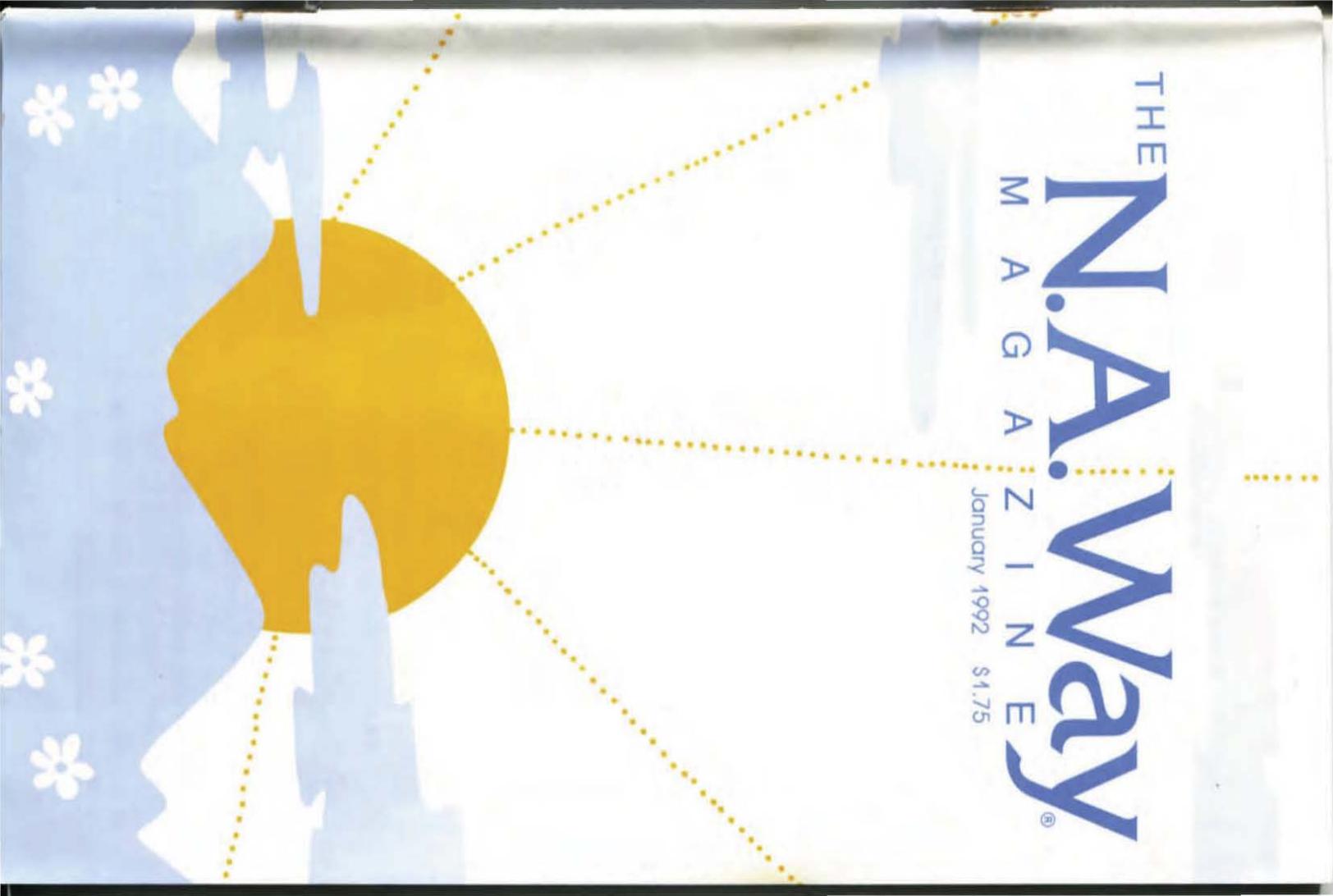


THE
N.A. Way[®]
MAGAZINE

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The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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THE N.A. Way[®]

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Following the way

When I first came into the NA fellowship, I was sure that recovery was a steady, uphill climb. Every time I heard someone speak and share their story I heard how bad it was, and then that person found recovery and everything was terrific, wonderful and great. Of course, I also heard how this was a slow process, which only added to the image of a slowly curved graph, steadily climbing upward. What I have come to know as recovery is something which would look much more like a lightning flash on a graph, with jagged ups and downs. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. This is some of my story. You may begin to understand why I wouldn't trade recovery for anything

Alone, frightened, with no where to go, I came to NA. The addicts there comforted me, reassured me that I could make it, and held my hand. They gave me hope that I too, could live drug-free. Somehow, I was open enough to listen to their suggestions and follow them. I learned one day at a time, not to use, and to live life on life's terms.

With about a year in the program, I was gaining recognition among fellow recovering addicts. I was the only female in my area with any amount of clean time, and whenever a female newcomer came, all eyes would turn to me for my words of wisdom. I lapped up all of this attention. The pedestal was so very comfortable. Of course, I would be asked to be the newcomer's sponsor, and my ego would never refuse such a request! But the time came when I began remembering issues from my childhood which caused great pain. People on pedestals are not allowed to be weak, need help, or share problems. They are not allowed to do anything but be wise and know everything. I began to miss meetings whenever I didn't have enough in me to sound good, and as time went on, I missed more and more meetings. Eventually I stopped attending meetings altogether. I relapsed with two-and-a-half years clean.

About one-and-a-half years later, I was still "doing research" for the fellowship. Pain motivated me to attend a meeting. So I got dressed up in heavy winter clothing, with big moon boots, and drove to the only meeting I could remember. I felt the need to prove that I was an addict, but got so high, that I decided I was too high to get any use out of the meeting. I did the only thing that made sense to this addict. I drove home. The next week, I decided to go to the meeting again, and this time, I was high, but not too high. Or so I thought. Once again, dressed in heavy winter clothing, I approached the two steel doors of the building. I returned once to the car to

get a little more "reassurance" that I would be accepted as an addict. Then the moment came. I opened the door, took a few steps, tripped over my own two feet, and slid, on my stomach, down the decline. I came to an abrupt halt right in front of the open double doors of the meeting room. Totally embarrassed, I turned and ran out of the building. My ego kept me from making a meeting for another year.

When I finally returned to NA, I no longer needed to "prove" that I was an addict. I knew, and that's all I cared about. I would have fought anyone that would have denied me a seat around the tables of NA. A great change came about when I realized that NA could survive without me, but I could not survive without NA. Indeed, NA not only survived, but thrived without me. In the two and a half years during my relapse, the addicts of NA had gotten the Basic Text published, the service structure had been formed, and the meetings in my area had grown from ten to thirty-five meetings weekly. I dug into recovery with all I had.

Although I could no longer count the previous two and a half years of recovery as part of my continuous clean time, I could still use what I had learned earlier, and learn from the mistakes I had made. I got a sponsor with whom I really worked through the Twelve Steps. My sponsor would warn me that I was too critical of myself by saying that the hammer wasn't a tool of recovery, and I shouldn't beat myself up. I eventually decided that I would take a vacation from relationships for awhile. In the time I did so, I came to depend on and utilize the

Higher Power whom I came to know through the Second Step. The practice of turning things over to the Higher Power meant that I had to do the footwork, and leave the results to HP. I took a fearless and moral inventory; then shared it with God and my sponsor. My sponsor worked with me to find the patterns of destruction which I all too often created. I came to realize that those character defects were once necessary for me to survive, since I had acquired no living skills. Now they served no purpose, but to make my life difficult, and I became ready to have God remove those character defects and to ask for help to build new, healthy living skills.

At about this time, I was granted the honor of becoming a citizen of the United States of America. Something which had taken nine years of bureaucratic red tape to accomplish. On the day I was sworn in as a citizen, I was so happy that I could have burst with excitement. Thank you NA, for you were there for me then, too. You rejoiced with me in my happiness. You showed me how to celebrate without the use of mind and mood altering chemicals.

I worked through the Twelve Steps, with the guidance of my sponsor, and continue to do so. I am grateful that I will never finish working on the steps until I am no longer in this world.

When I celebrated two years of recovery, I became worried, "Am I working my program to the best of my ability?" My sponsor suggested that we review the Twelve Steps of NA and find out, and I gladly did so, for I did not wish to repeat past mistakes.

In the NA Basic Recovery Text (5th ed. p. 94, 1st paragraph) it states that, "When problems arise, we hope to be well-equipped with the tools of the program." This simple sentence gained new meaning for me, when, with two-and-a-fourth years clean, I was abducted, sexually assaulted and nearly killed by my abductor. I was involved with H&I at the time, and went to my meeting still in shock. A counselor at the facility noticed that I wasn't my usual perky self and began talking to me. When I shared what had happened the night before, he was able to guide me to get help. My sponsor came to my side to support me immediately. I went to a recovery meeting that night and shared. The warm understanding and support I received that night were more than words could explain. The next day brought more pain, as my father was rushed to the hospital near death. Through this too, my fellow recovering addicts were there to support me. They were there for me too, when I had to go to the state's attorney and county sheriff's offices. Fellow addicts drove me to meetings or followed me home to make sure I felt safe. They walked me to my car, and even checked out every closet, and room of the house to make me comfortable. Nowhere have I found friends as dedicated and willing to help as the friends I have come to know in recovery.

The friends I have made have seen me through so many things. They watched as my husband and I built a healthy relationship. They prayed with me when the jeweler lost my ring two weeks before the wedding.

