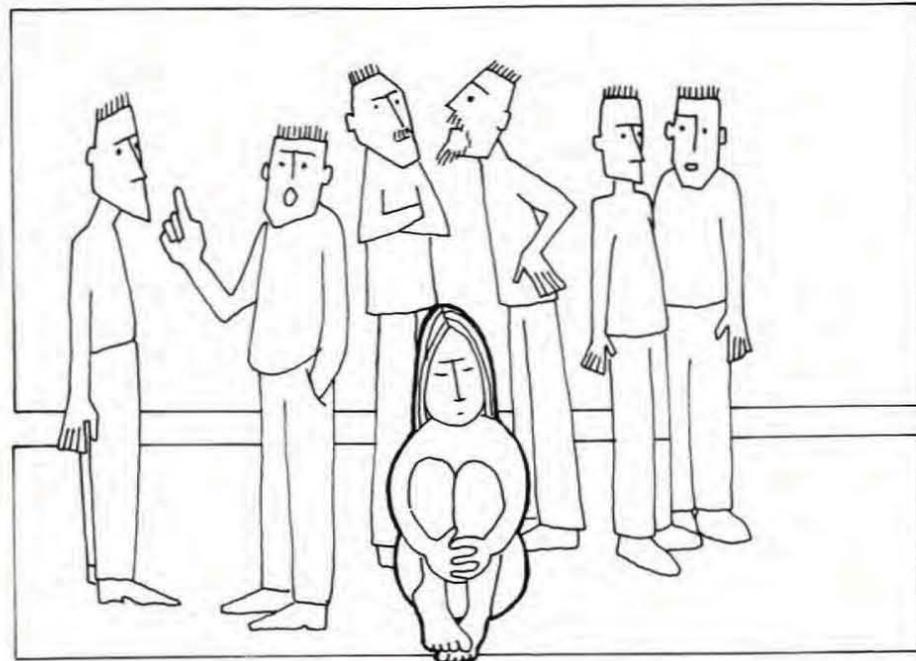
powering anger that I sometimes feel.

Lately, at many N.A. meetings I have been hearing men use language that is inappropriate in mixed-sex meetings, as well as listening to them get blatantly honest about the abusive acts that they committed while they were using. And this honest recital brings up overpowering feelings of rage in me. At times, I have sat through meetings feeling violated, even physically ill.

I don't believe that I am the exception. I would be willing to bet that the majority of women sitting in N.A. meetings were victims of incest, rape and physical abuse. If this is true, then it would hold that the rage that I feel when I hear men share about the violence they were a part of is also coming up for the other women who sit beside me.

Perhaps one of the reasons there is a scarcity of women with much clean time in N.A. is that we begin to feel disrespected. After a few years of recovery, our heads are just beginning to clear up, and the walls around our hearts just beginning to come down, making us especially vulnerable in areas like our shattered sexuality. When we go to meetings, we need to feel especially safe and nurtured. What is the point of going to meetings that often make us feel more miserable and angry when we leave than when we walk in the door? It's no wonder many women simply quit coming to N.A.

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of recovery. I know that men, like women, have a need to remember what it was like. I can only hope that they do it in the appropriate place: in



a mens meeting or with their sponsors. I crawled to N.A. a shell of a human being. If it weren't for Narcotics Anonymous, I don't think I would be alive today. Therefore, I don't have the luxury of letting myself be kept

explaining this tradition, states that its purpose "is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups recovery-oriented." At speaker-discussion meetings, the speaker sets the tone for the rest of the meeting. One who dwells on how it was, complete with graphic details and anatomical correctness, limits the scope of his message. Ultimately, the responsibility lies on the groups' secretaries to pick speakers that carry the message of Narcotics Anonymous.

I believe that to become a whole, healed woman I must work through these feelings of rage I have towards men, and learn to trust again. The ability to be intimate with men, not sexually, but as one human being to another, will have to be relearned slowly. Please respect my journey through recovery.

