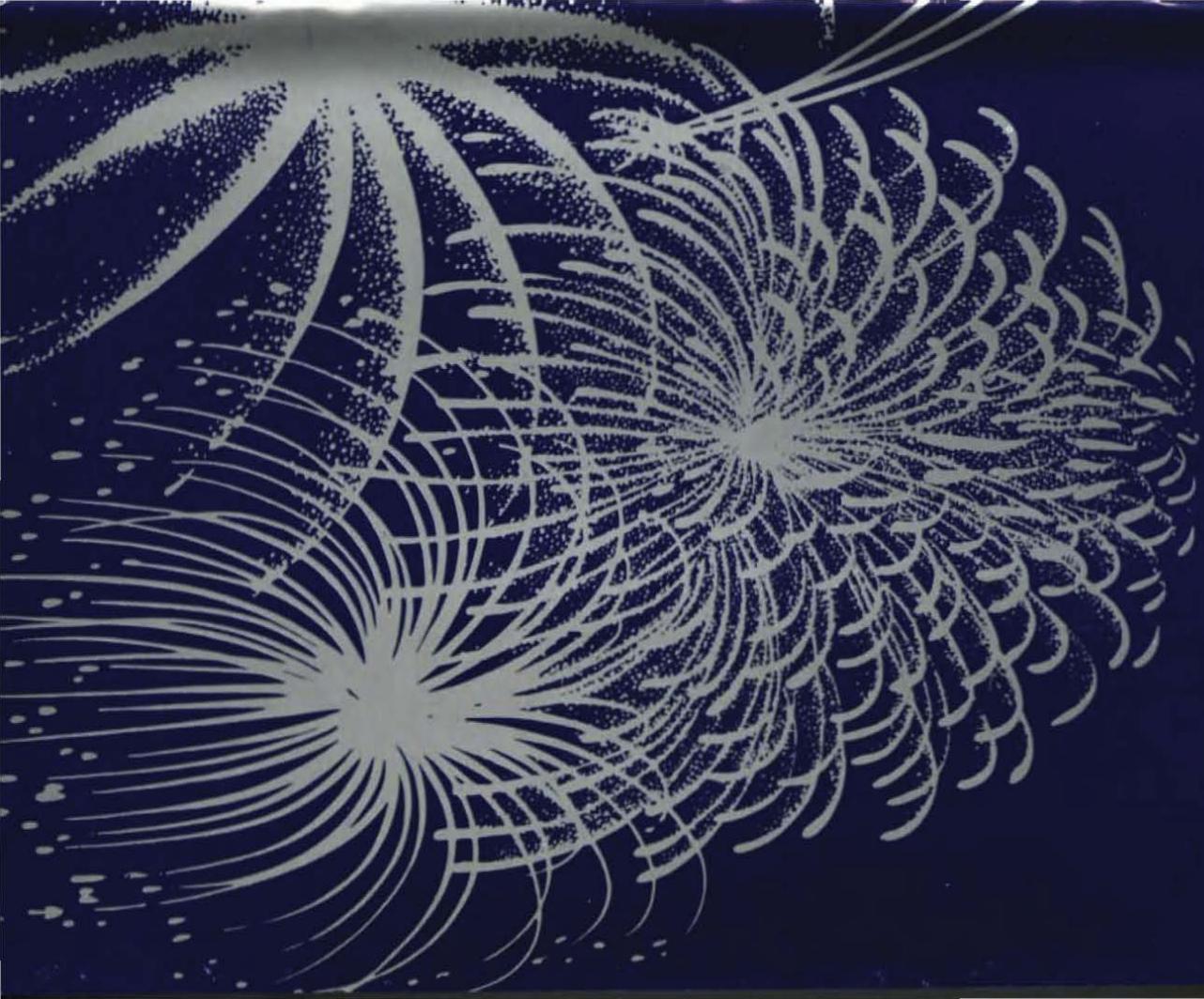


THE
N.A. Way[®]
MAGAZINE

July 1992

\$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[®]

M A G A Z I N E

volume ten, number seven

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

meeting in print

This seat taken	2
Surrender to win	5
Trusting the process	6
Long paths	8
Sharing the pain	10
The price & the deal	12
In the heat of reality	14
Letter to my child	16

home group

First dance	17
-------------	----

the broad perspective

Fellowship news	18
-----------------	----

feature

Ramon, el relato de un adicto	21
-------------------------------	----

viewpoint

Who are "We"	30
Dislikes reprints, especially graphics	30
On changes	31
Opinion piece	31
Debate continues	32

from our readers

A selection of letters and short articles	33
---	----

comin' up

A worldwide NA calendar	38
-------------------------	----

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

The NA 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 NA 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 NA Way Magazine, (ISSN 1046-5421,) copyright © 1992, 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 NA Way Magazine* and Narcotics Anonymous are registered trademarks of World Service Office, Inc.

The NA 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., and other points. POSTMASTER: please send address changes to *The NA Way Magazine*, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.

This seat taken

Because of the gift of recovery I was able to get another paid vacation. I had always wanted to see a WSC so I went to Dallas. What a coincidence that this was the first conference that was out of California. I got to meet all the addicts whose names on reports were just that. It was nice to meet in person the addicts on the WSO staff. They were even as nice in person as they always are to me on the phone. I was real surprised that NA was so successful in so many countries outside the US. Hugs felt so good from members from thousands of miles away. Just like my home group.

During an open session of the BOT, when all the international NA communities got a chance to share, I was touched when a representative of France talked about the HIV and AIDS problems in France. Also a representative from Argentina suggested that a story in the Basic Text be written by an addict recovering with AIDS. During the open forum an RSR/Alt. from South Carolina asked the BOT for some direction on the AIDS issue. This came in relation to motion number 12 in the CAR about special interest meetings at the world convention. It was very moving and

many talked of friends they knew that were dying or had died. There were also comments about the issue of prejudice, that NA members who shared about AIDS were treated less than lovingly. There were many comments about special interest meetings for HIV members. I cried during the discussions. I don't really know why, maybe cause I was so glad to hear someone else talking about an issue that I am having to go through in my recovery.