They lent a helping hand when my father became terminally ill with cancer, and mourned his death with me. They helped me face abuse and incest memories as they surfaced and showed me that I could ask for help. God has used so many wonderful recovering addicts to help me, guide me, and help me see humor too. They laughed with me as I learned about acceptance. They laughed with me as I learned how to drive a car with a manual transmission. They encourage me as I returned to college, and are thanking God with me when I succeed.

The recovering addicts of the NA fellowship are the most wonderful people I know. They rejoice with me in my happiness and pray with me when in despair. God uses the addicts in NA to hold me up, when I cannot stand alone. No greater gift could ever have been given to me, when I embraced recovery! As I approach my eighth clean anniversary, I can say with confidence, that, "Just for today, I will be unafraid, my thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear." (NA Basic Recovery Text, 5th ed. p. 90) Thank you, NA!

J.R. Illinois

Morning's reflection

I'm an addict. It is 5:30 a.m., the eastern sky is a pumpkin-orange and there are four morning stars. The only sound is a few sparrows that are trying to wake the others. Because this has happened, my day is "made." These simple things now make me extremely happy, yet for years in my life I had thrown them away.

If there is a way for addicts like us to find peace and happiness on the inside, it is through God and the Twelve Steps. It is throwing out what we were taught and think is "cool". . . the money, the pride, the greed, the ego. What it is; is simplicity, in where you'd never thought to look.

It is the intense and life-long study of unselfish love.

P.T., Hawaii

Teaching to learn

(Editor's note: The following two articles were written by the same addict. Since they were originally succeeding pieces, that's the way they are presented here. *The NA Way Magazine* welcomes and encourages the sharing of such collections.)

Letter one

Dear Addict,

I've been thinking a lot about our last conversation, and I've become increasingly concerned about you. I don't think you really understand what the program is all about. To be honest, I'm not sure I know exactly everything about what the program means. I do, however, have some knowledge about what recovery is to me. I know you don't like to talk only about "program," but seeing as how you're back in treatment, it seems appropriate.

You said that you could talk to me about things other than the program. What I don't think you realize is that in order for me to be that way, I had to learn how to LIVE the program. Before NA I had no life to speak of. True I did all the things normal people do, but I felt empty, somehow

different from those around me. I couldn't understand. I just figured that everyone felt the same as me and was dealing with it, or covering it up somehow. My disease, (notice how this is spelled dis-ease), affected and still affects every aspect of my life. Addiction is a dis-ease of thinking, feeling, believing, as well as physical.

The physical part of our dis-ease is the easiest to be rid of. All we have to do is not take drugs. That part is simple.

The belief part of my disease is more difficult. This is the spiritual aspect of my dis-ease. The spiritual part of my dis-ease is the CORE of my addiction. My inability to trust others, to trust a HP, and even to trust myself. It seems that the only truly reliable thing is drugs, and I include alcohol when I say drugs. I know when I use drugs in any combination what will happen. I don't know that about anything else in life. I am learning that my HP is predictable, that is, *my* HP, not anyone else's. People are not predictable, including myself. That makes it hard to trust. As a result it's easy to keep going back to that which is predictable, drugs. What I need to keep trying is reliance on my HP, and my HP works through people, as well as a tiny, quiet voice in my heart. The main problem with this is that quite often my head is a lot louder than my heart, so I have trouble hearing my HP. The way I've learned to handle this problem is by listening to people I trust, and talking things over with them and really listening to their response. When my HP speaks through others, I can hear them with my heart. I know that what they say



is the truth when I can hear them with my heart. Spiritual counsel can come from the most unlikely sources. I just have to be open-minded enough to hear it. I have heard spiritual truths come from people who have a program I think is all fd. Something that helps me is to learn to believe that all people are doing the best they can with the tools they have at their disposal at the time. I NEED to not judge others. It is true that I have to decide if someone is healthy for me to be around or not. The only question I need to ask is, "Is it healthy for me to associate with them?" Period.

I needed to totally immerse myself in NA. The steps, the traditions, and the spiritual principles. I had to be a fanatic about these things until I could "re-program" myself to live healthy. If every area of my life is affected by my disease, then every area of my life needs to be affected by the program. I am such a stubborn person that it required obsession regarding the program. I don't know if that is what you will need or not. But you sure aren't any less stubborn than me! I don't believe it's a bad thing to be immersed in the program. I don't really understand why you seem to feel that way. I think that there is a healthy way to be program obsessed. In everything I do, I try to see how to apply the steps and the traditions. Every step, and every tradition contains several spiritual principles. That is their ONLY purpose. Because the core of our disease is spiritual, the core of our program must also be spiritual.

To me, the spiritual principles of Step One are: freedom, choice, humil-

ity (which simply means knowing and accepting who we are, faults, assets and all), unity of purpose, surrender, anonymity, hope, and I'm sure there are more but that's all I can think of right now.

I think the spiritual principles of Step Two are: freedom, faith, choice, clarity of thought, anonymity, etc...

Step Three: freedom, anonymity, humility, faith, peace, surrender, etc...

Do you see a pattern? You kept telling me you want freedom, yet you still try to control your own life. The fruit of running your own life seems to be active addiction, whether it means using drugs, or a way of life. I don't see that you've experienced much freedom in your life running it on your own. If you truly want freedom, then you must surrender control. I know that sounds contradictory, but it's not. Your way of doing things has landed you back in treatment, this is surely not freedom. Living the steps guarantees freedom, peace, humility, love, faith, anonymity; in essence the steps will give you what you want for your life. Why are you fighting it?

I would like to define anonymity for you because I've used it a lot and I want to make sure you understand me. Anonymity means we are all equal. No one has all the answers, no one is better than anyone else. I think a truly good service worker is not obvious because he is simply part of the group working toward a common purpose. It is where "I" becomes "we," and mine becomes ours, and me becomes us. This is the spiritual principle of anonymity, and that is why all our steps say "we," "our," and "us" instead of "I," "me" and "mine."

I hope that what I've shared helps you to understand the program a bit more. I hope I haven't bored you with repetitions of what you already know. Please try to separate the fellowship from the program. Please stop judging and condemning others in your own mind, this will only separate you from the HP you are trying to know. For every finger you point outward there are three pointing back at you. An inventory is only to help you to see yourself as you truly are. It is not to make you feel badly about yourself. Remember each of us is doing the very best we can with what we have to work with at the time. I believe this about you, can you believe this of yourself and of others?

Letter two

I was really surprised to hear that my last letter ended up as a letter to a whole group. Surprised, yes, and also grateful that what I have to share means something. It wasn't too long ago that all I had to share was disease. And yes, this is gonna be another "program" letter. I want to share my First Step with you, and if my fingers don't wear out or my mind go blank, I'll start on Step Two, too.

Like I said in my last letter, some of the spiritual principles of Step One are freedom, hope, choice, etc. I want to share with you my perception of these principles. The reason why freedom is one of the principles is because we are allowed to surrender control. For so long we have tried to control the uncontrollable. Our addiction is not controllable, period! I hear people

say that we cannot control people, places, or things. I think this is a cop out. That's not what Step One says. It says we are powerless over our addiction. Just what is my addiction? My addiction is inside of me. It's about how I think, how I feel, how I react. It's my reaction that makes me an addict, not what I use. Drugs are not incurable, addiction is. There is nothing, repeat *nothing*, external about the First Step. True freedom comes when I accept and surrender to the fact that I am powerless over a disease inside of me. Because it is that something inside of me that makes me an addict, I will always be an addict. As long as I do not put any mind or mood-altering chemical into my body, I have choice, and a chance. I have the ability to listen to my HP and start thinking, feeling and reacting a little less like an addict, and more like a reasonable human being. This is truly freedom. When I use that drug I no longer have a choice, I can no longer hear my HP, I can no longer think in a healthy or positive way. The drug runs my life. This is the opposite of freedom. I become totally self-centered, and full of denial. This self-centeredness is the core of our disease, it is also the spiritual part of our disease. If self-centeredness is the core of our disease, then this tells me that spirituality is the treatment for this disease. Make sense? That is why the purpose of the steps is spiritual principles. There is no "spiritual side" of our program, it is all spiritual. If you can find the other side, let me know, cause I sure don't see it. Living by the spiritual principles in our steps and traditions arrests our disease and

allows us freedom. Living without these principles means living with insidious addiction, whether or not we use drugs. You and I both know we can live in addiction with out using any drug. That's because the core of our disease is not drugs, but self-centeredness. Self-centeredness causes rebellion and defiance against following spiritual principles. And here we are full circle to the core of our disease, and the core of our program, spirituality.

