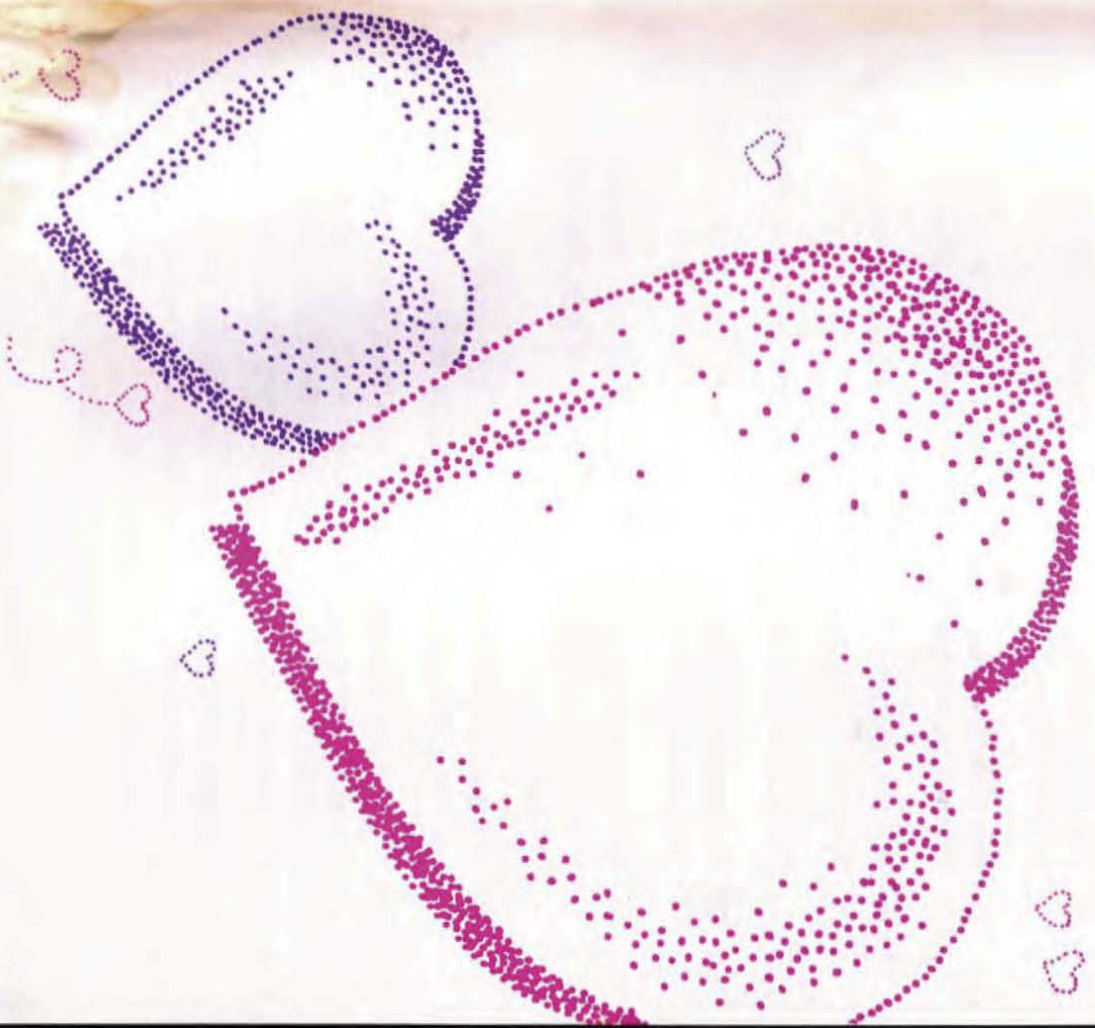


THE
N.A. Way[®]
MAGAZINE
February 1991 \$1.75



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.

Twelve Steps reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

THE N.A. Way[®] MAGAZINE

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

volume nine, number two

meeting in print

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| On taking back the Twelfth Step | 2 |
| Being where we need to be | 4 |
| Success story | 6 |
| Circus blood | 8 |
| The up side | 10 |
| On going back in | 12 |
| Right on time | 14 |

the broad perspective

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Fellowship news | 16 |
|-----------------|----|

home group

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| The vision made real | 20 |
|----------------------|----|

feature

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| The "GOD" question | 21 |
|--------------------|----|

viewpoint

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Re: psst off | 29 |
| Taking the heat | 30 |
| Anonymity and sexism | 31 |
| I understand now | 33 |

comin' up

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| A worldwide N.A. calendar | 34 |
|---------------------------|----|

The N.A. Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

The N.A. Way Magazine presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous, The N.A. Way Magazine or World Service Office, Inc.

Subscription rates, please remit in U.S. or Canadian currency: 1 yr. \$15, 2 yrs. \$28, 3 yrs. \$39, single copies \$1.75. Please inquire about bulk rates.

The N.A. Way Magazine, ISSN 1046-5421, copyright © 1991, World Service Office, Inc. Permission to reprint from this publication is granted to all Narcotics Anonymous service boards and committees, provided they cite the source. All other rights reserved. The N.A. Way Magazine and Narcotics Anonymous are registered trademarks of World Service Office, Inc.

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

On taking back the Twelfth Step

I got clean at a time (over two decades ago) when a newcomer was a real, not rare, commodity. The focus of the whole room was on that one person. Usually some other recovering addict brought him or her to that first meeting.

Addicts were not referred to us by hospitals, judges, psychiatrists and the like. We were not trusted and held no credibility.

What was significant back then with Twelve-Step work was that there was a lot down and dirty contact with the addict who still suffered. A Twelve Step call was where you went to where another addict was. We often tried to avoid going into someone's house or apartment, because of the possibility of us all getting busted by the police. But we would meet them. We would tell them our stories, what we were like, how we got clean and how we stay clean. Depending on

what they were using and how sick they were, we would often take them home with us and they'd Jones on the couch. We'd stick with them sometimes in shifts. There weren't a lot of us clean addicts, but for some reason we worked together like that. We would take addicts to their first meeting and introduce them to the road of recovery. Those who actually "made it," stayed clean and kept coming back, had a special love and gratitude for Narcotics Anonymous. N.A. shared their life.

This kind of Twelve-Step work still goes on today, though not nearly enough. Now there are many members in N.A. today who have never experienced a Twelve-Step call in its original form. The reason (in my opinion) is that the face of the Twelve-Step call has changed and with that change a dramatic shift has occurred.

That change has to do with the advent of "treatment." The coming of treatment centers brought tremendous blessings. Finally the addict was validated as a sick, suffering human being who needed help. Detox was available when before we would have to feed an addict who was "kicking" some booze just in order to get a hospital to care for them under the disguise that they were a drunk; otherwise we couldn't handle them if they went into convulsions due to barbiturates. In most places today an addict doesn't have to die kicking a habit.

At first treatment didn't affect our Twelfth-Step very noticeably. Their programs consisted of "take an addict in, detox them and get them involved with N.A." Most addicts got to treat-

ment as a result of recovering addicts taking them there in order for them to have a place to stay and buy a little time. Eventually these programs started to expand and they began to become a little more professional. Growing on counselors and therapists who were skilled and educated, today there are at least one or two highly proficient programs in every major city in the U.S.A. Addicts began to get their first initial contact with Narcotics Anonymous as a result of their reaching out for help to a treatment program. Their first "ah-ha," or realization of who and what they were, was the direct result of some group session or one-to-one talk with their counselor.

Naturally their gratitude would be focused on that institution. Just as mine was focused on Narcotics Anonymous as the result of another recovering addict giving me my first "ah-ha."

I think it is no surprise to anyone in N.A. that most of the newcomers we see at meetings are there because of treatment, and that it is no more shocking that very few of them are still at our meetings after ninety days. This is a bare-ass fact. I've done it and for sure many of us have done it, we've ignored them. We have basically turned the Twelve-Step call over to the professionals.

Where this has really hurt us as a fellowship is the fact (in my opinion) that we are not nearly as strong and unified as we should or could be. Most of the disunifying controversies that are going on around our fellowship have almost nothing to do with the addict who is still suffering.

I want to offer a solution. It's not as exciting as publishing your own copy of the Basic Text or starting your own WSO, but it will definitely save hundreds and thousands of lives.

It's time we took back the responsibility of the Twelve Step-call. We can start by contacting our local treatment center and ask for the opportunity to talk to a new addict. If we do it in pairs it's more effective. Tell them our stories, how we got clean, how we stay clean. Tell them that we would like to meet them at their first N.A. meeting. Give them some literature, stay in contact with them throughout their stay. Offer to take them to their first meeting after they get out of treatment, introduce them around the room, be available as sponsors.

I would seriously like to invite comments on this subject. This is the kind of discussion that we really need. If this program Narcotics Anonymous works, then we have to ask ourselves why it isn't working for so many. Has that got anything to do with us and the job we do?