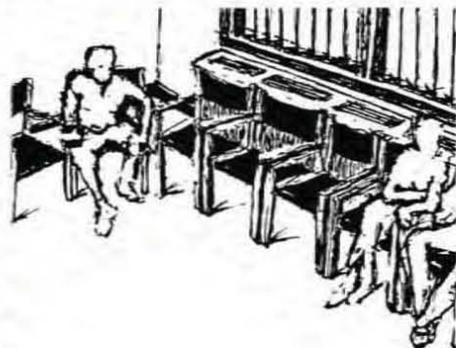
Sitting in that meeting made me feel motivated to share my experience. I decided last year to get tested for AIDS. I was very scared to get tested again. This was not my first test. When I was two years clean I got tested I was so scared. I knew that I had shared needles, slept with lots of prostitutes and had gotten hepatitis several times. Just as things started going good in my life I knew that I would want to use again if I found out that I had AIDS. There were two things that I thought would be excuses to use, getting AIDS or my father dying. I was fortunate that the test came back negative. (My dad is dying now.)

When I came into NA I thought drugs were my only problem and I had no concept that I had a disease and that drugs were only a symptom of that disease. Denial is also a symptom and I was in deep denial. I rationalized that since I am not using needles anymore and that I am not gay and that getting AIDS from sex was rare, it was unnecessary to use safe sex. I found that out when feelings came up that dealt with sexual issues or of my fear of interacting

with women, especially on dating. I became panicked and then I found myself sleeping with a prostitute who was using and shooting up and saying "nothing will happen to me cause I am in NA." In our Basic Text it talks about "if we can only get enough sex, food, and money everything will be alright." That same denial came to me a year before when after being clean five years I ended up in the hospital with diabetes. See, I ate everything I could get my hands on, especially sugar. I thought if I didn't pick up drugs everything would be okay. Our Basic Text also says "because we were unable to accept personal responsibilities" and "we were creating our own problems." I was so proud of being drug free and knowing that when I took a drug test that it would be clean. Because of my actions I was having to use a syringe again to do my insulin. My home group was very supportive. They let me come to meetings and share my feelings of using a syringe and how I was having trouble working the steps on my addiction, which had suddenly become more than just drugs. That line in the text about "enough sex, food, and money" helped me share about my addiction. I have found something real special in NA and I did not want to go any where else. My home group has gone so far as to get me sugar-free hot chocolate so I also can partake in refreshments. I shared freely about my feelings and my friends were always there for support and help.

So when I tested positive for HIV I instinctively called my sponsor and my best friend. They seemed more upset than me. I guess I was numb or

that I realized that I had been ignorant and that I had a choice with my actions but I chose to not use safe sex. Waiting for the western bloc test, which confirms if your body is producing the antibody that is fighting off the AIDS virus, was an eternity. Being involved in NA has allowed me to really experience friendship and I could not practice silence. I shared with about twenty of my closest friends and they all were very concerned and very loving. And after the tests confirmed I was HIV positive all my friends rallied to be there for me if I needed them. I had read several articles by addicts with AIDS in the *NA Way Magazine* and in *Meeting by Mail*.



Most of the articles I read were by addicts who were working the steps and staying hopeful. I told my sponsor that I didn't want to piss and moan about my condition. I told him that I wanted to share with hope and that I wanted to be filled with that hope I felt when I found that NA would work for me. My sponsor has shared with me about his cancer, and he stays positive, so I get hope from many sources. Since I have been clean I have strongly felt that I could share freely in any meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. Though my area has many special interest meetings, I never attended because I always felt safe to share anything in open meetings.

When the numbness of being HIV positive wore off I knew that I would have to test my beliefs. At that time there were three addicts in my area that had died of AIDS and no one knew that they even had AIDS. And there were rumors that they had been sleeping around. I did a lot of praying and talking with my sponsor and I knew that I was going to have to not have any secrets from NA. First I told everyone that I sponsor so that they would hear the truth from me and not from a rumor. They were all supportive and none have fired me yet. Then I went to a couple of groups that I am well liked at and I shared openly about being HIV positive. I remember how scared I was to share and my insides shook and waited for the response. I do not think the group was ready for that. I don't think anyone knew what to say. I went to my home group later that night and did the same thing. I knew that I was to be free. My home group members loved me just as they would love any addict.

I anticipated vicious rumors being told about me and that hasn't been the case. During the BOT session I heard that members were treated bad for sharing about having AIDS and had not felt welcome or been told to go somewhere else. It makes me real sad to hear that. It also makes me grateful to NA where I go, which includes Texas and many other states. See, my NA chair has my name on it. NA has always been about how to live. Now I have been given the opportunity to do just that. I am so fortunate to have had a God and lots of NA friends in my life that I had the courage to get tested early. See, I have an opportunity to take care of myself so that I may live.

By sharing honestly I have already been able to help other addicts who are scared. Just like my Fourth Step, I was scared of what was going to come out. And when I came to the Fifth Step and faced those terrible things I did and shared with my sponsor, I also felt that fear of being judged. Well, for me, I have shared the worst thing in my inventory to many of my close friends and I trust them. If I needed to share them in an open meeting of Narcotics Anonymous I could. My pride might be hurt and I might not look so hip, slick, and cool.

I hope no one reads into this article that I am anti-special interest meetings. I honestly can't say that if I hear of a group called "In times of illness" or another name like that, that I wouldn't attend. The spirit of the Tradition Three tells me I can go to any NA meeting. Like in our literature, if we don't tell someone we are hurting they will never know.

S.D., Texas

Surrender to win

Getting clean on the East Coast in 1980 was a big miracle. No one was around to tell me about freedom from addiction. Priorities were on staying clean and being good. I stayed clean but found being good impossible. I was a member of a drug group where court ordered addicts attended a meeting on a weekly basis and talked about our struggles staying clean.

Eventually NA found its way to Pittsfield, MA and a Higher Power led me to believe that maybe someone as sick as me could get better. My sponsor still reminds me that I'm not here to be good but to get better and that I need to put my worth into my recovery.

With lots of hugs I began to experience surrender on a much deeper level. The isolation of addiction was replaced with hope and I found myself vulnerable and asked a loving and caring man to sponsor me. He said that it would be a privilege. Since then the focus has been on internalizing spiritual principles and experiencing freedom from addiction.