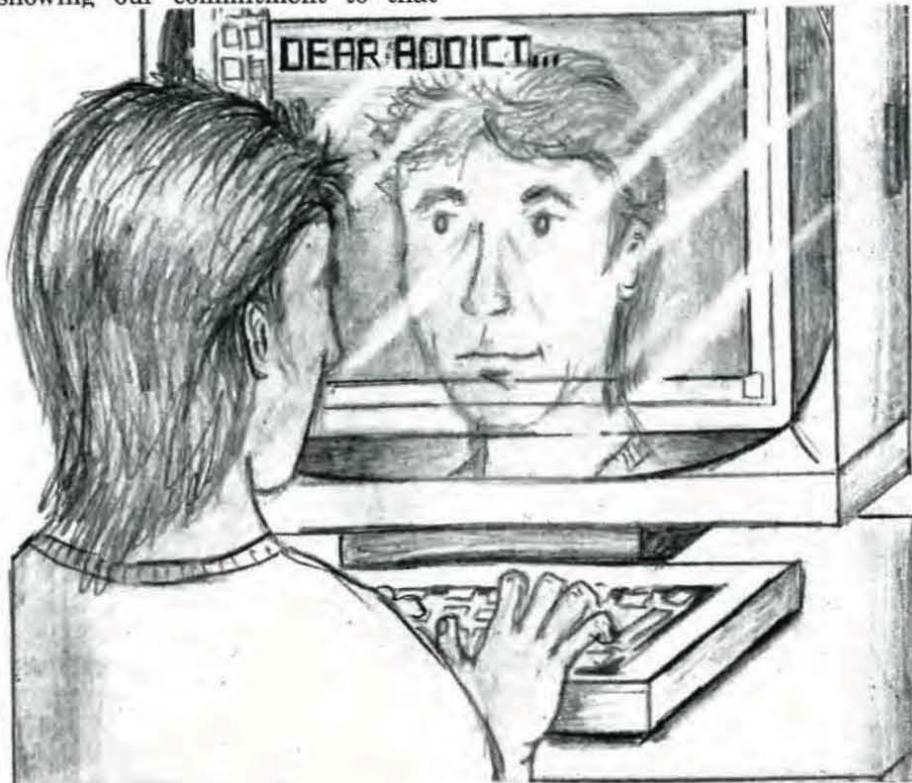
I think another of the spiritual principles in Step One is unity. Notice it says, "WE." Until we found other recovering addicts we could not recover. We have common purpose. Granted, we all have different ways of showing our commitment to that

purpose, but we still all have that common bond: a commitment to recovery from addiction. Freedom from active addiction is the only promise the program makes.

The letters I've written to you were as much for me as you. I need to be reminded of what recovery is all about. I "forget." When I forget, my addiction has a toe-hold, and then I am fd. I need to remember that my addiction affects every area of my life, so my recovery must, too.

I love you. I know you know most of what I've written, but I figure if I need to be reminded, and you have the same disease as me, then you need to be reminded too.

J.B., Michigan



How it feels

Well, I am two years clean the NA Way. It's been a hell of a year. I wouldn't change a thing!

I learned a lot this year. I got into a relationship. Its a beautiful experience. Communication has been



the key part. Along with patience, caring and understanding. This could be the one! For now it's one day at a time. We are in no rush.

I went to a lot of conventions. Massachusetts, Virginia, New Jersey, and of course, Paris. All of them were great influences in my life and in my recovery. No one should miss out!

I've been a sponsor all year. Sponsorship is wonderful. I try to do it like my sponsor shows me. He does it with love, caring, patience, and understanding. I love my sponsees. They're all quite different, but we share a common bond.

NA family everywhere. It is through your love and friendship that I have made it this far. From simple fellowship to service, *we* do it together. I'm not alone.

Finally, to you, my Higher Power-all of this is possible from you. But NA brought us together.

In closing, today was sort of blah. I wasn't feeling too good, so I tried to take it easy. My H&I meeting was canceled tonight, so my friend and I went to a local meeting. It was alright, nothing extra-ordinary. I watched a movie, then I checked my messages. Again nothing special. I called my sponsor at one a.m. I planned on his machine, but he answered the phone. I told him how I felt. He said, "How do you know what two years is suppose to feel like?" We laughed. I said "thanks" for this year, and told him I loved him. He replied, "Thank you." *Now* it feels like two years.

H.O. Connecticut



It just keeps getting better

Hello from Fairfield CT. It's been a while since I've written, but I just got back from the Second Paris Convention and I had to write you all and tell you about it. Also, I wanted to say thanks for all the hard work you do to put out this magazine every month.

The last time I wrote you I was still living in NY. As of March I am a "Connecticutian." I love it here. My HP has given my girlfriend and I a beautiful home and a wonderful fellowship to keep us warm. I now have a few meetings up the street that I love to go to. I have met a wonderful group of our huge family and I am proud to call them family. I love you all.

It's been a bit over a year since the first Paris convention, but well worth the wait. I went over a few days early to see a few sights and get together with my loved ones in Paris.

Unfortunately I had wicked jet lag all week, but that didn't keep me from getting together with everyone and having a wonderful time.

The convention itself was beautiful. There were about 230 of us from fifteen or twenty different countries. All the same faces were there from last year and some new ones.

We had speakers from all over, each bringing a message of love and hope.

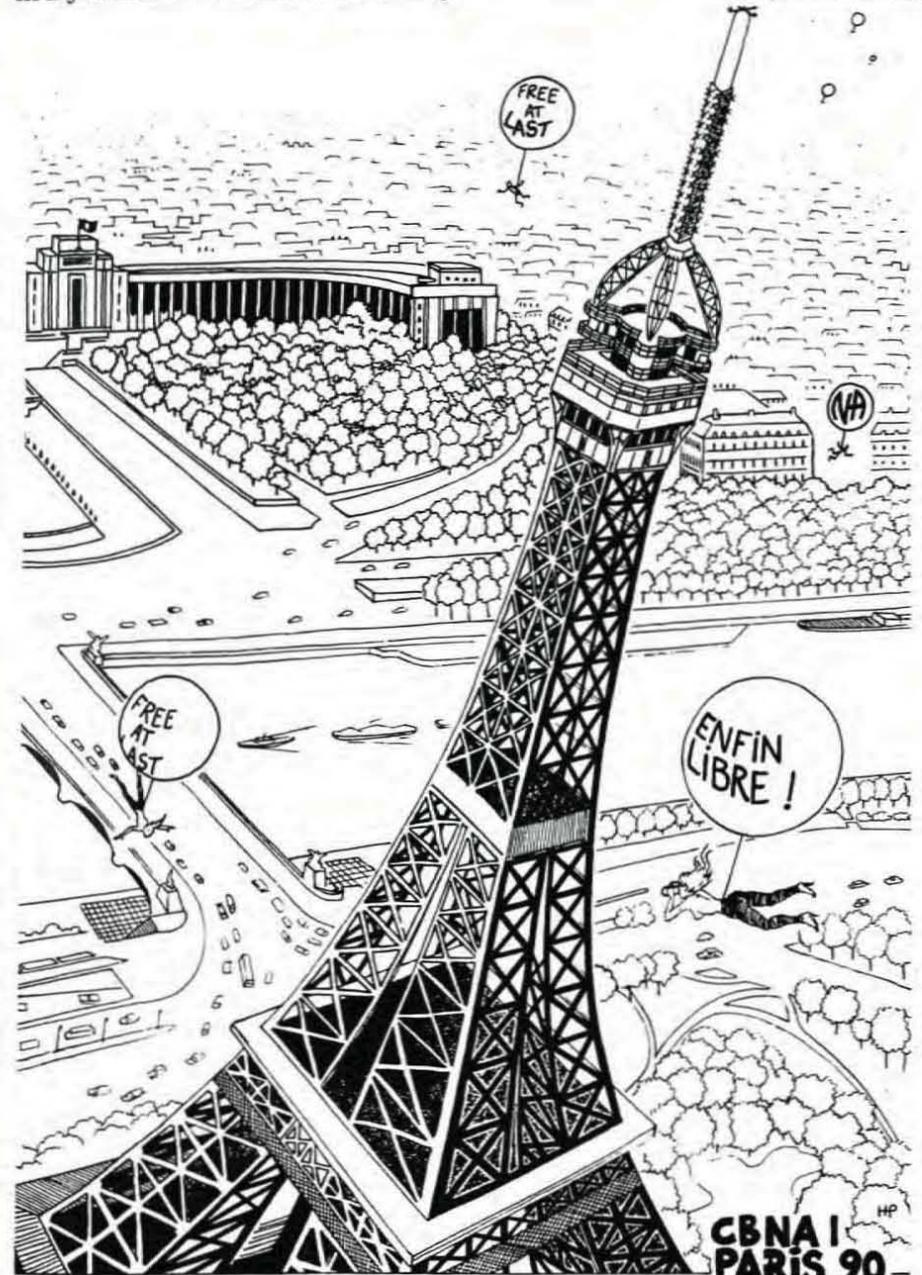
For myself, a spiritual experience happened at my first meeting, earlier that week, downtown. I met my friend A. outside, and she translated what everyone was saying for me. About eighty percent of the addicts in the room had ninety days or less. Five of us had over a year. Everyone was honest and spoke from their hearts. A girl started sharing and, right away, I felt an emptiness inside me. I also felt fear and sadness. A tear came to my eye. Then my friend translated what she had said. She had about sixty days clean. She felt an "emptiness inside her." She didn't know what to fill it with. She was without a man for the first time in years, and she was scared. My jaw was on the ground and I almost fell off my chair. Language wasn't even a barrier. I felt another addict's pain without even hearing what the person's pain was. This was a miracle.

I shared this when it was my turn. I told everyone to come to the convention that weekend, and they too would be a part of a miracle. Everyone

showed up. It was a beautiful convention. The committee did an excellent job. I look forward to next year. The Paris convention has a special place in my heart. The First PCNA was my

first convention. The Second PCNA was my ninth and like I have a home group, the Paris convention is my "home convention."