Treatment is about treatment. They allow an addict to buy some time. They try to knock down the denial system, they educate and teach some coping skills. They can't do what we do, offer continuing recovery from the disease of addiction. They can't carry our message, least of all deliver it. Only one addict helping another can do that. We need to build a bridge. My solution is just one—there is so much more we can do. It works if we work it.

T.M., Hawaii

Being where we need to be

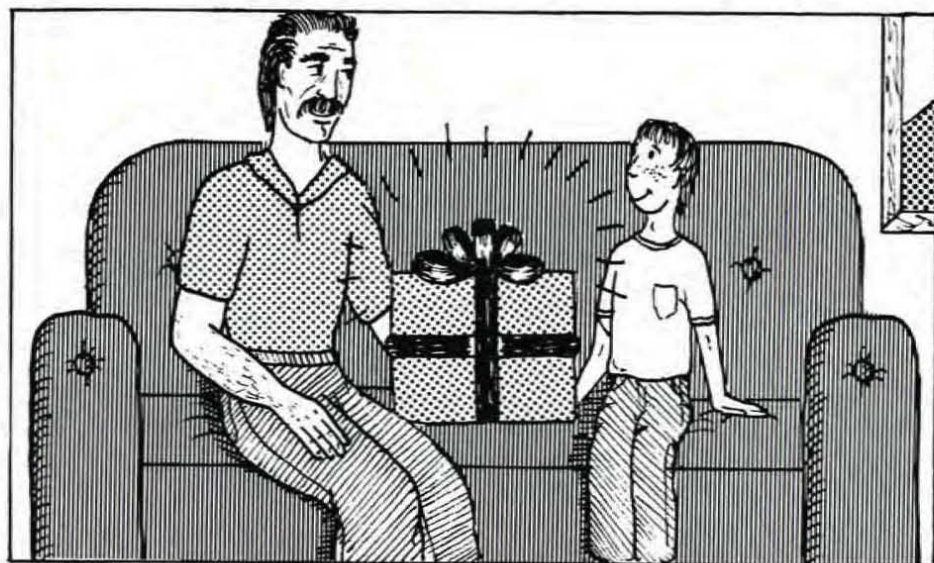
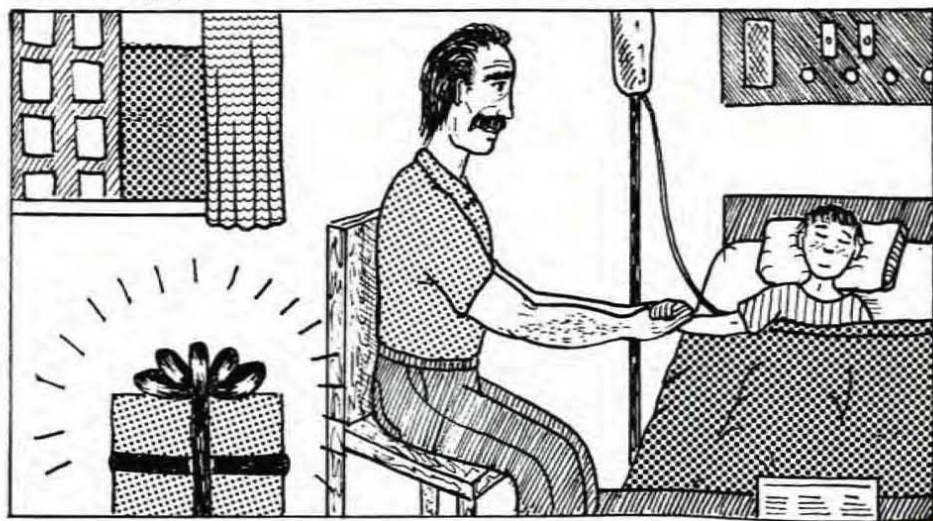
As I sit here by my son's side with care and the feeling of love that at one time in my life I thought was lost and unattainable, I realize the gifts that my Higher Power has given me.

Eight years old, but with as much faith and patience as I have, he hasn't eaten in forty-five hours. An I.V. in his arm has been his only form of nourishment. An accident on his four wheeler has caused damage to his liver and we are still unsure how long the healing process will take and

what will have to be done. One thing is for sure, my God is working in my life today. At one time I may not even have brought him directly to the hospital.

I am *here* physically, mentally and spiritually, and not obsessing about something else, not obsessing about this situation, just doing what I need to do today to feel time, to be with him, to comfort him, and to be the father I need to be. That, recovery has given me. So brave he is, and so serene. I feel, with faith replacing fear, today. These are the spiritual awakenings I know that our text speaks of, those times of gratitude when we recognize what this thing is all about. That desperate dying addicts can become caring, loving, patient, believing people, doing the right things for the right reasons.

The nurse just entered and took my son's temperature. It has risen to 102 degrees and concern enters my mind, basically because I know he is very uncomfortable. I don't question why. This is life.



So many times in my active addiction I questioned God and I angered at life's deals and I reacted in ways that isolated me from the world by using with that "I don't care" attitude. Today, after surrender, fear is replaced with my God's will, as our steps share with us. Four and a half years in recovery and the changes have been subtle and not always apparent to me. I realize I am not perfect today, but I am experiencing open-mindedness, willingness and surrender.

Again, as I write, the nurse enters and updates me that the doctor has been notified of the temperature and will receive information about the changes in his health. She looks at me and says, "I hope he does well, he's a great little kid," and it makes me want to cry, for I realize how dear he is to me and how innocent and vulnerable he is. I am feeling, today, and I don't want to use over it. The miracle is I haven't used; the recovery is

that I am doing the things that are offered to me in recovery. I am not using this program, I am working it; and it is using me to show other recovering addicts that they can live normal, responsible, productive lives. These are pages of gratitude. These are pages of assets. I am not hopelessly bad. I am an addict. I have a disease and am learning how to love again, how to live again. I am learning about freedom. The following day they told us my son would be operated on for internal bleeding. I cried for the first time in a long time, because of the fear and pain I knew he would experience, and a moment of anger entered my mind. After talking to my sponsor and being comforted by family members in N.A. and outside N.A., I let go and walked through it.

A week later, he is home, and I am so glad I was by his side; the father I can be today through N.A.

Thank you for this love,

J.L., Maryland

Success story

While writing this story I started to reflect on my life, not about the old addictive life, but my new life in recovery. This life as I live it now is a brand new experience to me and to others around me. I can say and believe that I am now a model or a power of example to others as well as to myself. Where I am today spiritually, mentally, and physically has been a long time coming, and now my friends, relatives and people around me are watching me. I can see the look of approval coming from them all.

My self-esteem has grown enormously, where once it was a fragile, brittle shell of sensitivity. Now, I feel good enough to look at people. I admire some and I pray for others. Some nerve huh. An addict having good feelings, isn't it terrible? I fought against the process for a long time and I have achieved these benefits not just by trusting the process, but by being affected by the process.

I managed to hang around long enough to let things happen. I was one of those addicts who was truly attracted to this program. Oh, excuse me. Did I say "addicts?" That word was very hard for me to identify with and it was not accepted without a

struggle. It took me twenty-six days in a mental institution to say that I was an addict, and it took me a year to believe it.

The last day I got high it had never come to mind that I had gone far overboard with my using. It would not have mattered if I had all of the coke in Peru at my feet, it just simply would not have been enough. I went to a rehab because people got tired of seeing me around. I had said time



and time again that I would quit using, that things would get better. I never felt people thought anything good about me. I knew that people were saying terrible things about me. I didn't care, and I could not help myself. I will never forget the constant, out-of-control lies that I would tell when I started to use.

While in the rehab I learned about N.A. I attended the meetings and got attracted to the people who brought the meetings in. They looked good, but for some reason I equated looking good to using. When I got out I looked for those people who brought the meeting, because I thought they had the secret of using sociably. I hung around these people waiting for them to say "Let's go get a hit," but they never did. We made meetings and this

sooner or later they were asked to leave, or they had an unlimited stay because the building was abandoned. I heard how some addicts leaped a tall building in a single bound, were faster than speeding bullets aimed at them and were more powerful than a locomotive. Wow, that drug life was wild and exciting.

What was more powerful was the way these speakers were able to communicate their lives of active addiction and then were able to speak about their lives in recovery.

Today as I walk into meetings I no longer wonder what people are thinking. Some of those eyes belong to people that are where I was almost six years ago. They are attracted and have a thirst for a hope-filled message of recovery.

I never wanted to stay here until after my first year. I got scared. Now I wouldn't give this up for anything in the world. I have stayed in a recovering situation long enough to know how to give a message of hope, and I understand that when a speaker is asked to speak or share his strengths, hopes and experiences it is an honor. That plays an important role in the recovery of others.