I now have a way of life that is full of loving and caring relationships. Gratitude for this gift continues to allow me to grow in my relationship with my Higher Power, which helps me to stay out of self-will long enough to allow a loving God to work in my life.

"Powerless," to me, means accepting reality and living in the moment. I've never heard of addicts getting loaded when they were feeling grateful. Don't quit before the miracle happens.

R.H., Massachusetts



Trusting the process

I am an addict in recovery that knew nothing about trusting the process when I walked into the rooms of NA seven years ago. The school I attended in active addiction was one that taught me how to lie, cheat, act out, manipulate and play games. I needed someone or something to blame all the time. I had no self-respect, no self-worth and no sense of who I was.

I wish I could say I was one of those addicts who did things the way the program is suggested, but I wasn't. I did everything backwards, so consequently I repeated many lessons. I kept doing the same thing, expecting different results, and didn't understand why things hadn't changed. It took me almost four years to take a Fifth Step with a sponsor. My life was a mess and I was falling apart. The thoughts of suicide crept in my mind, but that's not what I wanted. I wanted to live but I didn't know how. I had no experience in trusting the process of working the NA program.

I had been around the program for three years when a relationship ended. My dream of the picture being complete had changed over night. Desperation is what I felt. I had never

taken the time to find out who I was. My relationship with this man had taken priority before the steps, my program and a relationship with a Higher Power. This was the worst time in my recovery and I didn't know if I had enough courage to walk through this alone.

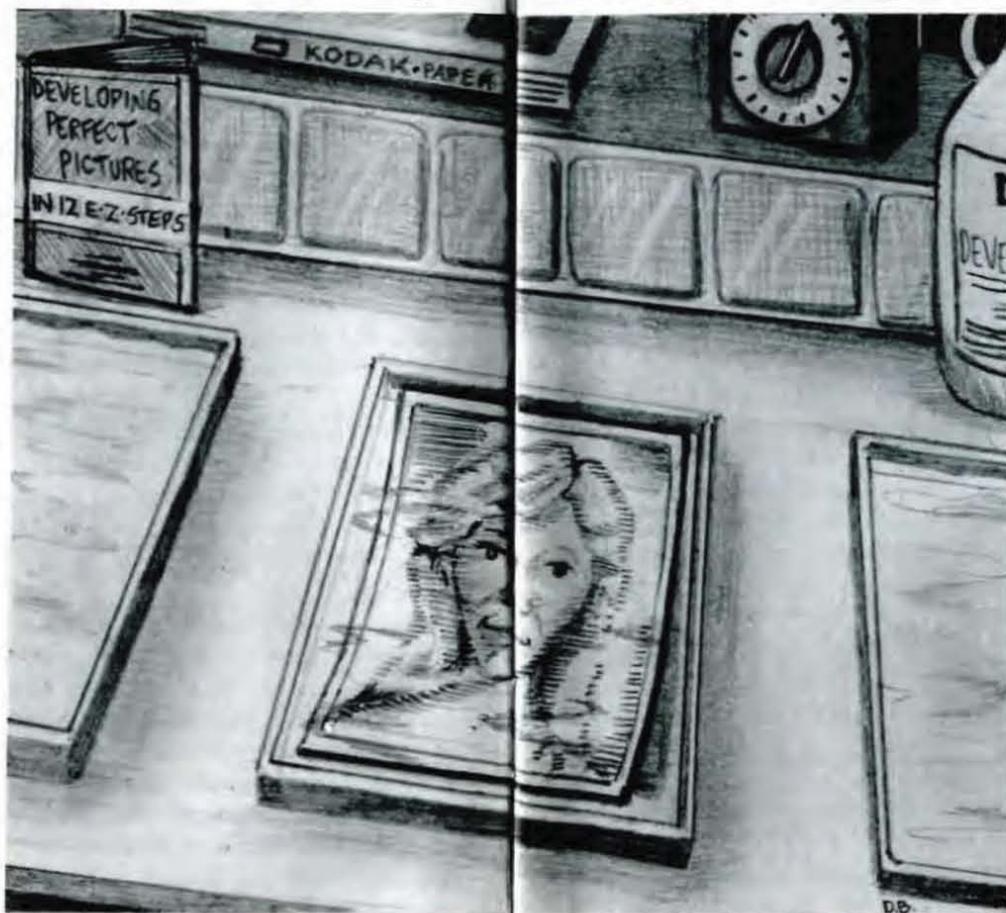
You see, I had not allowed myself to experience that NA is a WE program and that I didn't have to do it alone. I was so used to keeping everything bottled inside. The way I was raised is that you discussed nothing outside the family. Then after a while you

stop telling your family and you tell no one. I lived in a shell, ashamed of not knowing the answers, but not knowing how to ask for them. I finally made a decision to start working with my sponsor. Little by little I was able to get honest with a few women friends. There were a few women in my life that picked me up, dusted me off and showed me how to work on myself. My whole life began to turn around. I started to trust in the process. Learning how to share with others and ask them to teach me was a new way of life for me. I got so hun-

gry for recovery and wanted to learn how to apply the Twelve Steps of recovery to my life. I starting hanging around with the winners, people who were willing to go to any lengths to continue to work the NA program. It's been a process. The rewards have been great, and at times very painful. I've made many mistakes, but it's progress, not perfection.

It's been almost four years since that point of desperation that I thought I would never get through. About a year ago I met a man that I wanted to share my life with. I was going to move in with him and take a risk. This time around, my priorities were straight, starting with a working relationship with a loving Higher Power and a very firm foundation in my NA program. About three weeks ago, this relationship ended. Today, even though I am sad and don't quite understand, I truly believe in the process. I don't feel the desperation that I felt almost four years ago. I've gained the experience through the years to not leave before the miracle. The life I have today is amazing. At this same time of confusion in my personal life, a new door has opened for my career. I will be moving in six weeks to a new state, a new job, a new experience. The faith I have in a loving Higher Power comforts me enough to pursue this adventure and take a risk. It's all about blind faith and allowing the process to work. Thanks HP for giving me the NA program, for without the fellowship I would not have experienced the gift of life.