N.G., California

One of the reasons there is a scarcity of women in N.A. is that we feel disrespected.

away from meetings by a thoughtless few.

Our Fifth Tradition states, "Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." Our Basic Text, in

It's your turn to share

We printed a "Viewpoint" article in the October issue entitled "Second Class Member?" The author had some challenging things to say, and we were sure we would receive some responses. At this writing, we haven't received any. We have gotten messages from some of you, relayed by staff members or world-level trusted servants who have been in the office, but we've received nothing in writing. That has prompted us to offer a few words encouraging you to participate in our "Editorial Replies" section.

This section of the magazine is intended to serve as a forum for open dialogue about issues of concern to us as N.A. members. It's your avenue to speak out about matters that have been addressed in the magazine in the past.

Maybe you agree, as some did with the "Second Class Member?" article, and feel that it was high time someone made that case out loud. That's worth jotting down and adding to the discussion.

Or maybe you disagree, as some others did who relayed messages to us about that article. Maybe you wish to present a counterpoint and add another dimension to the discussion.

That's what we've provided this section for.

Another possibility is that you felt the article shouldn't be published at all. Maybe you feel that the N.A. Way was not acting responsibly in printing such a viewpoint in our fellowship magazine. If that's the case then let us know, and tell us why.

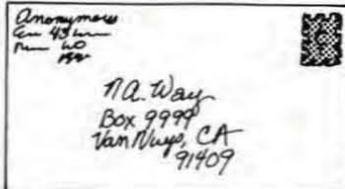
I've used that particular article as an example, but those comments apply across the board. We do not want to miss the opportunity to serve the fellowship by providing wide-ranging discussions.

We do receive some mail, of course, that the editorial board won't print. We reject pieces, for example, that are primarily angry, personal attacks. Some that address a specific incident or a certain committee's work are forwarded to the proper place rather than printed. We also reject pieces that are not consistent with our traditions, such as letters expressing opinions on outside issues. Sometimes if a subject has gotten a thorough airing already, and we receive another piece saying essentially the same thing as previous pieces, we don't print it. And there are times when we print only portions of a letter, for clarity or space, or perhaps for one of the reasons mentioned above.

In other words, we do exercise some responsibility in carefully considering the appropriateness of everything we print, so even if you're not sure, give it a shot. We'd rather receive too much than too little. Consider this that familiar moment at a meeting when the finger points at you: "Would you share with us, please?"

R.H., Editor

From our readers



Not on my own

I've seen too many members of Narcotics Anonymous stay clean for one year, turn around and stop doing what got them there, and relapse. This is because too much emphasis is put on *clean time*. My experience is that, no matter how much clean time we have, we really only have today. It is not how much you have that counts, but what you do with it.

I've heard so many addicts say, "I've made it a year." I do not know about anyone else, but I do not do anything of my own power. God gave me Twelve Steps, a sponsor, a home group, and several recovering addicts who honestly love and care about me. We can accomplish together what I can't.

E.W., Georgia

Hello there

Due to the fact that I'm in the navy, I spend much of my recovery at sea and in foreign ports. Most of these ports don't have N.A., but I knew there was N.A. in Tokyo; I just had to find out how to get there.

A friend in Hawaii wrote to me with an address of an English-speaking N.A. member in Tokyo, and I wrote to him. He wrote back and sent directions, most of which were written in Japanese. The whole process took about three weeks to a month, but it was worth the wait.

On our last day in port I snatched up the directions and headed for the Yokosuka Chuo train station. The rest of the trip I relied on the friendliness of the Japanese commuters to help me find my way to Meguro where the meeting was to be held. Outside the Meguro Station, I relied on the map drawn on the directions, and I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the ever-dependable N.A. sign hung on a church gate.

Inside, I met up with two Japanese men who had come to our gathering in February on Oahu. That's when the hugging started, my first hugs in three months. There happened to be a man inside who spoke English, and he interpreted the meeting for me. The whole time I was sitting there I couldn't stop smiling. I was so happy to be home again.