H.O., Connecticut

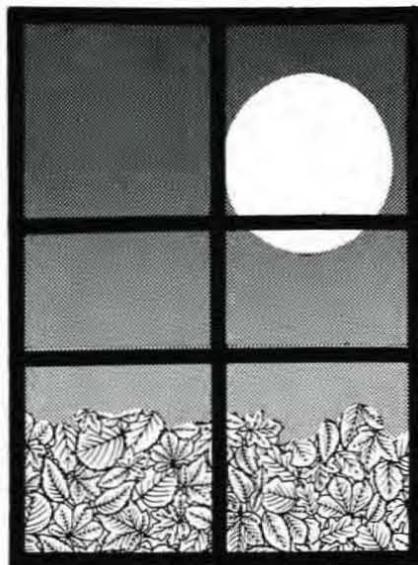


I asked for direction

The other night I was feeling really depressed and a lot of other things. I shared some about it in a meeting that night, and went home and went to bed. The next morning when I got up I still felt bad. I said to myself, "You better do some praying about how you feel in your morning prayers." I felt mis-directed, so I asked God to pick me up by the shoulders and direct me. I left it at that and went on about my day. When in town that evening (I drive fifty miles for a meeting on that night,) after taking care of some before-meeting things, I decided not to go to my regular meeting. I got out a meeting list and picked out another meeting to attend. When I got there I went into the meeting room at the church, and there was no meeting. I asked a couple of ladies if there was a meeting there and they said they did not know of one. Just then the priest came in and I ask him. He told me that there used to be one, but it moved somewhere else. Then he said that the three people sitting out in the courtyard where there for the meeting, too. I asked him if we could have a meeting out in the courtyard and he said, "Sure." I went over to the people and introduced myself to them

and told them about the meeting. I asked if they wanted to have one in the courtyard. They said "Yes," so I went and got my text from my truck. It was unreal. They had only been clean for seven days. It was their third meeting that night. I shared my experience and hope with them. I knew that it was my Higher Power answering my prayer. You see, it was Him that changed my mind about going to a different meeting that night, and of all the meetings on the list, He made me pick out that one. I asked Him to direct me and that is just what He did. He directed me to where he needed me to carry the word of recovery and stop feeling bad about myself. Those people thanked me that night for helping them, and I thanked them too. Someday I hope they will realize just how much help they were for me. You see, that is how the program works, "You can't keep what you have unless you give it away."

S.A.R., Florida



Surgery in recovery

Five days ago I went through a two-and-one-half hour surgery for an Achilles tendon that snapped while I was playing basketball.

I knew about the surgery two weeks prior and began talking to other addicts and sharing at meetings. I was not afraid; I even felt I should be more concerned than I was. After all, with over five years clean, I should have nothing to worry about. Then I heard, louder than ever, "The only way to keep from returning to active addiction is not to take the first drug"

With the help of my sponsor and having a conscious contact with God, I still knew everything would be OK. Faith overpowered any fear that set in. A few times I wondered whether the pain was intense enough to take something. It was. I will admit, one time I wanted the pain to come so I could take something, and on an empty stomach, so it would work better.

Three days after my surgery, my sponsor and a few NA friends came over to my house for a meeting. It was great, and just what I needed. There were six of us. We went around the group and shared for about five minutes each; everyone said something I needed to hear. My sponsor

had the best opening line, "With over twenty years clean, this is the first meeting where there are drugs on the table." We joked about counting them, and "could I share if I took one in the past twenty-four hours?" We joked, but I know we all take our clean time seriously.

My sponsor called me that same night about 9:30 p.m. I was just crawling into bed. He wanted to let me know if I felt any obsession to give him a call. He told me he loved me and did not want me to go out. We hung up.

I shared the conversation with my wife, who is a registered nurse. She has only known me since I have been clean and although she is not an addict, she has been very supportive to me and respects my program.

My wife would be checking my actions; my sponsor was checking my thinking. If my actions or behavior changed, it would already be too late. That's the difference in *being* an addict and knowing how we think.

I don't know if my sponsor heard anything in my sharing that was a concern, but I'm glad he called. I prayed for guidance.

The next day when I thought this thing through, I knew God was working through my sponsor and it is vital to keep a conscious contact, because it is the thought that will kick in the action. The action I took was to get into the three r's of my program—reading, (w)riting and recovery. Staying clean is not taking drugs; recovery is working the steps.

C.E., California

Spiritual rewards

I remember that, prior to leaving a treatment center, I was asked to list my personal goals. They were: 1., to stay clean; 2., to repair damaged relationships with my wife, children, and parents; and, 3., to find a fulfilling career.

Back home, I quickly became involved in Narcotics Anonymous, joined a group, and found a sponsor who had something I wanted. I stayed clean, went to lots of meetings, began to apply the steps, and returned to the university after a sixteen-year absence. My life has changed remarkably in the six-and-a-half years since I listed those priorities. Through the process of healing called recovery, I have accomplished more than I ever believed possible.

But I am writing now with a mixture of gratitude and pain. My father died three weeks ago, and I miss him terribly. There is an emptiness in my life that aches. However, the pain is lessened by the knowledge that there was little, if any, unfinished business between us when he died. You see, my father was on my Eighth Step list.

I made a decision back in "treatment" that I would invest in this relationship. Today I understand and

accept that both my parents generally did the best they could, as did I. My father was a very private man, and if I have any regret it is that he found it so difficult to share at an emotional level. But we changed and grew together over the past number of years. We were able to establish a closeness, a friendship, a real bond between us, which was truly a gift of this program.

I believe the healing of this relationship began when my parents drove five hours to visit me in treatment. It continued with effort, commitment, and love on all sides. It was not always easy or comfortable, and there were periods of disagreement and friction. But it was important for me to make formal amends to them both. The fact that they were on that list, and that I made direct amends to them early in my recovery, made possible the intimacy we experienced later. The past few months, when my father was clearly in the terminal stage of his cancer, have been exceedingly difficult. But I know I was present physically, emotionally, and spiritually in a way that would have been impossible without the tools of this program.

Near the end, my dad was hospitalized in the country, not far from his chalet, about an hour away from here. It was a crazy week, running back and forth, and monitoring his condition from a distance. I finally got the call telling me he was deteriorating, and rushed to join my sisters and mother at his bedside. When I arrived he was agitated and in distress. I knew he was dying, and I wanted to alleviate his suffering. I consulted the

rest of my family before requesting that he receive an injection of morphine to soothe him. My dad died a few hours later, surrounded by all of us, in the most peaceful, serene, and pain-free way.

He left us a beautiful letter, to be opened after his death, that was a declaration of his love for us all. I would like to share the last paragraph of that letter with you. For it expressed not only his feeling about his family, but at a broader level, I believe he described the spiritual rewards of recovery in action.

These were his fundamental values. His words are eternal:

"All of you have made my life worthwhile, and have given me the answer to the eternal question "what is life all about?" A loving, devoted and supportive family is what you are, and I devoutly hope you will continue to be, and this means the world to me. Take care of each other. I love you."

So I have cried many tears, and undoubtedly will cry many more. I have been supported and comforted by my wife, children, family, NA friends and others. I have also been able to return that support and comfort. I knew when I first heard recovering addicts share their experience, strength and hope that they had something I wanted. My sponsor told me this program has as little or as much to offer as I want, from simple abstinence to a deeper spiritual journey. He was right. For despite my current pain, I know I have never felt more spiritually centered. For this I am tremendously grateful.

P.W., Quebec



I can leave if you want me to . . .

It was a cold, wet night and he slipped on his full length, tweed overcoat. It had been a long eight hours at work and he loosened his tie and tugged at the gold tie-tack with a well manicured finger. The fine tailored suit he wore probably felt heavy, and the starched white shirt was creased. It had been another disappointing day. His sales were down, and only he knew how badly he needed the money just now. Law school was harder than he had expected, and more expensive. His girlfriend from back home had called him twice tonight, and that nine-hour drive between them must have felt like a chasm swallowing-up his soul. He'd gone to the restroom after both calls. Shaking and in a cold sweat, he lost what was left of his lunch.

But this night was different. This night he had a place to go other than a college party or a marijuana-clouded study session.

As his car pulled-up I rushed to let

him in out of the freezing dampness. I looked at his paste-white face and saw the fear in his eyes. Wrapping my arms around him I felt how thin he'd recently become. I let him know I was excited to see him, how welcome he was here.

We were running a little late and the front room of the club-house was empty. From the meeting room the *Serenity Prayer* faintly echoed. I led him to the coffee pot and then to two empty chairs. One for me, one for him. We took off our coats and a few eyes rolled at the appearance of his suit and tie, distinctly foreign in a sea of flannel shirts and Levis. I heard the familiar opening-reading and leaned back in my seat...safe here with my family. A woman began to read the steps and I remembered carefully talking to him at length about how I had found my serenity in the steps. He was desperate in his search for peace and relief, and he had clung to my words.

Then, suddenly I felt as if I were attending an auction! The woman was spewing those same steps at lightning speed, mumbling and tumbling over those precious, life-giving words. No one was paying attention to her anyway. Small conversations were taking place here and there around the room. Cigarettes were being bummed, a couple was laughing over a private joke.

Then we went around the room introducing ourselves as addicts. He simply said his name and that he was a friend of mine. A few more eyes rolled and he added softly, "I can leave if you want me to." No one said anything for a long while until the

chairperson chimed, "I don't have a problem with you being here, does anyone else?" Shrugs and silence. The topic was introduced and discussion began.

Silently, with huge eyes, my friend sat, taking it all in. Time after time whoever was speaking got interrupted. Well-meaning members confronted one another and pointed fingers. Voices raised and tears fell. I was stunned. The chairperson obviously had other plans because he tried to close the meeting twenty minutes early, and then fidgeted but said nothing when it ran late. After a quick prayer, he bolted out the door.

Cliques formed. My friend stood alone. No one approached him as I received hug after hug. Finally, one man shook his hand and said sarcastically, "I'm glad to meet you, but I don't know if it's such a good idea to be hanging out with HER", and then brushed passed me on his way out.

"I guess I shouldn't have come", my friend said sheepishly. "I felt like an unwelcome guest and there was just so much pain in there, I can't help feeling sorry for those people. I'd never be able to open-up like that." I explained to him that it wasn't normally like this. I tried to tell him how it could be- how it was for me. He said nothing.