D.R., California



Long paths

I arrived in NA in 1988. I had to travel 500 miles to go to my first meeting because I was living in the French Alps and the only meetings in France at that time were in Paris, about one a day. Since then NA has grown in Paris with three meetings a day now and some other meetings starting through out France. I grew as well. I am now 2 ½ years clean and I love being clean. I am becoming an all new person, somebody I never thought I could be but surely somebody I always wanted to be. I love NA, I really do, and I love you all.

Today I'm writing you from a high point in the French Alps, there is absolutely no human life where I am now. I come here to meditate quite often. Around me I have a blue sky, clouds floating below me, eagles surfing in the sky, cascades of water created by the snow melting (it's May), very few trees, wild animals waking up after sleeping all winter long, my dog, my *NA Way*, and the sun covering all this. I love my dog and my God—I make a lot of similarities between my dog and my God: 1) They have nearly the same name. 2) They both don't know what yesterday and tomorrow is. 3) They both give me unconditional love. 4) I tell them both my deepest secrets. 5) They both love

life. 6) They both are very beautiful.

As my addiction covers all my life, it also does it in my service in NA. I took a lot of service and there is a lot to be done since we are still a rather small fellowship in France. But for my work I travel, so during the past years I lived in different places in Europe and I took service everywhere I went. It's amazing to see the slow building and construction of NA all over Europe, with all the different culture and languages we have. I am sure that some of you have been lucky enough to attend some kind of service committee meeting. Well, can you imagine that exact same business meeting with addicts that don't speak the same language? That's what we have at the European conference. We opened a meeting here in the French Alps and our GSR has to go to the next door country (Switzerland) to attend the local ASC for Geneva. Isn't this fun, to cross a border to attend your business meeting?

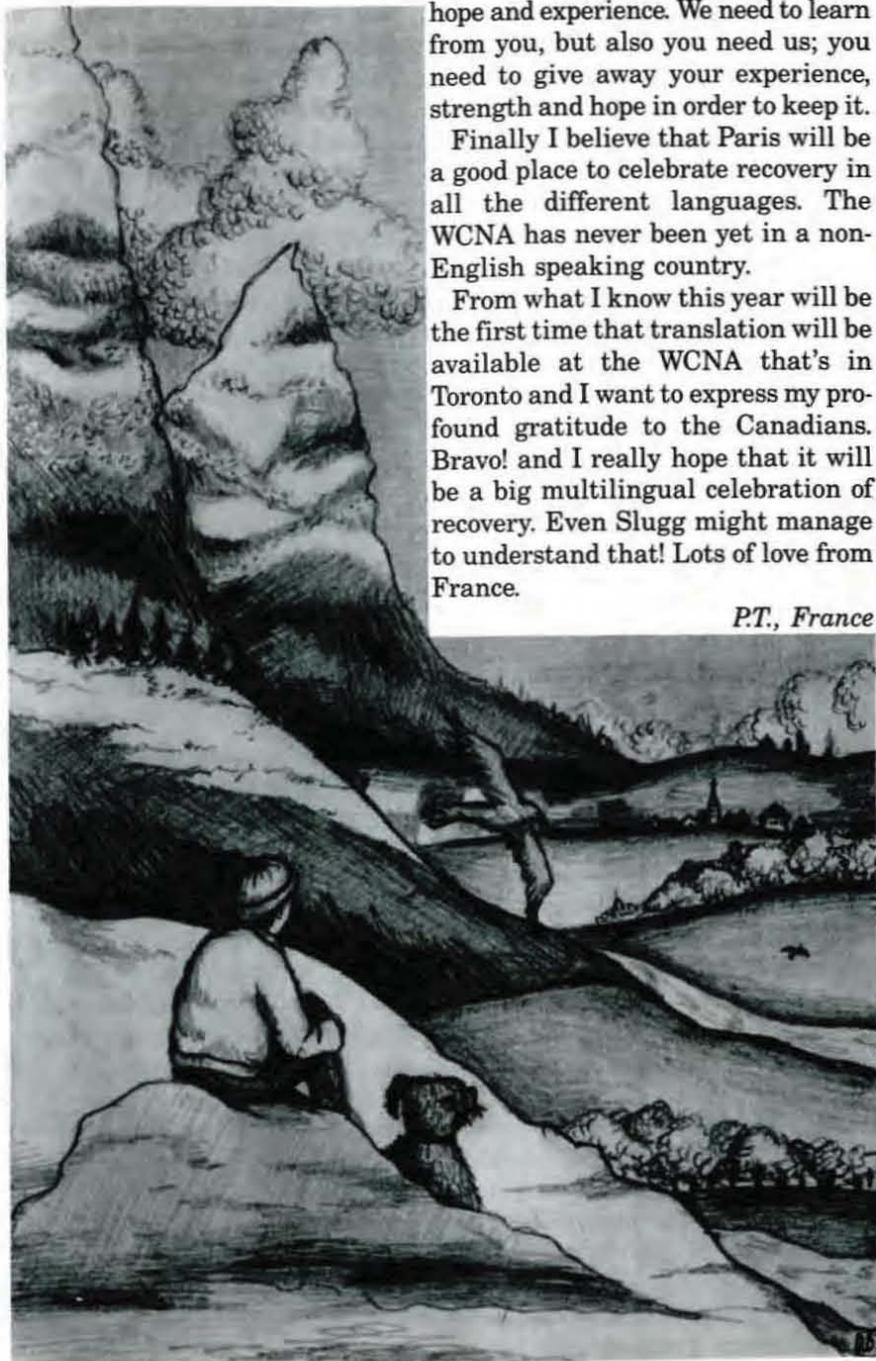
One of my commitments is towards the WCNA 25. I am part of a group of people that thought that it will be a good idea to have France putting a bid to host the World Convention of NA, with Paris for the venue. It's a big work, but I think it is worth it because I believe in NA being a world wide fellowship and not only a North American fellowship—Because I believe that our different cultures in NA are our strength—Because I believe that it's not fair that if you don't speak English you can't have access to this English speaking program—Because I believe that North America being the old-timer and Europe the newcomer, we need your strength,

hope and experience. We need to learn from you, but also you need us; you need to give away your experience, strength and hope in order to keep it.