As eyes watch me inside and outside the rooms of N.A., I am compelled to practice what I speak about. I am obligated to live the truths that I have learned about from others. And with much practice it has gotten easier. To live the life of a success story. Just For Today.

M.M., New York

Circus blood

Like many other ASCs, ours a lot of times is referred to as area "circus." Until recently I disliked this identification. I was there when our area was created. The reference hurt when overheard. Some of us did not know how to not play into the argue mental phase most addicts react on. Or just how to turn this around, making something positive out of negativity. My Higher Power saw fit to send me to one of our area "learning days."

After I got there somebody asked me to share on "trusted servants." It just so happened someone was there who also was part of the support system in the beginning. Naturally we started reminiscing. I was also trying to think about how to share my experience, strength and hope. Thinking of the others who were a part of the

"circus" when I was, one factor stuck out. All of us were still clean and doing fine, except one who had died from AIDS, but even he was still a part of N.A. What a clique or circus to be a part of, talk about unity. This one fact was enough for me to have gratitude over my part in this area. A lot step aside from the question of whether to become involved or not.

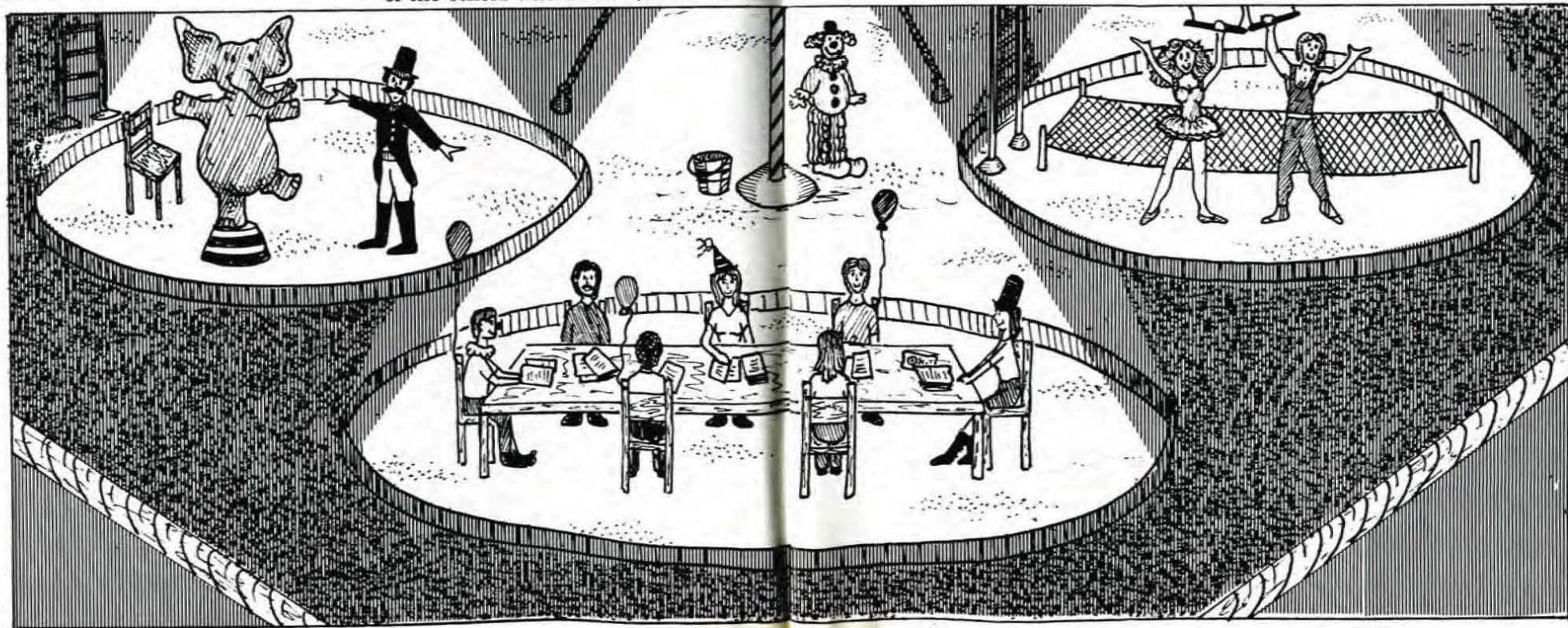
We are coming up on the fifth-year area anniversary. People who became area "clowns" in our circus still have a good performance record. Even the new clowns are learning how it works.

While watching TV. the other night I saw an animal trainer retire from the *Greatest Show on Earth*. He said he was going to hang around and give some advice.

Look at people who retire from our big-ring circus. They are still there giving support and advice. N.A. circus blood has been shared and they are still trying to be a part of the solution. They have strength and hope for us all, especially the newcomer. The message is that service was a part of their learning and helped save their lives. Especially the love that goes into making a circus work. So laugh at us, those of you who have not been involved, yet. But always remember the show must go on for the newcomer. We as a whole do attract a few who would like to give it away, so others can live, and we can enjoy what we keep.

Just another clean clown,

Woody, Maryland



the UP side

I have found that there are certain "ups" that I need to encounter and experience in my personal program, on a regular basis. I fondly refer to it as the "seven-up" concept."

1. GET UP

I get up each day, grateful that I'm clean and I start by thanking my Higher Power for the gift of recovery. I then face the fact that life's in session and I have to live life on it's own terms and accept whatever it has to offer me; remembering that no matter what happens during the course of the day, I don't have to use any mood or mind altering substances.

2. FESS UP

I confess to my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life. Then I admit to the need for a Power greater than myself, who I can turn my shortcomings over to; and believe that He will restore me to sanity and remove my defects of character.

3. GIVE UP

I give up my will and my life and I turn them over to the care of God. I ask Him to guide me in my recovery, believing that He knows what He's doing—only wants the best for me—and will do for me what I can't do for myself.

4. SUIT UP

I wear my "work belt," which holds the tools of my recovery, and I take and use them wherever I go. The tools that I use most often are honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, acceptance, faith and a daily inventory. This helps me to put all of the day's activities into their proper perspective.

5. SHOW UP

I show up at a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous so that I can interact and relate to people who are just like me—who know where I've come from and what I'm about—and who want to help me in my recovery. Because I know that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel.

6. SHUT UP

My sponsor once told me to take the cotton out of my ears and put it in my mouth. This was a rude awakening, but from that I learned to actively listen; not just hear, but really listen and allow myself to feel another addict's joy or pain. Yeah, this program works well when you share, but it works even better when you stop and listen.

7. KEEP UP

In order for anything to stay in a good working condition, you must keep up the maintenance. The same holds true for my personal program of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Therefore, I maintain my program with humility, forgiveness, spirituality and service.

My "7-up Concept" in a nutshell is this: as long as I GET UP and start my day with an attitude of gratitude and get on with the business of life; FESS UP that I really don't have it all together and I need the help of a power greater than myself; GIVE UP my self-centered attitude and turn my will and my life over to the care of my Higher Power; SUIT UP and use the tools of recovery that this program has given me; SHOW UP at N.A. meetings and participate in my own recovery; SHUT UP so that I can hear what needs to be heard; and KEEP UP these practices on a daily basis—staying humble, forgiving, prayerful and giving in the process—then I have all that I need to deal with whatever comes my way.

This is the UP side of my recovery, and no matter how down things may seem at the moment, as long as I use this concept, I can come out of any situation, clean and serene.

V.C., California

On going back in

If no one told you they love you today, I do. My name is Wayne and I'm an addict. I've just been blessed with a surge of willingness to write because honestly I'm not much of a letter writer, but I'm becoming a letter writer. About a month ago our region was blessed with the opportunity to carry the message through our H&I committee and was asked to go into a correctional facility. As soon as I found out about the invitation I was filled with excitement and joy. I never imagined in all my wildest dreams that being imprisoned would eventually pay off for something. When this day finally arrived it was truly a "God thing." Another member of the Regional H&I committee and I drove

about five hours to get with the other twenty-eight members scheduled to attend. Members from the Albany area were very hospitable. We slept over and awoke early to reach the bus by eight a.m. I honestly felt, from the time we boarded, the closeness H&I workers share. After traveling another hour, we arrived at the prison. My stomach was taking me through tremendous changes. There was always something about those long bus rides, being shackled. You would do a whole lot of thinking. We got off the bus with handfuls of literature and boxes of I.P.s, and it was truly wonderful. We got clearance with almost no problems and soon headed over to the gym where the H&I "Learning Day" would be held.



State correctional system officials are very firm. I guess they expected us to be "narcotics people" and real screwed up.

We filled about three hundred large envelopes with *Behind the Walls*, *Reaching Out* and many other I.P.s. After eating the typical institutional lunch, the inmates piled in, all two hundred of them.