I love N.A. and our worldwide fellowship. Thanks for being where you are today.

T.G., California

Thank you, N.A.

I am an addict, and a regular N.A. Way reader. I recently read the article, "Freedom in Prison." I was deeply touched, and so was my husband. He is doing five to fifteen years for a crime related to his addiction. Thank God for meetings! Through them, he has grown and gained a sense of self-respect. And in recent visits I

have noticed that he has greater peace of mind. Without meetings in prison, I wonder what his frame of mind would be.

As for me, N.A. has given me hope, understanding and love. When I attend meetings, I really feel a sense of freedom and hope to continue *a day at a time!*

I live alone and have beautiful twin boys. I am attending a welding school, and plan on graduating in December 1988. I've been clean a little over two years. I feel great! It's hard, being a single parent, but with my N.A. sponsor I can make it. I don't have to be alone anymore; neither does my husband.

There's so much I want to say that words can not express. I've gone from being a high school drop-out to a certified welder and a clean and happy mother. N.A. was there when I needed it. It is responsible for my happiness and success. Thanks so much, N.A.

M.R., Ohio

Dear N.A. Way,

Greetings from Salisbury, which has a famous cathedral, started in 1220 and still the most important building in the city. We get lots of American visitors in the summer.

We have had an N.A. meeting here since October 1985; I was present at the first meeting. I was on tranquilizers at the time (had been for twenty-five years). It took me a year to get clean, but I now have nearly two years. Today we have three meetings a week, and I try to get to them all.

It takes a bit of hard work to get us serious reserved Brits to start sharing, but once we get the idea, there's no

stopping us. We have had a couple of Americans come to meetings here in Salisbury, and it was great to see their enthusiasm.

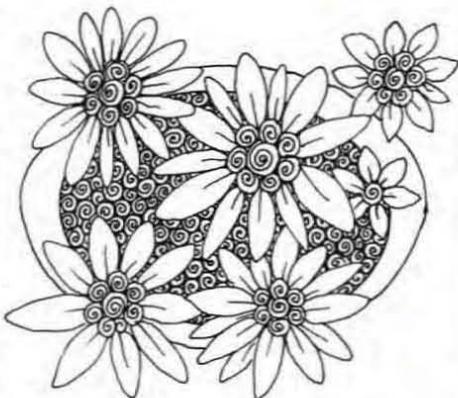
As a relatively young fellowship, we don't have anyone with very much clean time—three or four years at most. But my sponsor, who lives about fifteen miles away, has about seven years and was at the very first N.A. meeting in England.

We had a mini-convention in Salisbury in August, and had over two-hundred people there. I was asked to do a chair and was scared witless, but it was okay (of course!).

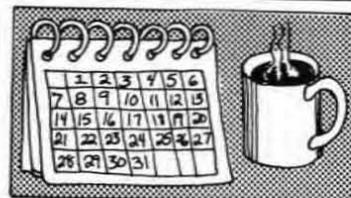
I am so delighted to see lots of really young people coming into the program. I have seen some wonderful changes take place. Aggression gives way to love; fear gives way to trust. We are so privileged to have a program that helps us improve ourselves and our lives.

I bought a couple of N.A. tapes at the convention. I consider those speakers my friends. Their voices have cheered me on sleepless nights. Greetings to them both!

G.T., England



Comin' up



LET US KNOW! We'll be happy to announce your upcoming event. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, regional or area phoneline number, and the host committee's postal box mailing address.