Finally I believe that Paris will be a good place to celebrate recovery in all the different languages. The WCNA has never been yet in a non-English speaking country.

From what I know this year will be the first time that translation will be available at the WCNA that's in Toronto and I want to express my profound gratitude to the Canadians. Bravo! and I really hope that it will be a big multilingual celebration of recovery. Even Slugg might manage to understand that! Lots of love from France.

P.T., France



Sharing the pain

As I sit down to write this Mother's Day is a just a few weeks away and that brings me to what I would like to share. In February of last year I was told that my mother had a small spot on her lung. This news was a surprise since everyone in my family, especially my mother, was "fine."

This news came about a month after I had recalled being abused as a child. Needless to say, I did not feel much like being around the family.

My mother's condition was kept a secret for much of the summer. I would call or go visit and she would insist that it was a good day, and that she was "fine."

Sometime in September she wasn't as optimistic and started a long journey of hospital visits. She seemed to be in more than she was out. I knew it was getting bad when she got out on a Friday and was re-admitted on a Tuesday. She went in the hospital for the last time in the first week of October. Through the advice of my sponsor it was strongly suggested that I not shut my mother out, that I be a part of her dying process, regardless of what had happened to me in the past. I did that to the best of my ability. I stayed with her the nights that I could, and I was by her

side when the chemotherapy seemed to be doing more damage to her than good. The next few months seem to me a blur of emotions. Then time seemed to stand still. The day before my finals at school were to begin I went to see her. I told her I would be studying much that week but would come to see her after my last final. She said that would be fine, and she didn't feel like she was good company, anyway.

Wednesday, December 18th was my last final. The mother of a good friend had also been in the hospital, for a week or so, at this time. She wasn't doing too well.

Thursday night I was at a meeting when I heard that the hospital had called that day and asked that my friend's family come in. I went up to the hospital to be with him, to give him support and tell him I understood.

His mother passed away the next afternoon. My best friend came and told me that news at work. My first thought was "God, let me be there for him so he can be there for me." The next few hours were what I know to be God's miracle in my life.

I had a chance to go home early that night but decided to go ahead and stay a few extra hours. I had made that decision before hearing of my friend's loss. When I got home his car was in our driveway.

I thought "I'm glad he is staying with us and not alone." My boyfriend met me at the door. Our friend appeared to be asleep.

Then my boyfriend said the words I will never forget, "Your mother's at peace."

I couldn't believe it. Surely he was mistaken. Not *my* mother. I had just seen her that afternoon, to tell her finals were over, and that I loved her. She hadn't been able to open her eyes or talk, but I know that she knew it was me.

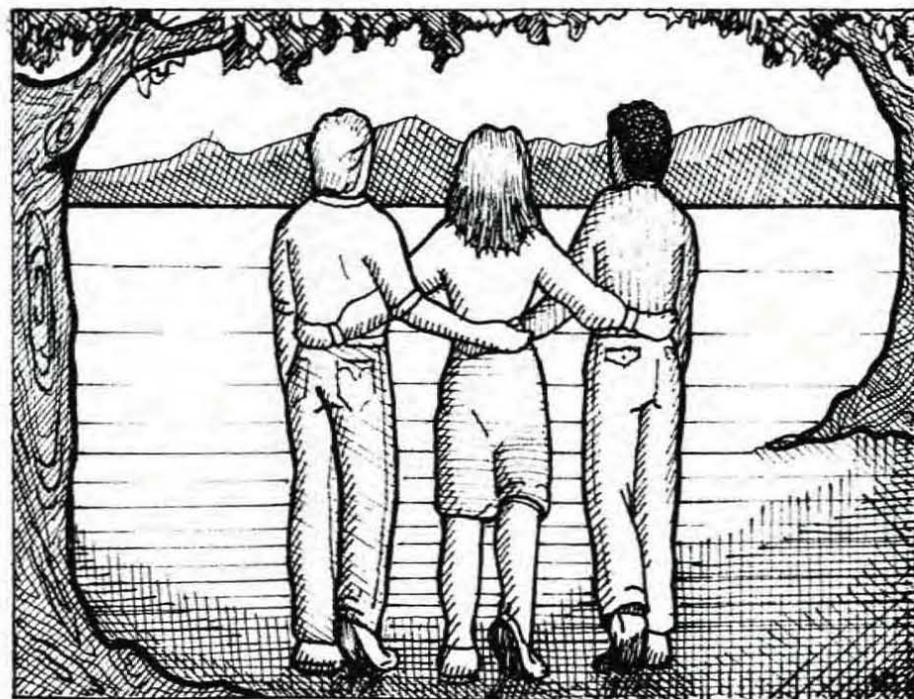
Later I found out that if I had gotten off work early they wouldn't have been home yet, and I would have gotten the information off the answering machine.

I am so grateful for this program and this fellowship. For the next few days neither one of us were alone. It was incredible. I did not have the strength to go on one more second. I felt I couldn't even comprehend the

whirlwind of events going on around me. I was afraid to go to the funeral. I was afraid of my father. What I found was that with you people, with the fellowship of NA, the entire time I had someone's hand to hold, someone's shoulder to cry on and someone's footsteps to follow.

If ever I had any doubts about this program working they were certainly laid to rest. Christmas eve, when I buried my mother, I found that I don't have to use no matter what and you all are always there to help. Today I look back on that time and realize that there are no coincidences.

Anonymous, Kansas City, MO.



The price & the deal

I'm clean today. That statement has meant more to me lately than anything else that I can say. I've had a lot of problems since I first decided to stop the abusive way of living that I had been pursuing for over 25 years. And all of the credit for my recovery goes to the simple and realistic program called Narcotics Anonymous.

When I first realized that I needed help, over 6 years ago, there were only two meetings in the vicinity where I've lived all my life. Since then, NA's had meetings come and go. Now every day and night of the week has an NA meeting available. This what makes me the happiest today.

Some of the problems I've live through clean have included divorce, the loss of certain physical capabilities, varying lifestyles, loss of personal possessions, deaths of friends, loved ones, experiencing unemployment, and even the wrong employment. I don't know why I didn't use over any of these situations (I sure thought about it), but I stayed clean. Today, I have things in my life that I consider irreplaceable. I have serenity, peace of mind, love for others, and myself. I have a beautiful home and all the material possessions I've

dreamed of (well almost all). I have a good job that pays well, and I enjoy doing. I have a truly loving circle of friends who love me for who I am, and allow me the freedom of finding out who I want to be.