What a feeling, watching their eyes light up like lights on a Christmas tree. For the next hour and a half thirty guys began to do what Narcotic Anonymous does so well, attract rather than promote. The experience kinda reminded me of the military—in, out, quick, fast and direct. The message was not that I'm better or less than, but that I had been there

also, and I found a way out, and it was N.A. It was as serious as a heart attack. What an experience. It really did my heart good to just experience the experience. When I initially told some people about going, they turned their noses up and said "I'm not going to anyone's jail to carry no message," and I silently said to myself "Thank God everyone didn't take that approach," because addicts would die and some newcomers would never stay clean. After we finished carrying the message and fellowshiping with the inmates in this medium security facility, it was like a natural high. No drugs can ever compare. Deterrents of society getting hope, lighting the fire inside.

Wayne D., New York



As I stand on the threshold of a new year and look back over this past year I find that I have a lot to be grateful for.

I am grateful for having been given a second chance at life—to really live, instead of merely existing. I am grateful for the forgiveness, love, respect, admiration and support that I have received from my family and friends, as a direct result of this program.

When I found Narcotics Anonymous a little over a year ago, I was helpless, hopeless and useless. I had experienced degradation, isolation, depravation, humiliation and incomprehensible demoralization. I was physically, mentally, emotionally,

spiritually and financially bankrupt.

And then an H&I Panel came into the recovery house where I was residing and I heard other addicts who had been just like me share their experience, strength and hope. I wanted what they had and the miracle began to happen. I found out that the lie ("once an addict, always an addict") was dead. That no addict seeking recovery need ever die.

I have found a new way of life and made the decision that no matter what, I don't have to use any mood/mind altering substance—that I can live clean and serene, one day at a time.

For this message of hope, new way of life and the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I'll always be eternally grateful.

I am also very grateful to someone in this program who paid for my first year's subscription to *The N.A. Way Magazine*. This publication has been very helpful and instrumental in my recovery.

I want to take this time to publicly thank the staff of the N.A. Way for all of their hard work and those of you who have sent in articles. The articles have always given me just what I needed, just when I've needed it.

In May of this year, with over six months clean, I began having drug dreams again. This was very scary for me. I thought that I wasn't serious about my recovery—that I still had reservations—that I really didn't want to stay clean and wouldn't.

I received my first issue of the N.A. Way in June and in it was an article entitled: "Dreams." I read it and found that James C. in Detroit had

gone through the same thing. This gave me some relief and some answers to my dilemma.

There was also an article in that same issue entitled "N.A. kids are great!" One of my biggest challenges in recovery (besides staying clean) has been learning how to be a loving and understanding mother and having patience with my kids. I, like the author of this article, have two children and sometimes I have to take them to meetings with me. This article gave me a solution and showed me how to deal with their restlessness in meetings. Thanks "C.G." in Maryland.

In July, I had nine months clean and as I was approaching that year mark, I became an ego-maniac. I felt like I couldn't let people know when I was "messed-up" or hurting, because by now I should have it all together. I would feel overwhelmed and want to burst into tears in a meeting, but instead I would fight back the tears and pretend that everything was O.K.

Once again, there it was—just what I needed... an article in the July issue, entitled "Humility," by "S.S." of Oregon.

Towards the end of July, I had started writing my Fourth Step and it was driving me crazy! Then I received my August issue and I read these words, which practically jumped off the page at me: "I've often heard it said that this step can be intimidating, difficult, painful, draining, scary or impossible."

I had felt all those things while trying to work the Fourth Step, and could definitely relate. But then it went on to say "This may be partially true.

But my experience has been that an inventory also produces relief, self-awareness, humility, self-acceptance, forgiveness (of self and others) and a sense of freedom." ("On selective recovery" by "P.W.," Quebec).

That was just what the doctor ordered! Reading these articles has been timely and helpful in my recovery. I could go on and on with other examples, let's just suffice it to say that there has rarely been an issue that didn't hold an answer for me. This leads me to believe that God is the real editor-in-Chief of this magazine.

I share what I've learned from the opinions and experiences expressed in the N.A. Way and I also share my opinions and experiences by writing articles.

If you are reading this and you've never written an article, I encourage you to do so. You'll be surprised at how rewarding it feels and how it helps in your own recovery. And you never know who else you might help, in doing so.

In closing, I'd just like to say that I thank God for *The N.A. Way Magazine* and for what it's doing in the lives of recovering addicts, all over the world. Keep up the good work!

Anonymous, California

The broad perspective

Agreement made

Litigants on behalf of divergent viewpoints regarding Narcotics Anonymous literature agreed to a process by which civil actions may be curtailed, according to an order signed by a US District Court Judge in Philadelphia January 4, 1991.

The agreed-to order enjoins one party from any further distribution of the N.A. Basic Text, service marks or trademarks.

Among terms of the agreement is the mutual release of the litigants from "claims or demands, both in law

and equity, arising from the beginning of the world until the execution date of this agreement."

The order also details an agreement that several motions pertinent to the controversy be provided WSO 1991 via the *Conference Agenda Report*. The order reads "...Without comment, but with an introduction..." that the motions "...immediately follow the publication, in their entirety, of the closing remarks..." of the presiding judge.

The parties agreed, "In an effort to heal any wounds caused by the controversy" to produce and have published a statement referencing the controversy which led to the litigation.

The statement:

Our commitment to unity

Over the years, members of our fellowship have struggled to resolve a variety of questions: How should our world services, and particularly our World Service Office, be administered? What is the proper relationship between world services and the rest of the fellowship? What are the appropriate means for developing, approving, and producing N.A. literature? How do we apply N.A.'s Twelve Traditions?

Recently, those issues came to a head when World Service Office, Inc., filed a federal suit in a controversy over the alleged infringement of N.A. literature copyrights. On one hand, there were members who felt the fellowship needed an easily affordable recovery text. Those members decided to print the Basic Text themselves. While recognizing the importance of

the related internal issues, the WSO Board of Directors felt a responsibility to take action it believed would protect the fellowship's legal rights to its own literature.

Both parties came to court on January 2, 1991. The result of their confrontation was far different from what either party expected, and far more beneficial for the N.A. Fellowship. In the course of the hearing, both parties became increasingly aware of the importance of N.A.'s primary purpose and the wisdom of our Twelve Traditions. The parties involved in the dispute were encouraged to seek an agreement among themselves, rather than place the court in the position of having to settle it for them. Their intensive negotiations and consultations, guided by the spirit of our traditions, were successful.

On January 4, the parties appeared again in federal court, agreement in hand. Their settlement not only resolved the lawsuit, but also described a procedure whereby the N.A. Fellowship could settle the long-standing internal issues which had led to the controversy and resulting lawsuit. The parties involved in the suit left court in unity, prepared to give their full energies to fulfilling the agreement they had made.

The status of our fellowship's trademarks and literary copyrights has not changed. There were no "losers" in the agreement. The January 4 settlement will, we hope, benefit the entire N.A. Fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous has the chance to resolve some long-standing issues, issues which have repeatedly caused controversy and grief in our

services and in our fellowship. The agreement reached gives the N.A. groups the choice to vote directly on these matters.

Three motions appear in the WSO Board of Directors section of the 1991 *Conference Agenda Report*: Which edition of the Basic Text, or parts thereof, is the one most preferred by the N.A. Fellowship? After considering all factors, do the N.A. groups want the WSO to produce a low-cost version of the Basic Text? Do the N.A. groups themselves wish to vote directly on these questions? If we are thorough in considering the issues surrounding these questions, diligent in producing answers to them, patient in discussing them with one another, and willing to abide by whatever decisions the fellowship as a whole finally arrives at, Narcotics Anonymous will have peace and unity.

It is our belief that the time has come to put aside all hostility arising from whatever disagreements we may have over issues of fellowship policy. We know that many of our members have much to share about the issues surrounding the motions that appear in the *Conference Agenda Report*. Let us all place our cards on the table and confront the issues squarely and honestly.

By entering into this agreement in good faith, we have put aside any further intention to settle this particular controversy by means of litigation. While the fellowship attends to the issues being put before it, we encourage everyone to cease attacking one another.

We are all deeply saddened that N.A. members and groups on both

sides of the table have felt the pain of rejection for their roles in this affair. N.A. members and groups on both sides of the table have been threatened and punished for their roles in this affair. Meetings have been removed from N.A. directories. Group and area representatives have been excluded from their ASC and RSC meetings. Individual trusted servants have been forced to resign. We ask the entire N.A. Fellowship—our members, groups, service boards, and committees—to cease such behavior. Those engaged in activities that could be considered controversial are asked to reflect on how their actions might affect their fellow members. We must find a way to talk about the issues before our fellowship without declaring war on one another.

Our fellowship has arrived at a point where it must resolve the controversies that are plaguing it. A solution may not appear overnight. We must commit ourselves to the process of forging that solution through prayer, study, discussion, and debate. The decisions our fellowship will make in this matter affect us all, and we are all responsible to take part in making them. If we do so with trust in a loving God, mindful of our fellowship's primary purpose, for our own good and for the good of the addict we have yet to reach with our message, all will be well.