Five days later was too late to let Levis and silk ties be an example of how we "place principles before personalities." It was too late to talk about our similarities instead of our differences, too late to let the newcomer be the most important person at any meeting. My friend gave up all hope and took his own life.

I remember him telling me how afraid he was that no one would ever care about him or that he could never care about himself or anyone else. I keep thinking that we proved him right that night. How many times have I been frivolous with my recovery, I wonder? I can remember a hundred meetings where I've avoided a newcomer. Or a dozen times I selfishly used a meeting to socialize (or, worse yet, as a dating service). Wrapped-up in my joy of being clean I frequently forget that the empty chair next to mine represents my alternatives- jails, institutions, and death.

How many times
have I been
frivolous with
my recovery,
I wonder.

I pray now that with every newcomer I'll see my dear friend's face. That in their silence I'll hear his voice softly saying, "I can leave if you want me to." And that when I read the steps or share I'll speak slowly and clearly, so eager ears can hear a message of hope and welcome.

For my friend, maybe his last resort was his first meeting. Unfortunately, it was also his last meeting.

Gari G., Ohio

One addict helping another



I just received my November issue of *NA Way Magazine* and was reading it. While doing this I discovered I am not alone. Someone told a story similar to mine. I would like to thank M.R., from North Carolina, for making my *Message received*.

I am eighteen months clean and just newly married. I am not working and haven't for about a month and a half. I have, however, been looking. In the meantime I decided to fill my days with walks. (How odd, actually doing something good for me.) On these walks I would always find a penny, and my thoughts were much the same as M.R.s: "Find a penny, pick it up, all day long, have good luck" (if you don't spend it). So I would go home and put it in a jar. On these walks I would usually think (not good) about how were we going to meet our bills. We have so many, and more keep coming in. I had been putting applications in for a while and had not received any calls. I was getting pretty discouraged, but I continued to take my walks, think, and pick up pennies. I was asking my Higher Power for help, but I wasn't taking the time to listen. I'm glad there was another recovering addict out there to carry the message to me. I started letting go and trusting my Higher Power to meet my needs. Today I have a job and hopefully can start paying off some bills, and I am happy. I haven't taken many walks so I haven't found any pennies, but if I do I will pick it up and thank my Higher Power for *message received*.

C.S., West Virginia

Home Group

Robert's important commitment



AND AT LAST I'VE FOUND A SERVICE COMMITMENT THAT STRETCHES MY INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES TO THE MAX...
THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB IN NA!!



The broad perspective

So, let's try for a *really* broad perspective this month! It's the New Year, and it's hard to say whether 1992 beckons or looms.

By the time you read this the directors of the WSO will probably have decided whether to increase the price of fellowship materials by a proposed ten percent. The magazine is, at World Service Conference direction, one of the products in the WSO inventory. The cost of a standard annual subscription may soon increase from \$15 to \$16.50.

That increase, if it is implemented, will close the gap between the costs of producing the magazine, and "income." That, *along with* the effects of the 1992 subscription drive we hope you are all hearing about right now. Sufficient annual drive material to be shared by 10,000 NA groups was dispatched about ten days ago. Area and group contacts were asked to help see to it that the most people possible are reminded of the existence and purpose of *The NA Way Magazine*.

The magazine has never "made money," and we'll stay true to that practice this year. But a counter-point

to that tradition is another one, known as the seventh. Though the bucks haven't been stacking up lately, a percentage of subscriber-increase like the one we experienced in 1990 would, for the first time, end our habit of going "into the red."

We got closer than ever to breaking even in 1989 and 1990, but in 1991 a combination of the poor general economy and a somewhat timid annual drive (Third Class, delayed several months) has resulted in hard times.

The formula that allows 15 or 20 addicts to rent meeting space that is beyond the practical means of 5 or 6, applies to the magazine. More subscriptions effectively cost less per individual served, because some expenses are the same no matter how many magazines are produced. When you subscribe or renew you not only get your magazines, but realistically help to make this extensive effort self-supporting.

Relatively speaking

There is an instant during the compilation of each issue, usually this page, usually about now, when an attempt is made to foresee what readers will have encountered when they're reading these sentences. Most of you will just now be moved by, and hopefully, responding to, events that are already history to the *NA Way* staff.

We had a heckuva time putting together the November and December issues, mostly because of the nature of the material available. Art assignments had to be delayed til the last possible moment (and somewhat be-

yond!) until we had enough "meeting in print" type stories and articles. As always, we had plenty of strong opinion and "viewpoints," but had a hard time compiling the front 15 or 20 pages in a way that could come near the standards that have been established.

We cut a few corners, cried on a few shoulders, and went on with it. November's issue, though suffering from more typos than usual, got out on time. The December issue, though neater, was mailed about a week late. By early December we are already experiencing the increase in "meeting in print" material requested in November, but you won't really start seeing the effects until "now."

The risks involved in projecting how you will respond are many. Happily, more addicts are now writing about basic recovery, and have begun to answer the questions posed in the November "editor's note." Most of those responses are in the review panel and editorial board time-consuming chutes, so you can't see 'em for another month or two.

All these elements: time, member-reader's desires; and writer's submissions; point up a crying need for more kinetic editorial planning.

During the coming few years a further refining of guidelines for the magazine's production may be necessary and asked, from any of several quarters. To better delineate those standards and meet them will take the input of a broad cross-section of the fellowship.

Spear-heading that task, or at least cheer-leading it, will be your review panel and editorial board. The 1992

WSC looms, or beckons. Please start now to nominate many and able people for the editorial board and panel positions!

Content

At this time responses are about evenly divided between approval, understanding, and chagrin that our content has lately tended more toward very personalized sharing and specificity, than to a standard and general recounting of unadorned principle.

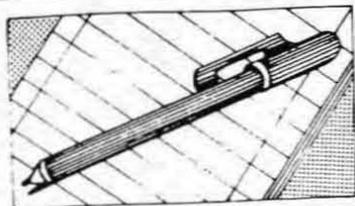
One regular contributor approved the "thought-provoking" nature of some recent material; and another reminded "*Personal* recovery depends of NA unity."

Though we will likely always be pulled between the champions of autonomy and unity, the best of both worlds is being sought. One somewhat subtle change that may support such an evolution is that staff-produced "news" and "features" are more often being displaced by the personal perspectives of other NA-writers. We're having to risk the ire of readers who might feel too much space is, in a given issue, devoted to esoteric sharing; but promise that, in the long run, you'll see a balance that reflects as many views as possible.

Oops!

In the November, 1991, "Broad perspective" we erroneously reported that several 1991 WSC motions related to travel expenses for some non-US regional representatives to the 1992 WSC were "approved." They were, in fact, "referred."

Viewpoint



Steady on

I am responding to the article by R.R., in Hawaii ("Aloha NA," *NA Way*, November, 1991). First let me say that I believe that articles such as R's are very appropriate and even necessary, and should be published more frequently. In my opinion, *The NA Way Magazine* is the "cutting edge" of the fellowship, and offers a reflection of what is going on out here in "fellowship land." I personally enjoy thought-provoking articles such as R's, that entice me to contemplate or question my own views.

As an "old-timer" (eleven-and-one-half years,) I found R's article particularly interesting. Upon reading the article my first thought was, "who exactly is an *old-timer*?" or, for that matter, who is a *newcomer*? Aren't we all considered equal and doesn't this kind of labeling place some sort of status on individuals? Well, we'll save these questions for another article,

but for the record I am only eleven-and-a-half and plan to live till at least 110! (My ego will tell me that I don't look old, either.)

My own personal experience tends to refute the idea that old-timers "drop-out" of the fellowship. I have remained a very active member with commitments to my home group and other service activities. I still attend two or three meetings a week (including an H&I meeting). I have been married for several years and have many other activities outside of the fellowship, also. However, I don't use these activities as an excuse not to participate in the fellowship. Ironically, I believe that I have stuck around partly because of those who have "dropped out." Perhaps it's not that ironic, it's just another way of addicts sharing their experience. I certainly have seen the experience of others who have "dropped out" for all sorts of reasons. The end result is almost always the same—*relapse*.

I'm sure the examples of "dropping out" that are offered by R are factual, but I don't see it as a prevalent circumstance, at least not in my neck of the woods. I've certainly felt persecuted or judged by others, and at times I have retaliated. I can recall my angst at those terrible, mean newcomers—how dare them to be sick! Today I tend to be a lot less knee-jerk

about those things, due to these experiences, and—let's not forget, your's truly was also at one time similarly obnoxious, arrogant, self-righteous, etc. Gee, I'm glad I didn't scare any old-timers away. As for not being allowed to participate in service, or anything else in NA, I have been through too much in my active addiction and worked too hard in my recovery to be pushed around like that.

I prefer not to rationalize my complacency by making excuses for not going to meetings based on the actions of others. There is plenty of NA to go around for everyone today. It was not like that not too long ago.

I will continue to go and be there for those who are seeking recovery, rather than worry about those who obviously aren't.

E.A., Alabama

Not going anywhere

After just receiving my November, 1991 *NA Way*, I feel I must respond to your questions, and the two articles.