Recently I learned something about myself through some physical problems I've encountered lately. See, when I was using chemicals to maintain my daily functions, I didn't think about what would happen down the road to my body. After years of being clean, it's finally catching up with me. When I asked the medical profession what was causing my medical situations, they explained that my body's normal activity was being sent mixed or incorrect messages regarding my bodily functions. The treatments they wanted me to begin would require some pretty addictive medications. I talked with my sponsor at length and she suggested I talk openly to my physician about my past using. A big fear became apparent. I've never had to admit to anyone outside of the fellowship about my past drug problems. The saying "we don't care what or how much you used" began to lose meaning for me. I talked to my physician for the first time about my past history, honestly. Well, I couldn't possibly remember every chemical I ever ingested one way or another, or the quantities and combinations. But enough came to memory that startled my physician. The doctor stated, "Now you're paying for that abuse."

It's not like I haven't paid for abuse before. I've done some pretty degrading things to obtain the drugs which are causing the problems now. But today is different. I'm clean today. I

honestly haven't ingested a chemical for several years. My body has completely detoxified, but now it doesn't know what to do or how to handle daily living. But I know I can begin again, just as I did when I first began attending NA meetings.

After consulting with my physicians and laying a lot of information on them about the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous and talking at length about what I've done in my past, (it was doing a Fourth and Fifth Step!) the doctors have decided against my chemical medication. My physician has hopes that I can attain a physical balance if I just take care of myself better and maintain my daily program of NA recovery. The medication they wanted to put me on would have given my brain another set of mixed messages, and would have altered my thinking and feeling just enough to placate my addiction, until I began to build up an immunity. Then my active addiction would begin all over again, and I just don't want to go through that again.

It's going to take time to get back to "normal" (whatever that really is), and I may still have to take medications in the future. But today, I'm able to maintain my serenity and peace of mind by taking life a little easier, praying daily for my HP's will for me, and eating a sensible diet. The most important thing to me is that I am able to stay clean today. I was able to honestly admit about my addictive personality for probably the first time in my life to someone outside the fellowship, and to openly admit that I can't handle "any type" of drug.

I was able to be truly honest with

myself about my addiction and my fears of becoming active again. I have been lucky enough to find a physician who is able to understand my addiction, and is willing to work with me in maintaining my abstinence from all drugs.

For all these things I am truly grateful today. I am grateful to NA for showing me a better way to live, and that I don't have to do drugs to maintain my life anymore. Through this program I've gained a new insight about myself—true honesty—and with the help of others, how to take care of ME. This program of abstinence from all drugs is so much more than our literature says. It is truly a way of life for me today, and I know I'm going to keep coming back.

I want to thank the Public Information Committees for all the work they do in helping the public know that there are people with drug problems and there is hope. And thanks to the Literature Committees for providing literature that has helped my physician understand what addiction really is. Also, a big thanks to all the NA meetings around the world which are available to anyone who wants to find out about recovery from drug addiction.

Thanks NA for existing, and making my life a better life today.

Anonymous

In the heat of reality

The events in South Los Angeles that began on April 29th brought on a tidal wave of feelings and emotions. The sheer energy from the chaos in the city was disconcerting. I had to reach into the inner most part of myself for every tool given to me since I've been in recovery. Something happened to recovering addicts in this city, something that hardly ever crosses the minds of many of us, because we are caught up with the ins and outs of everyday life.

The unthinkable suddenly became a reality for many of us, and, as I see it, a double-edged sword of justice in this society fell. Without warning the lifelines of the fellowship were cut. There were no meetings, and no telephones. I can only imagine how the newcomer must have felt in the heat of this reality. The isolation and desperation felt by many with time on the program must have been fear in its rawest form for the newcomer.

As I talked to other addicts concerning the events that led up to the revolt of 1992, I found that once again I was not alone. Their feelings of anger, frustration, abandonment, rejection, and violation mirrored my own. Feelings that led up to the event were

nothing compared to the feelings during the event. FEAR gripped my life like never before. There was no law in the land, talk about unmanageability. It would have been very easy for me to get caught up in the moment, but I consider myself to be a blessed addict because God had given me a safe place outside of the city limits in comfort and the company of another recovering addict. Even being distant from the excitement, it was hard to remain composed as I watched this city burn for the second time in my life. Enough was enough, and I sensed that at last people in this community had generally gotten sick and tired of being sick and tired; but the mixture of joy, fear, excitement and pain left a bitter-sweet taste in my mouth.

We of the inner-city know racism far too well. We have lived with it all our lives. But in this very emotional release of energy, as in our recovery from addiction, we were not alone in our desperation. Participants were reflective of the face of the city as a whole.

For the addict in the inner-city the ability to *care* was all the more illuminated, as we stood powerless to the situation; but the ability to *share* was virtually taken away. Suddenly something as simple as a phone call became of the utmost importance, but impossible to make. The relief that an addict could usually find in Narcotics Anonymous was gone. In its place was having to deal with our own insanities and a reliance on God to see us safely through a very lonely and trying time.

Once again we recovering addicts in the city of Los Angeles had to deal

with the very thing that drove many of us into the rooms of NA in the first place. *We had no choice.* The very thing that NA had given back to us had been removed. Something so valuable as the power of choice, once more, paralyzed many of us because it had been taken away.

So many times this addict has felt like he had no choice, only to realize that living the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous in all my affairs is a choice in and of itself. Even in very adverse times we find freedom through the steps.