*With high hopes,
(Signed)*

S.T.
D.M.
G.H.

January JAC

Members of the Joint Administrative Committee gave general approval for this year's WSC format and agenda during a meeting in Van Nuys, California, January 4-6.

Two major departures from conference formats of the past appear designed to support the sharper division between old and new business, as the schedule unfolds. The introduction of intermittent "panel presentations" fulfills a hope voiced by many that a vehicle for easier discussions, in the stead of expressive new motions, be created. In addition, a five and one-half hour session, formally titled "new business," is set for the afternoon of April 26, the last day of the conference.

If participants contain their issue-rumor as the JAC-approved format asks, the developing conscience of the fellowship may find alternative opportunity for expression in 16 separate conference forums. The forums, opened with brief "panel presentations," will average about two hours, and generally take their themes from board and committee purposes.

Contained in the Conference Agenda Report, and almost certain to be among matters discussed during the forums, are 31 motions submitted by nine RSCs.

Several of the concerns, like the perennial effort to restrict voting participation in the WSC to RSRs, are voiced by two or more regions.

Among other issues described are an appeal to cease work on the *Guide to Service*; the suggestion that a bi-monthly "Inter-Regional Newslines" be produced; that one or more of sever-

al suggested reduced-priced, paperback versions of the Basic Text be produced; that the WSO cease much current translations activity; that a "zonal" approach to seating members of the Board of Trustees be considered; that literature for H&I committee use be provided at costs; and that new or revised literature produced avoid gender-specific references for a "Higher Power."

Motions having the status of "old business" and so assured a place in the planned agenda are motions that were previously referred for committee consideration and are now being returned for action; or are a committee or board's response to such referrals. They include:

From the **Administrative Committee**—#1, a committed motion designed to more clearly delineate conference policy concerning old/new business and including a process for redress in the event the maker of an original motion is not satisfied with its disposition; #2, a motion revising the wording of the Temporary Working Guide to Our Service Structure to allow the production of a "Conference Digest" (an abbreviated form of the Fellowship Report) and detailing such distribution; and #3, a motion to amend the wording of the TWGSS regarding the zoning for future World Service Conferences.

From the **Joint Administrative Committee**—a motion to more clearly discriminate between "conference" as opposed to "committee" responsibilities for committee guidelines.

From the **WSO BOD**—three motions "to ratify" implementation of a new budget review, travel and translations policy.

From the **Ad Hoc Committee on Isolated Groups**—A motion that the committee become a "standing," permanent committee of the conference and motions setting forth its areas of activity.

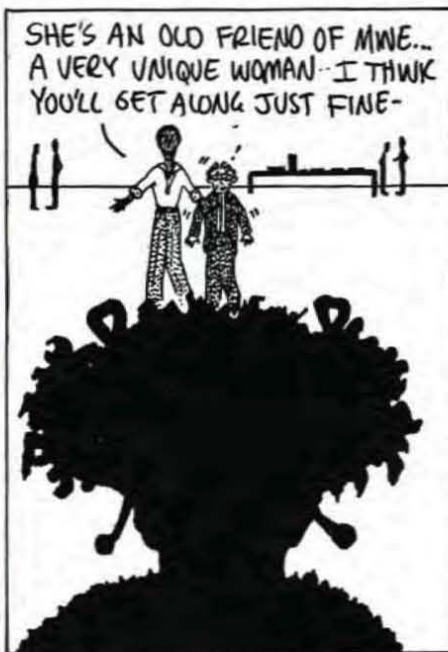
From the **WSC Literature Committee**—Approval is sought for the I.P. *For Those in Treatment*; a motion is brought to separate Lit committee internal guidelines from those of the general conference; and the establishment of the "Steps" portion of *It Works, How and Why*, the approval form of *In Times of Illness* and a "daily meditation" book as the primary work list for 1991-92.

From the **Policy Committee**—Approval is sought for a new set of committee guidelines.

From the **Public Information Committee**—Approval is sought for the I.P.s *PI. and the N.A. Member and N.A.—A Resource in Your Community* and replacement of section -4 of the P.I. guidelines is requested.

The Narcotics Anonymous Board of Trustees included no motions in this year's CAR, but the BOT report does reference motions that were committed to it last year.

The BOT also noted its recognition of American Sign Language as a language distinct from English and recommends that the White Booklet, with stories, be translated into ASL for distribution on a videotape.



THE "GOD" QUESTION

As was hoped and expected, responses to the "Viewpoint issue" published in December, 1990, continue to come in. Three fairly strong pieces have been submitted on an issue that was not given exposure in December, and so they are featured here.

The God of our understanding

In an issue that seemed to focus on unity, I was surprised by the lack of a *Viewpoint* on the "God question" because I know our fellowship is by no means unified on this issue. The consensus of many people in my area is that we send a mixed message to newcomers by first telling them they are free to choose a Higher Power of their own understanding, and then ramming the Christian religion down their throats. In effect, we are saying "you may have a God of your own conception. Here, try this one on for size."

First and foremost, we are contradicting ourselves. Though our Sixth Tradition tells us that N.A. does not endorse outside enterprises, we do just that by suggesting the Lord's Prayer as a closing for our meetings. The meeting formats I have seen suggest "the Lord's Prayer or other." While this is not stated as a required prayer, most recovering addicts I know are very keen on following the suggestions of the program. I have taken the same

approach to my recovery, which is one of the reasons I have almost two and a half years clean.

The major exception I have made to following suggestions is embracing this view of God that seems to be endorsed by N.A. Not only do we suggest the Lord's Prayer, but we constantly refer to the God of mainstream religion. Though I don't believe God has a gender, I often refer to my Higher Power as "She" to remind others that there is more than one view of God.

I can understand how this got started. Alcoholics Anonymous, from whom we borrowed much of our program, was formed at a time when most Americans had a concept of God that was of the mainstream religions. I believe that by including this two-thousand year-old prayer in their program, the founders of A.A. thought they were adding some kind of credibility to their spiritual program. Perhaps the reciting of an ancient and very common prayer satisfied some mystical need or made them believe that God was more likely to answer their prayers.

Their motives aside, the whole world has changed a lot since then, and many people have come to question spiritual matters or have quit believing at all. We do these people a great disservice by making our program less accessible in our implied endorsement of Christianity. As a woman, I take exception to the constant reference of God as a male in our literature. Unfortunately, I see it as a reflection of the sexism

in our culture, as though God wouldn't be all-powerful if She was female. Further, our religious slant does a lot to alienate those in our fellowship who are gay, since there is little question about the official Christian viewpoint of homosexuality. And as a transsexual female, I have no question about that religion's opinion of me.

We do great harm to our fellowship and exclude many people from recovery by our unofficial embrace of organized religion. This question once came up in a group conscience and one of our members said that this view of God has worked well so far. My question is, "How many hasn't it worked for?" How many people are scared off by the perceived religious endorsement? Why do we needlessly make our program more difficult or inaccessible to some people?

I am grateful that this is really a spiritual and not a religious program. If it were not so, I doubt I'd be in touch with a Higher Power I can believe in after years of wondering and worrying about the nature of God. I don't want to force my belief on anyone, nor have theirs forced on me. I fear there are many addicts out there who are missing out on recovery and the peace of a spiritual life because they think this is what will happen to them in N.A.

So what do we do? I think our first priority is to help the fellowship understand that this is an issue. That not all people are comfortable with the Christian religion, nor do they

have to be. If more people understood why this is an important issue for many, there might be more tolerance for alternate spiritual beliefs.

We should remove the Lord's Prayer as a suggested closing for meetings, and perhaps even advise meetings to not use that prayer. Most of the meetings I attend close with the Serenity Prayer. I would suggest to meetings that they close with that or some other non-denominational prayer.

Finally, we need to remove all references to God's gender in all parts of our literature that aren't part of our members' personal stories. Though an individual N.A. member is entitled to his or her view of God, we should not endorse any concept in the remainder of our literature. This is not difficult to do and would be closer to the true meaning of the words. In other places, we can substitute "God" or "Higher Power" in the place of masculine pronouns. If we are to "practice these principles in all our affairs," we need to start with our message.

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program that is open to all, yet we currently carry a message that leaves some people feeling left out or scares them off altogether. Let's make recovery available to even more people and let everyone in the program feel like they are a part of it. We spent too much time in our addiction feeling apart from.

C.B., California

For one not coming back

Editor's note: This is a shortened copy of a "speaker meeting in print" which was shared with a group mentioned in the article, *Open letter of concern*, August, 1990, *N.A. Way*. The writer so empathized with the original piece he contacted the magazine, and then the group itself.)

Several nights ago, a fellow member called me to share about problems with which I had been open.