AUSTRALIA: Mar. 24-27, 1989; Australasian Regional Convention; Wollongong University, Wollongong, NSW; accommodations (042) 28 0300; ARCNA-89, P.O. Box 87, Fairy Meadow 2519, NSW

CALIFORNIA: Apr. 24-28, 1989; World Service Conference Annual Meeting; AirTel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, (818) 997-7676

GEORGIA: Feb. 23-26, 1989; 7th Georgia Regional Convention; Comfort Inn, Jekyll Island, Georgia (912) 635-2211; GRCNA-7, P.O. Box 5244, Macon, GA 31208-5244

HAWAII: Feb. 10-12, 1989; 5th Gathering of the Fellowship; Camp Erdman, Honolulu; Hawaii RSC, Attn. Fellowship Gathering, P.O. Box 27909, Honolulu, HI 96827

IDAHO: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 4th Washington/Northern Idaho Regional Convention; A Resort on the Lake, Coeur d'Alene ID 83814, (206) 765-4000; helpline (509) 458-7767; WNIRCNA-4, P.O. Box 807, Spokane, WA 99210

ILLINOIS: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 1st Chicagoland Regional Convention; Ramada Inn O'Hare, 6600 Mannheim Road, Rosemont IL 60018, (312) 827-5131; phoneline (312) 848-4884; CRC-1, P.O. box 34525, Chicago, IL 60634-0525

KANSAS: Feb. 17-19, 1989; Sixth Mid-America Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Holidome Convention Center, Salina, (913) 823-1739; Mid-America Convention, P.O. Box 383, Salina, KS 67401

KENTUCKY: Mar. 24-26, 1989; 3rd Kentuckiana Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency, 320 W. Jefferson St., Louisville KY 40202; KRCNA-3, P.O. Box 35063, Louisville, KY 40232

MARYLAND: Mar. 10-12, 1989; 3rd Chesapeake-Potomac Regional Convention; Hyatt Re-

gency Bethesda, 1 Bethesda Metro Center, Bethesda MD 20814, (800) 228-9000; CPRCA-3, P.O. Box 9145, Silver Spring, MD 20906

NEW MEXICO: Apr. 21-23, 1989; 1st New Mexico Regional Convention; Hilton Inn, Albuquerque; NMRC-1, P.O. Box 4522, Albuquerque, NM 87196

NORTH CAROLINA: Mar. 10-12, 1989; 2nd Capital Area Convention; Sheraton Imperial, Exit 282 off I-40, between Raleigh and Durham, (919) 941-5050; phoneline (919) 755-5391

OKLAHOMA: Apr. 7-9, 1989; 3rd Oklahoma Regional Convention; Sunmark Hotel, Stillwater; Central Service Office, 4611 S. Peoria, Tulsa OK 74105, (918) 747-0017

PENNSYLVANIA: Feb. 16-18, 1989; 7th Grtr. Phila. Regional Convention; Adams Mark Hotel, City Line & Monument Rd., Phila. PA 19131, (800) 231-5858; GPRCA-7, P.O. Box 42628, Philadelphia, PA 19101-2628

2) Feb. 24-26, 1989; 5th Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; Sheraton Four Star Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster; phoneline (717) 393-4546; Conference 5, P.O. Box 7651, Lancaster, PA 17604

QUEBEC: Mar. 31-Apr. 2, 1989; 5th French N.A. Convention; P.Q. Community Centre, 253 3rd Street, Shawinigan; L'Envol 5, C.P. 841, Shawinigan, PQ G9N 6W2

SOUTH CAROLINA: Feb. 3-5, 1989; 9th Upper South Carolina Convention; Ramada Inn, 1001 S. Church St., Greenville; USCAC-9, P.O. Box 4407, Greenville, SC 29608

TEXAS: Feb. 17-19, 1989; Texas Unity Convention; Whitney

2) Feb. 18-19, 1989; 5th Texarkana Area Convention; Sheraton Texarkana, I-30 and State Line Ave., Texarkana TX 75501

3) Mar. 24-26, 1989; 4th Lone Star Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Riverwalk, 123 Lo-soya, San Antonio 78205, (512) 222-1234; LSRCNA-4, 2186 Jackson Keller, Suite 327, San Antonio, TX 78213

N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

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**Allow four to six weeks for your first
issue to arrive.**

9TEA

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.