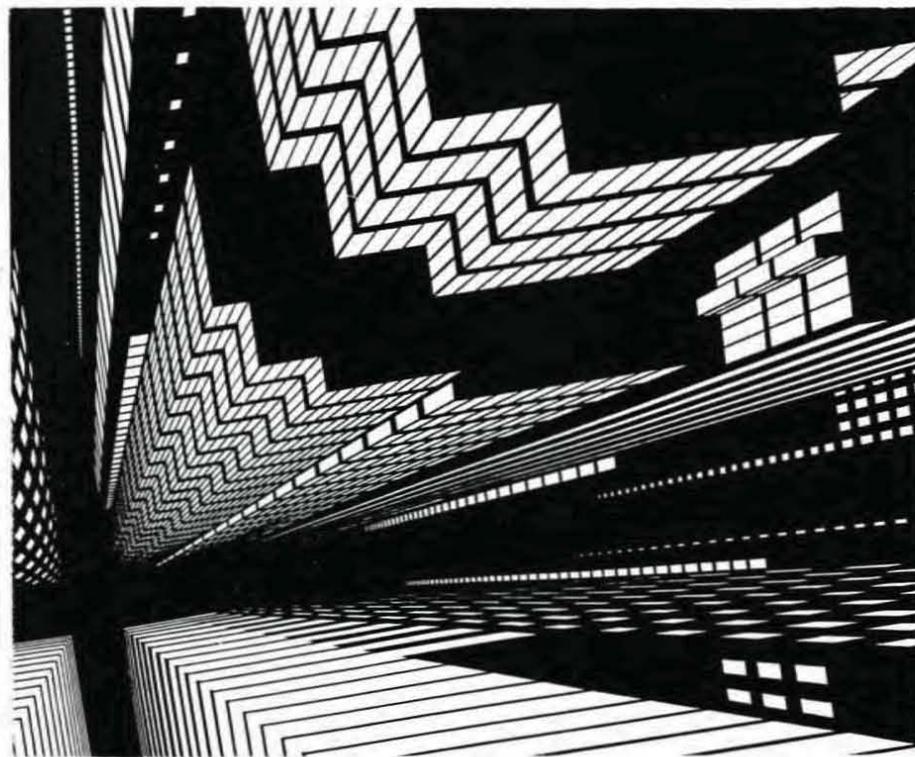
To quote a phrase from our Basic Text, "One addict helping another is without parallel." It is this addict's opinion that the events that began on

April 29th magnified the deep relevance of our First Tradition, we were able to see and feel the need we have for each other. I hope that in the future it doesn't take situations and circumstances such as this to make recovering addicts realize you "don't miss the water till the well runs dry."

In spite of all our differences and petty prejudices, we need each other to survive.

In the program of Narcotics Anonymous its not all about "justice," its all about "just-us," because God and us is all we have. In the spirit of the Twelfth Step and the First Tradition the message I wish to pass on is one of hope, healing and recovery through unity.

Michael W., South Central LA



Letter to my child

I have a burning desire to let you know that I am beginning to understand your pain, anger, and confusion. I am learning that the perfection I expected from you was the lacking I found in myself. I have expected you to excel and shine in the public's eye so everyone would see how great a parent I was. If you performed badly in school, I took it personally and punished you instead of asking what I could do to help. You have been made to feel that unless you are "good," you are not worthy of my attention and love. I have taken it as an act of spite against me when you performed at a level "less than" my expectations.

The truth as I have begun to learn in my program is that my own character defects have been the negative factor in my life—not you, never you. You are not a negative anything. You have the right to create your own personality, which will include your own character defects. Defects that are a part of the package that make up the whole. Unconditional acceptance is part of parenting, an important ingredient which I overlooked until I became involved in Narcotics Anonymous. NA has given me so much, not the least of which is the

knowledge that I am in control of nothing outside of myself. I am learning to let go without being "gone." I am reminded that you are a human being, separate and apart from me. You haven't been an object for me to use power and control over although I have tried. I regret that you were my vessel through the pain, anger, and confusion in my life.

I have found a new way to live—the hope and fellowship offered by Narcotics Anonymous. I am working on me. I am becoming a better me and will have more to offer you.

I won't change immediately. I didn't get here overnight but I will continue to work on my recovery, one day at a time. Today I am willing to accept my own contributions to your pain. Today I understand the need to nurture without being overbearing. Today I can love you without expectations and I am learning better ways to show you.

Just for today, I am letting go.

L.D., Virginia

Home Group

First dance



The broad perspective

The Broad Perspective is designed to provide updates of committee activity and other information likely to be of interest to the fellowship as a whole.

Celebrations of independence generally set the July mood in the American United States, so "remembering freedom" easily came to mind for this month's cover-art. This nod to the US national celebration is actually intended to remind of something a bit broader. Freedom from active addiction, and the joyful expression of gratitude for relief from that dependence, are what our fireworks are about.

The free expression of individual experience, strength and hope may have hit something of a high water mark in this, the longest issue of the last few years. Material from several countries, and a feature in Spanish, dramatize how our common problems and solutions are a world-wide reality.

Straight ahead

The somber story of Ramon R.'s struggle and success in recovery, despite his facing an AIDS-related

death, commences on the next page. This story came to us on tape, in Ramon's language. It was accompanied by a note in English from a friend, relaying Ramon's hope that he would live to see the material in print. Two weeks after sending us the tape, Ramon died. Correspondence with his executrix revealed a strong support, and authorization, for the presentation of the material. Though Ramon cannot physically share this event with his friends and family, his willingness to tell his story was not to be stopped.

The English translation of the tape was painstakingly produced by a staff member native to Mexico, whose first language is Spanish. Ramon was born in Puerto Rico. He lived for several years in New Jersey, then made his home in the Williamsport, PA, area.

Because of the differences of nuance and slang in different parts of the Spanish-speaking world (and the different expressive styles in spoken and written languages) absolute, literal transcription and translation was not the goal. The goal was a communication beyond words.

Permission from the executrix for the production and distribution of this or other tapes of Ramon's story is being sought. Contact the staff for copies of the written material. Because of the singularity of Ramon's request, and the nature of his story, this project was accomplished. The effort cannot, however, establish a general precedent. The staff is not able, nor do we have the other resources, to regularly present translations.

Perspective

During a recent *NA Way Magazine* review panel conference some participants asked questions about the *Broad Perspective* like "What is it?" and "Where does it come from?" Because many of the panel members were not involved in July, 1990, when this column was started, and there are many new readers, here are some details.

The first *Broad Perspective* carried this note: "The *Broad Perspective* is a new feature of *The NA Way Magazine* designed to provide updates of committee activity and other information likely to be of interest to the fellowship as a whole."