During our conversation he told me of a still-using friend who, it appeared, desperately wanted and needed what our program has to offer. The friend's reason for refusing to attend meetings, it was said, was an all-too familiar one; the talk of God and other religious overtones had turned him off.

Whether or not his friend's decision was one based on fear, anger, denial, or another excuse to disqualify himself from our fellowship,

no one will ever know. At the following night's meeting I learned that he had died from a drug overdose.

Now, more than ever, I am convinced of the need for a pamphlet (at least) that is specifically devoted to addressing this issue. There is a dire need to dispel the rumors and myths that surround our fellowship, a need to clarify that surrender to these principles and our new way of life can be achieved *without belief in a God*. It would not only serve to better emphasize and explain the fellowship's blurred (at best) definitions of our right to a Higher Power of our understanding, it could and would further open wide our doors to attract, admit and include any freethinker who seeks recovery from the disease of addiction.

More than that, it would serve as a guideline to ease the considerable struggles the majority of members experience when initially developing their own "concept."

I want to thank you all for allowing me this opportunity to share. When I first came across mention of this group in a letter published last August in the *N.A. Way*, my excitement and desire to be among you was so strong I would have started hitchhiking that night had they printed the address.

It is hard to express how deeply grateful I am for the service that was provided by the printing of that letter. To read the words that I had only felt inside released a flood of emotional relief and hopeful joy. It

was beyond description, like coming into the rooms for the first time all over again. A rebirth in the promise of freedom, in knowing I was not alone. *This* addict's faith in *his* Higher Power was restored, and for that gift I thank you again—consider me a homegroup member at heart!

The courage and willingness it takes to speak out on such an issue is to be commended and supported without reservation. There are many addicts both inside and out of the fellowship that need to know our message is that *any* addict can recover, that there is not only another way, but many different means to the same end—the N.A. way is more than big enough for any and all who choose to recover. Our Third Tradition guarantees us this right: there is only *one* requirement for membership.

I now find it hard to ignore the subtle contradictions (and at times blatant contradictions) that were easily overlooked in the pain of early withdrawal. In my own development and understanding of both a personal program and the fellowship as a whole, my mind has opened and acceptance has grown. Still the unease continues to disturb me, especially whenever someone dies before anything like this can be explained.

I do not like to think of how many are needlessly lost and slip away when, upon walking into their first meeting, they are confronted with the Lord's Prayer (or any other, for that matter).

As a newcomer I was well aware of when a speaker began to preach or "float out on a cloud of religious zeal." And I have remained alert to how all of this must sound to the "uninitiated." Sometimes it felt like I was the only one in the room who was hearing, listening to what was being said, or perhaps more importantly, how it was being said.

In my years of active addiction I experienced many "visions," from the sky melting, to the ground opening at my feet. I heard voices from both inside and outside my head, felt both demonic possession and the rapture of divine ecstasy. As a result I almost lost my mind, and have cultivated a profound and healthy fear of ever feeling such "revelations of the spirit" again as long as I live.

As a newcomer I focused on two very important and fundamental statements contained in our Basic Text; "We are responsible for our recovery" and "Results count in recovery." Since I was told that it was a program of example, I sat, watched and listened carefully to learn about the things that were working for others, and avoided the things that didn't.

I saw many devout believers in God pray fervently for the knowledge of His will, and profess endlessly over having His guidance and strength. I saw these very same die-hard, insistent people fail in both abstinence and recovery. This began to suggest something to me.

I saw that a belief system, use of prayer and understanding of God,

did not exempt them from the pleasures or pain of reality. I believe, upon awakening, the principles of the program *can* and *do* exist independent of any religious connotations.

Today I believe that one does not have to sacrifice moral or intellectual integrity to survive addiction, if we are lucky to have any left. I do not believe that one needs to only "go back out" again until you hurt bad enough to finally admit defeat and accept God's will. The mentality behind such an attitude is sad and unwelcome.

I strongly encourage any atheist, agnostic, freethinker or ignoramus to find a willing, open-minded sponsor, and work the steps! I, for one, became an atheist as a direct result of working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

**'I saw many
devout
believers . . .
fail in both
abstinence
and recovery'**

Viewed to be hanging on by sheer will-power (that's a good one) and doomed to relapse, I've suffered not-too subtle cross-comments or been treated with condescending rejection

(the "you'll come to believe—see the light" syndrome). In times like those I find I'm sorely pressed not to buy back into the old patterns of bitterness and hatred. I remain ever thankful for the unconditional love and support of a sponsor and close friends within the fellowship. I have also been exposed to the one-sided, self-righteousness of a few non-recovery oriented atheist groups. When I first began reaching out for identification with others, I was dismayed to encounter the very same our-way-is-the-only-way attitude that turned me off from the fanatical religious extreme.

Today my definition of unity is not everyone doing the same thing the same way, but of recognizing the value and power in sharing how we reach this goal in our own way.

There is plenty of evidence both for and against what I say. My purpose and point has not been to discredit or expose the virtues and value of one over the other. I just want to feel welcome and safe, not threatened or judged.

The number one founding principle is that one addict can maintain recovery by reaching out to help another. That is why the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is truly without parallel. The common denominator has never been a belief system, but that we all suffer from the same disease. In that way alone we remain united together in our goal of recovery.

James S., Alaska

New publication requested

It is my opinion that the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has a need to develop an information pamphlet regarding the selection of a higher power. What follows is my contribution and my experience to this end.

First of all, I would like to state that I am extremely grateful to N.A. for teaching me how to live life in abstinence and recovery with the disease of addiction. The fellowship and program have given me exactly what was promised: hope, freedom and a new way of life.

My experience is that I have been able to stay clean and live one day at a time without belief in, faith in, or a relationship with God. While the N.A. text leaves many loopholes regarding our individual understanding of God, the overall message is that we should do God's will, and turn our will and life over to God as

we understand Him. I often feel at meetings that there is only one way to do this. This is not an attempt to disprove or deny what works for many of our members. It is only an attempt to broaden our perspective with regards to the newcomer. Many addicts do not feel comfortable with what they hear when they arrive at N.A. with respect to God.

When I arrived at the doorstep of N.A., I was in considerable pain as a result of practicing my addiction. The first attraction was the love I felt from the members of that group. That kept me coming back. My second meeting was a step meeting on Step Two. I heard many speak of a conscious force which kept them alive during their active days, gave them direction, and kept them clean when He was asked and thanked through prayer. Fortunately for me the group was small and I was able to share my quandary. It was suggested that I should just believe that I was not God. I also heard that the only requirement for membership was the desire to stop using. I could use the group of druggies, a tree or whatever I choose as my higher power. I occasionally wonder if I would have come back had I not asked questions. Then we closed the meeting with the Lord's Prayer. Even in my haze and despair, I could see the contradictions. I figured that my whole life had been a contradiction, so what did I have to lose?

I set out to develop an understanding of a higher power that would be helpful in my recovery. I felt the

need to consider that many concepts of a higher power might work best for me. Even in all of my self-centeredness, I could see that there were many things that were greater than me. The fellowship of N.A. certainly qualified. Nature and the universe were certainly amazing. Love was a very great thing. My true self had the potential to be far greater than what I had become as a result of active addiction. I am so grateful for Step Two. It helped reaffirm my powerlessness. I have not yet, however, experienced any divine intervention, heard any voices or achieved any conscious contact with a God that I so often hear others talk about.

So now I set out to attempt Step Three. Again I attended many step meetings, and sought suggestions from other free-thinkers about doing God's

will when I did not believe in God. The most applicable answer that I could come up with was that Step Three involved surrender to the principles of N.A. The principles of N.A. (so called spiritual principles) involved honesty, open mindedness, willingness, hope, surrender, acceptance, tolerance, humility, and love... I redefined "spiritual" to

'Even in all my self-centeredness, I could see that there were many things that were greater than me.'

mean the qualities involved in becoming the person that I am capable of and want to become. It works for me.

I have made many efforts to share my experience and understanding at meetings to let all know that N.A. is big enough for all those who have the desire to stay clean. Sometimes I feel judged by those who perceive me as a threat to their agenda. Some perceive me to be hanging on by my own will and doomed to relapse. Others accept me and my beliefs in the same way that I have accepted them and their beliefs. And others seem to want what I have,

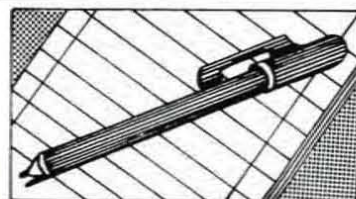
usually after trying to force the God thing when it does not fit. I realize that I am in the minority and do not wish to change N.A. I only want to broaden our message to include all those that are seeking recovery

from addiction and the new way of life we offer. An I.P. might offer hope to the still suffering addict. There are many roads to recovery from the disease of addiction.

The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using! Thank you for letting me share.