First of all, in the area I participate in and attend meetings, we are doing fine, thank you. Sure, some people with years of clean time have left. So have people without the clean time. That will never change. This is a program for those who want it! I remem-

ber when I first got here, I couldn't go two hours without using, so when someone stood up with six months (like my first sponsor) or a year clean, I was in awe! Since all I knew at that time was that I wanted to quit using and feel alright, I knew I was in the right place. Five or ten years clean didn't mean anymore to me than someone with two months clean, identifying themselves as someone having the same disease I knew was killing me, and that there was a new life here for me if I wanted it and was willing to go to any lengths to get it. I'm coming up on six years clean now and I'm not going anywhere. It isn't about what I gave or received yesterday, or somewhere in the distant past. This is a program just for today. All we have is this moment. I can either make something positive out of it, or waste it by worrying about the past or the future. As the fellowship grows, it changes as we change. I don't like all the changes either, but with faith in HP and the love of other recovering addicts you can believe that I'm not going anywhere.

As far as "Newcomer confusion," (*Viewpoint*, November 1991) goes, we don't have that here. Wherever someone goes for their personal recovery, that's up to them, but when you're at an NA meeting in this area, all you'll hear about is recovery from the disease of addiction, and how to face life on life's terms, just for today.

One other thing that bugs me is when I hear of someone applying the steps to their boss, job, car, loved one, etc. Huh! The steps, traditions and spiritual principles of NA are what we apply to ourselves. If we do that, by

daily practice, we can deal with life, and our boss, job, car, loved one, etc. My car has no concept of the steps. All it understands is money and mechanics.

Thanks for your time, "Still here anonymously, in Ohio."

Oh, I almost forgot! I love the magazine, and you seem to have a good format. I know I enjoy it and get a lot out of it. Please try to keep it focused on recovery. As far as personal recovery stories—isn't that what we are all about? Doesn't "personal recovery" depend on NA unity?

Response: "On basic respect"

I love this program. I have a passion for the steps. I'm a "purist," I've been told, for the traditions. Nothing in my life is more important to me than Narcotics Anonymous. My wife and I left our honeymoon suite at a bed-and-breakfast inn up in the mountains, at night, in the cold, on a motorcycle, to go to the next town to get in a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. When it comes to staying clean I am dead serious. But our slogan "H.A.L.T.S." tells me to curb any one or all of them before they get too much and cause me to use. The "S" stands for "serious." I try not to take anything but staying clean too serious. Nothing else is that

important, although my wife and son come damn near.

But I go to conventions to celebrate life. Celebrate Narcotics Anonymous. Celebrate my wife and kid. I celebrate by laughing and having a good time. By not being too serious. By kidding with my family. I can joke that it says, "over" on the readings at the bottom of the page of "How it Works." I can, "Thank God" that "our leaders are but trusted servants and do not (or at least aren't supposed to) govern;" and I can "thank God" that "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." I can "rip" and I can "boing" and I can celebrate. I could never laugh with anyone before. And, if you laughed, I knew it was at me and not with me. I am truly grateful to Narcotics Anonymous and am grateful that today I have something to celebrate. And everyone who knows me knows I love this program!

B.B., North Carolina

Anonymity

When I first came into the program, I thought that people with a year or more clean were just a step below God. What they had to say about recovery and living clean were, to me, from God's own lips to my ears. I listened as hard as I could. I watched them living their lives. I placed them on a pedestal. They were the gurus of our fellowship. I'm sure this did a

great deal for me in my early recovery, but today I wonder what it did for them.

These people with years of clean time eventually left our area one by one. Suddenly I was the "old-timer" of my sex in our area. I had less than two years clean. Without warning, new people were using and seeing me as I had used and seen those before me. In the years that followed I learned what a double-edged sword years of accumulated clean time can be.

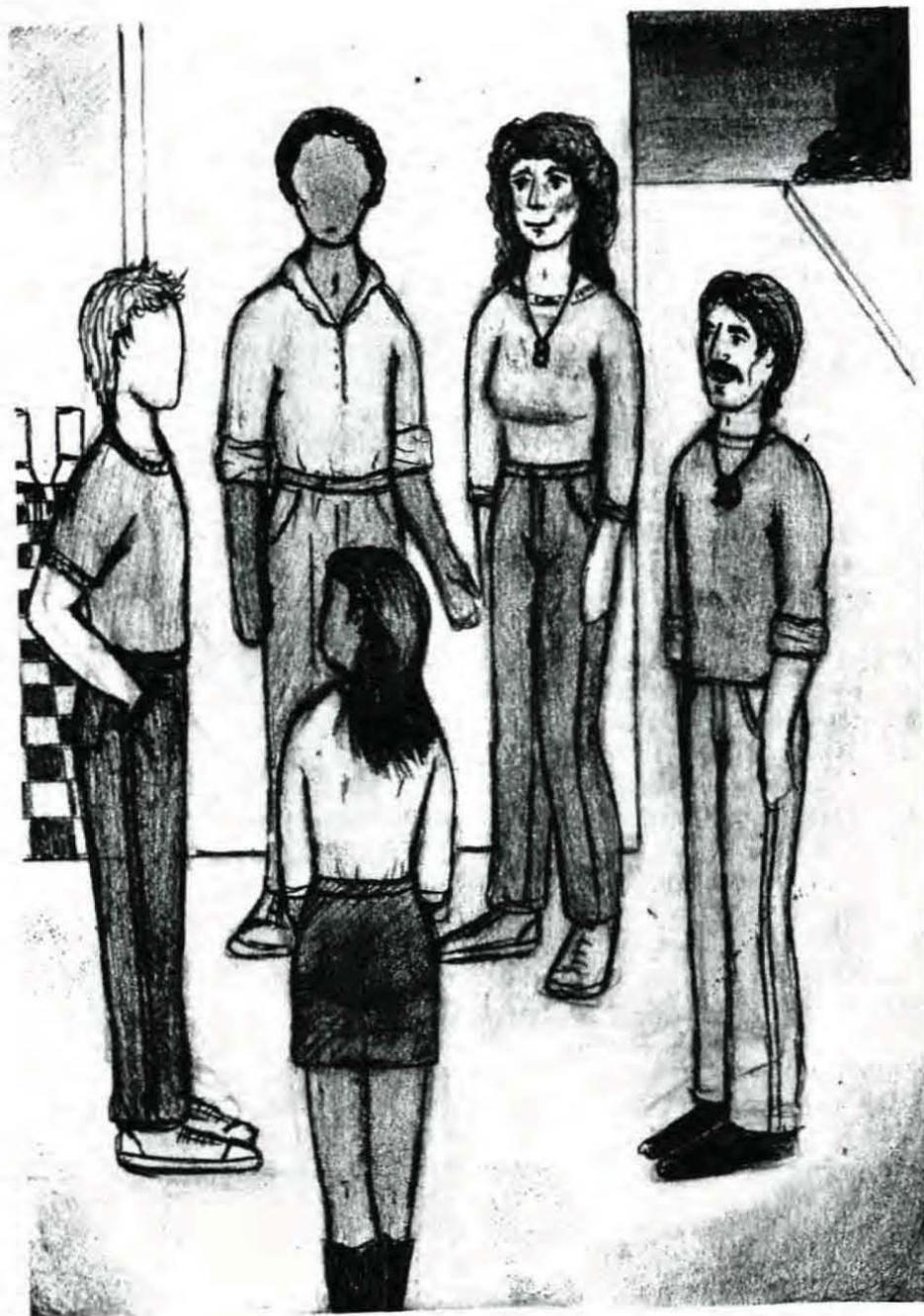
Instead of my ego once so large and dominant taking a back seat to my Higher Power, I noticed that to some, I BECAME their HP. My ego, which needs no reason to inflate, had many reasons to do so. Even though I had my own sponsor, and was doing all that I could see I needed to do for my own recovery, I went on a wild power trip. I began sponsoring more and more newcomers, at one time I was sponsoring as many as ten people. Soon I was sponsoring people who had more clean time than me. People I had never heard of had my name and phone number written in their Basic Text. (I know because I ran into one while I was in a treatment facility.) People I didn't know by name or face were referring people to me for sponsorship. On top of this I became immersed in service. It didn't take long before I was convinced that Narcotics Anonymous would fall apart in our area if I weren't there to keep it together.

To make a long story short, and to avoid the inevitable excuses and justifications, I relapsed. I had more than seven years of clean time when

I picked up again. We all know what happens next. We all know what using does to any addict, and that's not what I want to write about here, so I will skip to when I came back to NA some two years later.

Of course the fellowship in my area continued growing while I was gone. Addicts were still finding recovery, my relapse did not destroy all of NA. Thank God there is no one who has that power. Today I believe that our Higher Power created NA, and only our Higher Power has the ability to destroy it.

I did learn some important lessons. This is what I would like to share. The spiritual principle of anonymity is that we are all of equal value. There is no one person who is more or less than any other person. My opinion has no more value or weight than your opinion. Why then do we put so much emphasis on clean time? I have no doubt that staying clean is essential for any addict who wants a life worth living. I also know that those addicts who have substantial clean time are obviously doing something that works, and that they have valuable experience to share. I know too that when any addict has more clean time than anyone else in their area they can be made to feel separate and different. Their opinion carries more weight than newer members opinions do. Where in our steps and traditions does it say anything about counting clean time? Paying attention to clean time makes each member different from the next member. Isn't this a violation of our most important spiritual principle, anonymity? In our area, after the key tag ceremony, the



question is asked, "Will all who have a year or more clean time please raise their hand to show that the program works?" This, to me, clearly separates those who can prove that the program works from those who cannot prove it. I wonder why we feel a need to prove that our God given program works. Anyone walking into a meeting, and seeing the recovery, and feeling the spirituality, will KNOW that something wonderful is happening here. If we feel a need to prove NA's worth, maybe we need to look at why we are feeling that way. This practice of wearing a clean time medal offers an ego boost to members with years clean, and it also gives them a status different from those members who have less clean time. Where is the unity in this? Where is the anonymity in this? My Basic Text tells me to take life just for today. Of course members who have been here longer have more experience, living clean, to share. I'm not saying that this isn't a valuable part of our fellowship. I don't have the answers. I do know that in our steps and in our traditions it says nothing about counting our clean time and offering it up regularly as proof of our recovery.