D.B., Oregon

Viewpoint



Re: psst off

Dear N.A. Way,

This letter is in response to the article "Psst off" in the December, 1990 *Viewpoint* feature written by B.B. from North Carolina. While I believe that your magazine has a responsibility to publish articles and letters from all viewpoints, I think it also has a responsibility to limit vitriolic diatribe, as exemplified by that article. The author of that article made some extremely strong accusations about the integrity of trusted servants and special workers alike, without citing any supporting material. Is it responsible to publish such an attack without providing facts to back such attacks? I think not!

While I could respond to all the points raised in that article, I will try to limit this brief letter to three points. I will not deign to say anything about the statement "self-willed individuals who I feel misused

N.A. funds for personal gain," except to say that this kind of statement leads to the type of disunity that threatens the very fabric of our fellowship, and therefore our personal recovery.

The first point I wish to address is the one about the funding of trusted servants to attend service committee meetings. I still clearly remember a discussion within my region when the issue of who may be eligible to participate on various committees came up. Up until that time, the only trusted servants we were able to elect were those who were able to not only meet the various stated requirements, but also those who had the fiscal resources necessary. After lengthy discussion, we decided that we needed to make those positions available to all, not just the "haves." If we wanted these individuals to participate, then we had a responsibility to fund them. We also decided that asking an individual member to donate all those costs went far beyond what was reasonable, and what our Seventh Tradition talks about. We were also reminded that our Seventh Tradition also implied that we are responsible for Narcotics Anonymous, and that support of our fellowship and its service structure goes far beyond financial support. It also included physical support.

The second point made that needs to be addressed is the one regarding the October workshop. As a former participant of the World Service Conference, I remember thinking that the word "workshop" was a misnomer for those meetings. In most instances, these "workshops" were in fact WSC committee meetings, where the committees worked on the tasks assigned to them by the conference. At the first workshop I attended, I felt somewhat put off by the fact that I was not given an opportunity to express my concerns and opinions as freely as I had wanted. I was, however, given the opportunity to vent as much as I desired during the open forum session of each committee. In time I learned, the hard way, that conference committees and boards are given a very limited amount of time to complete the vast amount of tasks assigned to them, and the only way they even have a hope of completing them is by having closed committee sessions, when the only voices recognized are members of that given committee.

The final point I wish to address is the abusive venting about trusted servants and special workers at the world level. I have had the privilege over the last five years to be involved in world services at various levels and positions, from being a member of two committees to being a special worker. During that time, I have never had anything but respect for the members I have had the privilege of working with. These members exhibited an incredible amount of self sacrifice to attend the various meetings and do the work assigned to them. They sacrificed vacation time, personal

funds if they were not funded, and, most of all, an incredible amount of personal time and effort, for nothing more than an opportunity to serve the fellowship. Comments, such as "forked-tongued, hypocritical, resentful, and self-willed," are not descriptive of the people I have met.

In closing, I recognize the responsibility you have in presenting various perceptions and viewpoints, but once again, I implore you to limit the type of scabrous statements evidenced in that article. It is my hope that we can learn to treat each other with the compassion and respect the program asks us to.

S.L., California

Taking the heat

An Open Letter to Distributors of the illicit Basic Text:

Over Christmas I went to a meeting in Berkeley, an area that had been, to my knowledge, uninvolved with the distribution of the illicit Basic Text. Imagine my surprise, then, when I noticed a woman with a small blue paperback book in her lap. I asked her if I could look at it, and I saw that it was, as I suspected, the illicit Basic

Text. I handed it back to her, and asked to talk to her after the meeting.

It seems that this woman had nine days clean. She had been at a step-study meeting where these texts were handed out. All that the person distributing the books told her was that these texts were free. The difficult task of explaining to her that these books were not conference-approved fell upon my shoulders. All this woman understood was that I was recommending that she destroy this book, and offering her little alternative. She was visibly confused and upset.

I was able to strike a bargain with her. Since there were no Basic Texts available at this meeting and I lived in another region, I mailed her a text in return for her agreement, upon its receipt, to destroy the illicit book. But I grieved for her hurt and confusion. How could I adequately explain to her that some of our members, responsible for the unauthorized distribution of our fellowship's material, were acting on self-will, not taking into consideration the expressed group conscience of N.A. as a whole? All she knew was that this text was given to her, and now I was telling her that it wasn't "conference-approved." How do I explain our traditions to someone who has nine days clean?

To whomever gave her this book, this letter goes out to you. I'm sure that you believe that you did her a favor by giving her a free book. But I'm here to tell you I believe no addict ever relapsed simply because he or she didn't have a Basic Text. Our recovery is available in our meetings to all who seek it, free of charge. If you insist on spreading disunity and con-

fusion among the newcomers based on your misguided beliefs, then I can only say that I wish you well in your recovery, but I wish you would recover elsewhere, outside of Narcotics Anonymous. Our traditions tell us that "As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well." Our literature is a tie that binds us together; what you are doing is a slap in the face of this precept.

N.A. gave many of us a new life, and all that is asked of us in return is that we respect our traditions. I tried many other ways to quit using drugs; none of them worked for me. I consider N.A. my last refuge. I hope, for my sake and the sake of this newcomer, now so confused by our tangled message, that N.A. can survive this trauma intact.

Anonymous

Anonymity and sexism

I was quite disturbed and saddened by the December article entitled, "On Sexism." I am a female and have been in this N.A. program for over seven years. Some of the ingrained and unhealthy messages that were described affecting women as a whole, I can identify with, (i.e., being taught as a young girl to be seen and not heard,

good girls are passive, poised and soft spoken, and that self-worth was dependant upon good looks). These are issues that I have had to work through in my recovery. To blame society or the fellowship for lack of growth in these areas of my life is "old behavior" and a dangerous one. I learned early on it was vital to my recovery to identify and not compare with my fellow N.A. members—to identify with their feelings, not to compare with their gender, sexual identity or race. That opened my mind and my heart for me to grow through my earlier prejudices and to learn to trust other recovering addicts regardless of our differences. I feel special interest groups can be a double edged sword for N.A.'s unity if their primary purpose is anything other than carrying the message to addicts. I've always been told to focus on the "message," not the "messenger." Why should a convention speaker be chosen based on race or sexual identity? Where's the Twelfth Tradition in that process? "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

My experience as a recovering female in Narcotics Anonymous, gratefully, has not been like that of the writer of "On Sexism." When I first got into the program there were a lot of women in recovery and still are. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to learn to reach out and network with other recovering women and form relationships based on something more real than recipes and gossip. There were also a lot of recovering men who taught me that friendships

could be formed with the opposite sex based on trust, respect and a genuine concern for another suffering addict. We formed an area and got involved in regional service. We did it because we were willing and we cared about the still-suffering addicts, not because we were hanging on to the coat tails of our men in service. The assumption that women in N.A. service structures are only there because of their "men" is a slap in the face to all N.A. women and an idea that promotes the exact attitude the writer is wanting to change.

I used to call myself a feminist, but because of the gifts of recovery, that is too limited a term for me now. Today I am a human rights activists.

N.A. has allowed me to let go of my inferior self image and become a "productive member of society"—not just as a woman, but as a human being that has dignity, self respect and self worth. That did not come about by trying to "prove" myself and win acceptance from all the men in our fellowship. It was a result of practicing anonymity (acceptance of you regardless of race, sexual identity, or gender), applying the steps to my own fears and inadequacies, and realizing through spiritual awareness that as a child of the Universe I have a right to health, happiness and prosperity. The service work I and countless other women do for N.A. is not dictated by a need to compete against men for power or prestige in our service structure. It's done out of love and gratitude for our fellowship. I am a child of God who happens to be a grateful recovering addict. The fact that I am a woman is beside the point.

As long as I keep myself and all of you in that order of importance—love and equality will prevail not just in N.A., but in society as well.

A.K., Tennessee

I understand now

I am an addict from Milwaukee, WI. At just shy of three years clean I found myself strapped to a bed in a padded room of a county mental health hospital in California. I had refused to take any medication, so they promptly gave me a shot of Thorazine to calm me down. I later found out that not only am I an addict but I also have a mental illness called manic depression. These two illnesses in combination are extremely powerful. The most difficult part for me was accepting professional medical help for the manic depression. For a whole week I refused to take medication, after all, I was coming up on three years clean time and didn't want to relapse. As a result I ended up spending a lot of time in padded rooms and in isolation. I was totally insane at this point with no grip on reality and still my zealous mentality said "no drugs." Finally, with the help of H.P. I surren-

dered to the professional's advice and accepted the medication and, as a result I started to come back into reality. My recovery from manic depression hinges partly on taking medication regularly, and this is a touchy subject in N.A. because it is "mood altering."