I don't want to change anything. Obviously what NA is doing is working, and working well. I just wanted to offer some food for thought for our membership. Please hear what I am saying, and understand that this comes from a heart full of gratitude and love for Narcotics Anonymous.

J.B., Michigan

It's personal

The 1988 World Service Conference asked the World Service Board of Trustees to define the term "addiction." The stated intent was to define addiction as drug addiction, and to clarify whether or not the word "drugs," as we use it, included caffeine, nicotine, and sugar.

What came of that 1988 WSC request was an essay developed during the 1988-89 conference year by the NA Board of Trustees. The essay was published in the July 1989 issue of "The NA Way magazine's" "Viewpoint" section.

The telling part of the essay for me is: "Since our inception as a fellowship, many of our members have been smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and eating sugar. Of these members, those who work the steps and abide by the traditions recover. This cannot be said of members who, for example, smoke marijuana or drink alcohol or abuse prescription drugs.

"So we as a fellowship do not address the issues of our members' use of caffeine, nicotine, or sugar in any way. We leave those decisions to each individual member to work out. Our disease finds many avenues in which to express itself in ongoing recovery. These can be identified by working the steps, facing ourselves honestly,

opening up completely with a sponsor, and relying on a Higher Power for the strength we lack. Whenever anything is producing unhappiness or dissatisfaction in our lives, we should use the twelve Steps to address it."

What this article (in its entirety) says to me is that it isn't okay for me to take an inventory of your addiction, as I see it. If I have time to take inventories of your dependencies (which, as far as I am concerned, can also include workaholism, relationships, and several other manifestations of addiction,) I don't have time to inventory my own. I have, in the past, found this attractive, and I have done it.

Today I have better things to do. The Third Tradition shares that, "Every addict can recover in this program on an equal basis. This tradition guarantees our freedom to recover."

Our Fifth Tradition states that "The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message," and that, "If our group purpose were anything other than to carry the message, many would die and few would find recovery."

Nowhere in our literature can I find edicts concerning quitting smoking, quitting caffeine, quitting compulsive involvement in redundant relationships, or anything about holding one's self to a forty-hour work week.

If, in the course of developing a personal program of recovery, I come to understand that nicotine needs to be surrendered (for me, not you), or that caffeine is interfering with my life (not yours), or that I need to spend a year developing a relationship with myself and my HP rather than with the next needy addict I can move in with, then more power to me. These

are personal decisions I make in my own time through my own involvement with the steps and traditions.

My disease of addiction involves some faulty-thinking. My job in this program (whether I choose to accept it or not—I've got a loud God) is to learn how to live today. If I'm not safe in Narcotics Anonymous meetings, where will I be safe? Love me as you would have me love you—then we can both recover.

Anonymous

What's appropriate to one phase . . .

Last night, my wife and I (with eight and seven years clean, respectively) brought our seventeen-month-old child to a Hanukkah festival at one of the local Synagogues. There, we ran into several friends from the fellowship. Today, as I thought back on last night, it struck me that most of us made some attempt to put down our involvement in the very event we were attending. One who seemed to be the most uncomfortable at being seen, who has two years clean, , said emphatically his wife was *much* too smart to come to something like this. Another, in his sixth year, grumbled that the characters in the stories told by the puppeteer all had names like "Esther" or "Solomon." I made sure

that people knew I was only there "for my son." My wife, it seemed, was the only one of us who was comfortable being where she was.

I bring this up because ever since I read the article from Rena R. (Nov 91) I have wanted to share my experience but didn't know how until now.

It's very confusing, sometimes, to grow in recovery. Things that were, to me, absolute truths when I was a newcomer, are no longer valid today. During my first year, a meeting every night was unquestionably the best thing I could do for myself. Today it means I'm coming up short in my responsibilities to my family and to myself. It also usually means I'm running from something—there's something going on with me I don't want to look at, and I don't have to listen to myself if I can listen to you instead.

In the beginning I needed to admit that my best thinking was what got me into the mess my life had become. I had to get a sponsor and was willing to pretty much do and think as he said. It set me free for several years, until I began to be angry with him and with me because I realized I didn't know who I was or what my own opinions really were. Today I practice what my second sponsor shared with me—to learn to trust my own thoughts and feelings. I'm a different person at seven years clean than I was at one or two. Today I know I'm coming up short when I search for someone to fix my state of mind with few simple words, or when I totally abandon my "self" when I'm in the presence of someone I want to impress.

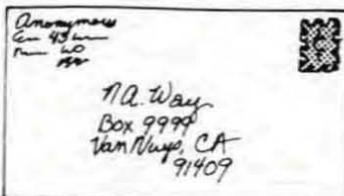
Today there are more areas in my life than I can list here. I have a family, a job, a program, a social life, I'm involved in community affairs with my neighborhood association, I take courses at the university, and I like to play sports, to name some. Meetings fill a need in my life, but they do not by any means meet all of my needs. Meetings do two very important things for me: they remind me of the nature of my illness and they afford me an opportunity to share my experience of recovery with other addicts.

If I am down and I think a meeting will be a sure fix like it used to be, I may be disappointed. If I am lonely and I'm expecting to receive that same sense of finding a plethora of new friends who know me better than I know myself then I am likely to leave the meeting feeling alienated and let down. The fact is that the people at meetings aren't able to meet all of my needs and it's unfair of me to expect them to. The people who have more time than me I now think of as fellow travelers rather than the gurus and mentors they once were.

Today I need to have friends outside of the fellowship. I believe that recovery is an ongoing process of becoming more and more integrated with society as a whole. I think this is the path we laid out for ourselves right from the start (How It Works). I also need meetings and fellowship. I'm still learning so much of what it takes to live and enjoy life as other people do. As always, balance and the willingness to grow are two of the keys.

B.C., New Mexico

From our readers



Still standing

I am a convicted felon and I did my time to pay for my crimes. In August of 1986 I found a real freedom and a new kind of life. I found this in a program called Narcotics Anonymous. I now have my family back and I have families where ever I go. We meet in all kinds of places around the world. We help each other stay clean just for today. We live good lives, and some of us help run this country. It does not matter what we look like, how much money we have, or how many times we have been to prison. It works and the lie is dead, we do recover!

I can hold my head up high when I walk down the street today, and smile at the world. I can pick the phone up and call NA people around the world when I feel bad or good, or just when I need to talk to someone who understands and loves me. I can hug men and women, and feel the heartbeat of another addict. It feels good too.

I am not real proud of the fact that I went to prison. It helped save my life, and I can go to a prison today for a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and walk out one hour later with my heart full of recovery. I have a God of my understanding, that loves me and cares about me. I am in contact with this God and it feels real good. We are recovering addicts carrying the mes-

sage everywhere we go. It works and people get clean in prisons all over the world.

We have conventions all over the world to share our recovery. Thank God that we are having the world convention in Australia this year. Everywhere we go addicts start to recover. It is powerful when two addicts meet, just think about a couple thousand of us together in one place. That is a lot of heart beats.

I have been to two world conventions, and I still feel the power of the first one. I am not going this year because my visa was turned down. However, I will be there in the heartbeat of all of the other addicts. I can feel the power already. I thank God that we do recover, and that we don't have to be ashamed anymore. I thank God that I was chosen to stay here in order to carry the message to the addicts who still suffer.

M.B., Georgia

Grateful

I am an addict and I am from a small town in Nova Scotia. In active addiction I traveled to every big city in Canada and the U.S. I ran to hide and hid from running.

One day I ran into the greatest thing of my life. I ran into the fellowship of NA.

I'm writing this letter to you to express my deepest feelings of gratitude, not only to you but to the entire group conscience. You helped me every step of the way. If I fell, you told me to get up. If I strayed, you were *always* there to greet me with open arms.

I no longer have to run anymore. I'm not afraid (as much) to face people and show them who I really am. Not an ex-convict, drug addict, high school dropout, world traveler, but free. Thanks to the people and fellowship of NA.

Speaking publicly is my direction, my vocation. I love to do it. I think that with my shared strength, experience and hope there will be one person who will grasp on to it and ask for help, the NA way.

D.T., Canada

A spiritual connection

A dictionary's definition of "connection" is, "... the state of being joined." For me that is what God is about today! I have two and a half years clean in Narcotics Anonymous and it took me two years to get a good contact with a Higher Power. I go to meetings and I hear people with ninety days clean talking about this faith in a Higher Power.

But I walked through the doors of NA feeling hopeless and bankrupt, mentally, spiritually and physically. Although I'd had a brief introduction, I had known from early in recovery, since I first heard of this Higher Power thing, I didn't want a thing to do with it. I fought endlessly about developing a Higher Power of my own understanding. I complicated it to no

end, until I surrendered. That was the key to "Higher Power" for me, surrender.

I realize today that we are staying clean together, not me alone. There is a spiritual presence in my life! I had a spiritual experience recently when I traveled to Vermont. In a meeting there one night I was hurting and lonely, and shared all the garbage. People said "thanks for sharing." That's all they said, and I realized there are no magic cures to pain, and this was something I had to work with, with my Higher Power, and nobody else. So before I went to sleep that night I prayed on my knees, for the first time in a long time, and felt this security that I had never felt before! For me that was acceptance of my Higher Power's love, and nobody could give that to me except my Higher Power.