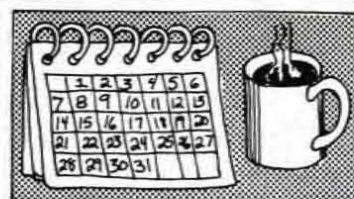
I am writing this letter because I know there are other people out there who are struggling with these two illnesses. Sometimes people will say "Just work the steps and you'll be alright." That's like saying to a person with diabetics that "If you just work the steps you wouldn't need insulin." I know of this type of thing happening to a recovering addict who had a mental illness. The person stopped taking his medication and not long after committed suicide. This is how serious mental illness can be. The acceptance of professional help is crucial to mental health recovery.

Today I am happy to say that I am recovering from both my mental illness and my addiction with the help of H.P. and people who care about me. I remember not long ago judging other people for taking medication for their mental illness, but not anymore, because I understand now.

The reason I wrote this letter is to both help people understand a little about mental illness and to let those who have it know that we do recover. There is hope for all of us in recovery; with help from H.P. and understanding from other people, we can recover.

V.M., Wisconsin

Comin'up



LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phonenumber, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**
MAGAZINE

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

ALASKA: Mar. 8-10, 1991; 7th Annual Alaska Convention; Clarion Hotel In Anchorage, Alaska; rsvn.s (800) 252-7466; Registration information write to; ARSCC VIII, P.O. Box 211995, Anchorage, AK 99521

ARIZONA: Apr. 27, 1991; Arizona Regional Talent Show; 5818 N. 7th Street; AARCNA, P.O. Box 26404, Phoenix, AZ 85282

2) May 24-26, 1991; 5th Arizona Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Hotel, 4550 South Palo Verde Boulevard, Tucson, AZ; rsvn.s (602) 746-1161; information (602) 244-0432; ARCNA V, P.O. Box 57443, Tucson, AZ 85732

ARKANSAS: Apr. 26-28, 1991; 8th Annual Central Arkansas Area Campout; Tumbling Shoals Campground, Greer's Ferry Lake, Heber Springs, AR; information (501) 373-8683; Central Arkansas Area, P.O. Box 250027, Little Rock, AR 72225-0027

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Feb. 22-24, 1991; "WILD P.C.N.A. I"; 3096 East Hastings Street; Hastings Community Center, Vancouver; information (604) 222-1307

CALIFORNIA: Mar. 7-10, 1991; Thirteenth Northern California Convention; Doubletree Hotel, Monterey; rsvn.s (408) 649-4511; NCCNA XII, P.O. Box 1826, Pittsburg, CA 94565

2) Apr. 2, 1991; Second Annual Unity Day; Elks Lodge, Chico, CA; 916 North, P.O. Box 8556, Chico, CA 95926

CANADA: May 3-5, 1991; Calgary Area Convention; hotline (403) 235-9901; Area Convention Committee, PO Box 30086, Stn B, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2M 4N7

ENGLAND: Apr. 5-7, 1991; London Regional Convention II; Holland Park School, Airlie Gardens, Holland Park, London; information (071) 351-6794; Programming Committee, P.O. Box 417, London, ENGLAND, SW10 0RS

FLORIDA: Mar. 15-17, 1991; Florida Spring Service Break Conference II; Eden Roc Hotel, 4525 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida, 33140; rsvn.s (305) 531-0000 or (800) 327-8337; FSSBNA II, P.O. Box 011288, Miami, FL 33101

2) May 16-19, 1991; 4th AL/NW FL Regional Convention; Ft. Walton Beach, FL. on Okaloosa Island; 1110 Santa Rosa Boulevard; rsvn.s (904) 243-9181; Convention, P.O. Box 6499, Pensacola, FL 32503

GEORGIA: Feb. 21-24, 1991; Building Foundations in Recovery; Jekyll Island, GA; At the Convention Centers on the Island; Holiday Inn (912) 635-3311 and Jekyll Inn (912) 635-2351; Information call (404) 339-4780 or (404) 953-1217; GRCNA X, P.O. Box 1465, Smyrna, GA 30081

2) Mar. 30-31, 1991; 1st Anniversary Convention; Chatahochee-Flint Rivers Area; Uptown Econo-Lodge, 1011 4th Avenue, Columbus, GA; rsvn.s 1 (800) 446-6900; , P.O. Box 3333, Columbus, GA 31903

3) May 2-5, 1991; The Tradition Continues; 1991 Fun-In-The-Sun, Panama City Weekend; 1991 P.C. Weekend, P.O. Box 47848, Doraville, GA 30362

HAWAII: Feb. 22-24, 1991; 7th Annual Oahu Gathering of the Fellowship; Camp Mokuleia, North Shore, Island of Oahu; helpline (808) 734-4357; Oahu Gathering Committee, P.O. Box 89636, Honolulu, HI 9630-9636

KENTUCKY: Mar. 29-31, 1991; Kentuckiana Regional Convention V; Executive Inn Rivermont, 1 Executive Boulevard, Owensboro, KY 42301; rsvn.s (800) 626-1936; KRCNA V, 2626 Parrish Ave., -228, Owensboro, KY 42301

MARYLAND: May 5-7, 1991; 5th Chesapeake and Potomac Regional Convention; Ocean City Convention Center; Hotel Request, P.O. Box 4062, Salisbury, MD 21801; information (800) 654-5440 or (301) 636 4600; C.P.R.C.N.A. V, P.O. Box 1551, Pasadena, MD 21122

MASSACHUSETTS: Mar. 1-3, 1991; 4 New England Regional Convention; Hyannis, Massachusetts; NERCNA 4, P.O. Box 2628, Quincy, MA 02269

NEBRASKA: Mar. 2, 1991; Return of the Close Encounters of the Clean Kind; UNO Milo Bail Student Center; Activities Committee, P.O. Box 3907, Omaha, NE 68103

NEW JERSEY: May 24-26, 1991; 4th New Jersey Regional Convention; Continue the Miracle; Ramada Renaissance, 3 Tower Center Boulevard, East Brunswick, NJ; information (908) 251-2402

NEW ZEALAND: May 3-5, 1991; Seize The Day; Auckland College of Education; information (649) 787734 or (649) 366-1892; Convention Committee, P.O. Box 6826, Auckland, New Zealand,

NORTH CAROLINA: May 10-12 1991; Annual Coastal Carolina Area Campout; Roger's Bay Campground; Topsail Island, N.C.; information (919) 686-1173

OKLAHOMA: Mar. 22-24, 1991; 5th Oklahoma Regional Convention; Tulsa Marriott Hotel, Tulsa; rsvn.s (918) 627-5000; OKRCNA 5, P.O. Box 890501, Oklahoma City, OK 73189

PENNSYLVANIA: Mar. 8-10, 1991; 9th Greater Philadelphia Regional Convention; Valley Forge Sheraton, North Gulph Road and 1st Avenue, Valley Forge, PA. 19406; rsvn.s (215) 265-1500; G.P.R.C. IX, P.O. Box 1298, Bensalem, PA 19020

SOUTH CAROLINA: Feb. 15-17, 1991; South Carolina 3rd Annual Low Country Area Convention; Westin Oceanfront Resort Hotel, Hilton Head Island, SC; info 1 (803) 681-9595; Just For Today III, P.O. Box 22155, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

TENNESSEE: Apr. 5-7, 1991; 12th Anniversary Convention; Quality Inn, 1 International Plaza, Nashville, TN 37217; rsvn.s (800) 221-2222; phonenumber (615) 297-9762

TEXAS: Feb. 23, 1991; 1st Annual Post Mardi Gras Masked Ball; Boss Bingo Hall, 510 61st Street, Galveston Island; information (409) 737-1289

2) Mar. 29-31, 1991; The Fairmont Hotel, Dallas Arts District, 1717 North Akard Street, Dallas, TX 75201; rsvn.s (214) 720-2020 or (800) 527-4727; Program Committee, c/o LRSO, 10727 Plano Rd., -200, Dallas, TX 75238

WASHINGTON: Apr. 26-28, 1991; Washington Northern Idaho Regional Convention VI; Tower Inn, 1515 George Washington Way, Richland, WA 99352; information (509) 582-5418; W.N.I.R.C.N.A. VI, 1415 N. Young, -400, Kennewick, WA 99336

WEST VIRGINIA: May 10-12, 1991; Out of the Shadows; Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV, 26502; rsvn.s (304) 372-7000; Mountaineer RSC, P.O. Box 2381, Westover, WV 26502

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

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

Subscription ☐ one year \$15 US or Canadian
 ☐ two years \$28 US or Canadian
 ☐ three years \$39 US or Canadian

Payment ☐ enclosed
 ☐ not enclosed—bill me

Multiple orders

Bulk sales Contact our office for details.

Subscription ☐ 10 or more 1-year subscriptions
 to a single address @ \$12 US or
 Canadian each.
 Minimum order \$120 US or
 Canadian. Prepaid only.
 (Canadian subscribers add 7%
 Goods and Services Tax)

Address correction If you have moved, fill in your new
 address and attach your old address label
 to this form.

Name _____
Address _____

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

3TEA

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.

Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.



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