Like I said, I walked into NA hopeless and today I walk out at the end of the meeting with hope that, Just For Today, I don't have to live the life I used to. For that I'm grateful to the people in Narcotics Anonymous all over the world. I know no matter where I go I'm going to be with brothers and sisters that love me, and for that I will keep coming back.

T.L., Virginia

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
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ALBERTA: Mar. 6-8, 1992; 2nd Annual Sherwood Park Winter Wilderness Retreat; Strathcona Wilderness Centre; info (403) 421-4429; Edmonton Area Service, 10022-103 Street, Edmonton, Alberta CANADA, T5J 0X2

AUSTRALIA: Jan. 24-26, 1992; Melbourne Convention; info 011-61-3-506-1229

CONNECTICUT: Mar. 7-9, 1992; 1st Southern Fairfield County Area Convention; Days Hotel, Bridgeport, CT; info (203) 330-9742 or (203) 330-1679; SFCNA Programming, 2490 Black Rock Turnpike, Suite 253, Fairfield, CT 06430

FLORIDA: Jan. 17-19, 1992; Palm Coast Area Spiritual Retreat; Gold Coast Christian Camp, Palm Beach County, FL; info (407) 848-5471

2) Mar. 6-8, 1992; 3rd Annual Florida Spring Service Break Convention; Ramada Inn Beach Resort, 4060 Gault Ocean Mile, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33308; Hosted by South Florida Region; rsvn.s (800) 678-9022 or (305) 565-6611; FSSBNA, PO Box 292323, Davie, FL 33329

GEORGIA: Jan. 17-19, 1992; CSRA Peace in Recovery IV; "Living in the Solution"; Sheraton Hotel; info (404) 667-9181; Hotel rsvn.s (404) 855-8100; PO Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30919

HAWAII: Mar. 26-29, 1992; 8th Annual Gathering of the Fellowship on Oahu; Camp Mokuleia, Oahu, HI; info (808) 945-2040; Subcommittee, PO Box 91003, Honolulu, HI 96835

ILLINOIS: Mar. 6-8, 1992; Annual Greater Illinois Regional Conference; Ramada Inn, 7550 East State Street; rsvn.s (815) 398-2200; RRCNA, PO Box 3395, Rockford, IL 61104

KENTUCKY: Feb. 28-Mar. 1, 1992; 2nd Louisville Area Convention; Holiday Inn Downtown, 120 West Broadway; info (502) 893-6026; LACNA II, PO BOX 2343, Louisville, KY 40201

MARYLAND: Jan. 17-19, 1992; First Free State Regional Convention; Omni Hotel, 101 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; info (301) 752-1100; Convention Committee, PO Box 65008, Baltimore, MD 21209

MASSACHUSETTS: Mar. 6-8, 1992; Cape Cod and Islands Area Tenth Convention; C.C. & L.C.C., PO Box 1478, North Falmouth, MA 02556

NEVADA: Feb. 21-23, 1992; 6th Southern Nevada Convention; Hacienda Resort Hotel and Casino; rsvn.s (800) 634-6713; info (702) 453-3713; S.N.C.C., 4928 East Tropicana, Suite 101, Las Vegas, NV 89121

NEW JERSEY: Feb. 28-Mar. 1, 1992; 2nd Annual Cape Atlantic Area Convention; "Power of Recovery"; Pleasantville, NJ; Sheraton Hotel, Black Horse Pike; rsvn.s (609) 348-9292; Registrations, PO Box 7386, Atlantic City, NJ 08404

NEW YORK: March 7, 1992 Clean in Queens NA group presents Theatre of the Absurd WSC "Fun Raiser". Six P.M., Corpus Cristi gym, 31-30 61st St. Woodside, Queens, NY Donation asked. Info. 718-296-13557.

OKLAHOMA: Jan. 17-19, 1992; 2nd Norman Winter Convention; Norman Holiday Inn, S. I-35 and West Main; rsvn.s (405) 329-1624; Norman Winter Convention, PO Box 2653, Norman, OK 73080

PENNSYLVANIA: Feb. 7-9, 1992; Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; "Unity Through Service...What Can We Do?"; The Inn at Reading, 1040 Park Road, Wyomissing, PA; info (215) 374-5944; MARLCNA, PO Box 642, Birdsboro, PA 19508

SOUTH CAROLINA: Jan. 25-27, 1992; 12th Annual USCANA Convention; "Catch the Spirit"; Ramada Hotel, 1001 South Church Street, Greenville, SC 29601; info (803) 294-1242; USCANA, PO Box 4407, Greenville, SC 29608

TENNESSEE: Feb. 28-29, 1992; Volunteer Region Additional Needs Awareness Weekend; Holiday Inn, 2406 North Roan Bristol, Kingsport Highway, Johnson City, TN; info (800) 831-5148

VIRGINIA: Jan. 25, 1992; New River Valley Area Learning Day; Workshops on Unity; US Army Reserve Center, Highway 611, Dublin, VA; PO Box 566, Radford, VA 24141

We need stories!

Remember, this section of *The N.A. Way* is your meeting in print. Like any other meeting you're a part of, you'll get the most out of this one by participating.

Who writes stories?

You do!

The stories you see in this magazine are written by N.A. members—like you! You don't need to be a "great writer." All you need is your personal experience in recovery, and the willingness to share it. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. In every sense, that's *The N.A. Way*.

What do I write?

Share as you would at any other meeting. Is there a topic you've enjoyed hearing or sharing about at a recent meeting? Are you on a particular step, and having some eye-opening experiences? Has there been a recent turning point in your personal recovery? Share it with your fellow N.A. Way readers. We'd love to hear from you! Write us at:

The N.A. Way Magazine
P.O. Box 9999
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3TEA

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

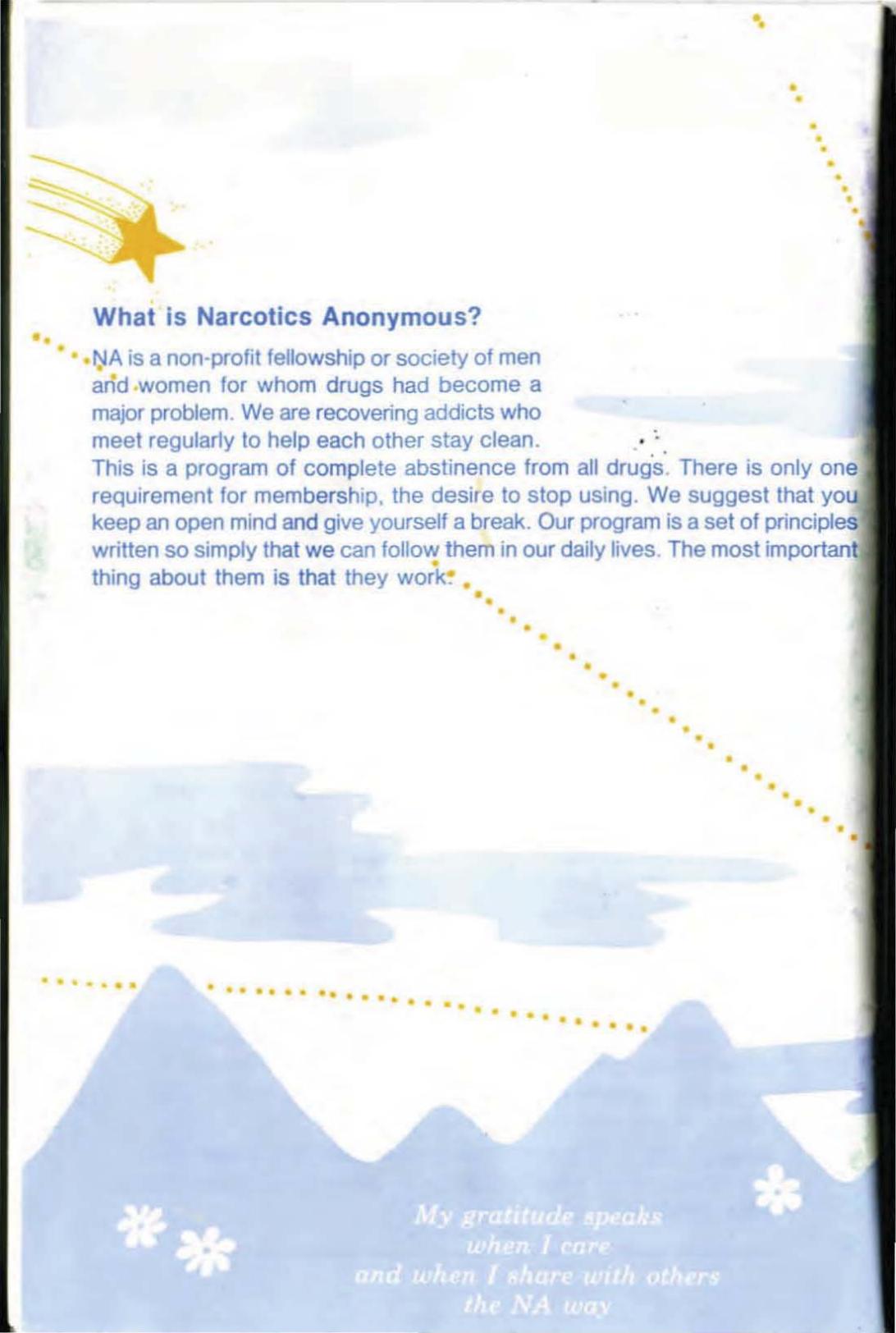
1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership 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.



What is Narcotics Anonymous?

NA 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 NA way*