Students of the *Temporary Working Guide to the Service Structure* will likely recognize the last half of that explanatory note as having been lifted almost verbatim from the TWGSS magazine guidelines.

The WSC directed a section be added to the magazine for the reporting of bits and pieces of "news," but did not go so far as to describe the mechanics. Some features have been printed that can be called news and information "of interest to the fellowship as a whole," but oftentimes beneficial or useful information exists that doesn't quite qualify as a full-fledged article. To offer a vehicle for that material, the *Broad Perspective* was created.

Most of the material in this column is staff-generated or processed. It is a handy nook in which to put one-of-a-kind graphics and notes from readers; as well as inform generally.

One benefit of the "BP" is that it can be lengthened, shortened, or left out of an issue altogether, depending

on the availability of fellowship generated material.

A panel member enquired about more clearly attributing the column, which is why you find these remarks now, and an appropriate line will be added to the contents page.

The whole topic of "news" in a recovery journal is interesting. While some readers want none at all, others like informative features on board and committee activity, and seem to appreciate little tidbits on what's happening throughout the fellowship.

Admittedly, during the last few months, the BP has been heavily weighted with information about the magazine itself. Because we are in the middle of a dramatic attempt to make the magazine consistently more a whole-fellowship project, the use of these pages to elicit that response has seemed appropriate. We're talking manuscripts, workshops, and networkers here, folks!

When the NA Way Magazine Network is sufficiently assembled (about another year) enough basic, clear, NA recovery-oriented written sharing may be available to make the BP the *only news* in the magazine.

Please let us know what kind of news you want, and where you'd like to see it.

Release forms

Right before "Comin up" this month you'll find included a standard release form for articles and stories you might wish to share with the *NA Way*. Due to reader and networker requests it will be standard part of most issues.



RAMON

EL RELATO
DE UN ADICTO

Hola, yo me llamo Ramón, y soy adicto, este quiero dar las gracias a esta reunión por dejarme hablar.

El problema de nosotros que tenemos en NA y en quedarnos limpios, sinceramente desde el fondo de mi corazón yo creo, que nadie tiene una excusa para usar drogas de nuevo.

Yo cuando vine a este programa a los 30 días supe que yo era positivo de la enfermedad del sida, y la gente que andaba conmigo en este camino se alejaron de mi, se hicieron para atrás, yo pase por muchos problemas. Esto fue en el ao '86 y mucha gente en ese tiempo no sabían mucho de esta enfermedad, y tenían miedo que si ellos me tocaban o yo les daba un abrazo o si tomaba del mismo vaso, ellos podrian contagiarse, y yo pase muchos días en mi casa llorando, tenía mucho miedo yo creía que nunca iba a tener una mujer, tener que estar solo y aceptar la vida mía, pase por muchos cambios.

Todo empezo así, tuve una recaída y fui al hospital me hicieron un chequeo, de primero estaba en un cuarto con alguien más, después me movieron de un cuarto

Note: Production of this article has been difficult for all involved.

The transcription and translations, artwork and layout, and various interactions allowed each of us to know

Ramon, though we never met him. The staff team learned Ramon had died as we were working with his voice and words. We experienced an empathy hard to define, and worked on in tears.

Perhaps because we know such energy and spirit now visits most of our meetings, we recognized our brother.

It hurts.

RAMON

ONE ADDICT'S STORY

My name is Ramon and I'm an addict,

The problem we have in NA, trying to stay clean, is that we always put forth an excuse to use. But I think nobody has an excuse to go back to using drugs again. I came to this program and about thirty days later I found out that I am HIV positive. Most of my friends walked away from me. I started having a lot of problems, a lot of fury. This was in '86. In that year most of the people thought if they touched me, if I hugged them or was drinking from the same glass, they would get the disease of AIDS.

So I stayed in my house, crying, for days. I was very scared. I thought I was never going to have someone to share my life, and have a family. I went through a lot of changes.

When I went to the hospital, to have a check up, I was waiting in the room by myself. I was very confused because they were moving me to different rooms, and I didn't understand why they were doing this. Four doctors came to see me, and told me "Ramon, we need to talk to you." This is what happened. In that moment I went into denial,

a otro, pero siempre solo, yo no entendia porque ellos estaban haciendo eso. Al día siguiente fui a ver al doctor, estaba esperando al doctor pero resulto que vinieron cuatro doctores, y uno de ellos me dijo Ramón yo tengo que hablar contigo, esto fue lo que paso, en ese momento yo me negue aceptar la realidad, el espíritu mío se subio como suponer encima de la cama al lado mío, era como otra persona hablando con los doctores, pero era yo, me agarro de sorpresa y tenia mucho miedo porque este es un virus que mata a la gente.

Yo no sabia nada, estoy en un pueblo donde no conozco a nadie, no tengo familia, entonces yo llame a un amigo para hablar con el, pero el me tumbo el mundo porque se lo dijo a otra persona y cuando el se lo dice a otra persona pues de ahí todo el mundo lo iba a saber, pero de todas formas yo seguí adelante, como dije anteriormente yo tenia mucho miedo, estaba solo, pensando que a la mejor nunca iba a tener una familia, no tener mas hijos, y lo que pasa es que no me gusta estar solo, y a quien no le gusta tener una familia alguien con quien hablar y no tener miedo siempre.

Yo hable de esto con un consejero mío, y me daba miedo de hablar de esta enfermedad en esos cuartos porque yo estaba inseguro de mí, yo no queria que la gente se alejara de mí.

Muchas veces cuando yo conversaba inocentemente con una mujer en la calle, la gente iba hacia ella y le decian fulano tiene sida, no hagas nada con el porque te vas a contagiar y cosas así, eso me

molestaba mucho y por eso yo me puse una pared para arriba pero seguí adelante nunca use.

Yo me acuerdo una vez que yo estaba viviendo con un muchacho y el se movio del apartamento, y yo le pregunte aun amigo mío, que estaba buscando apartamento, o alguien con quien vivir que si queria rentar el cuarto que dejo el otro muchacho y el me dijo dejame hablar "con mi padrino, y con mi novia." Y yo le dije esta bien toma tu tiempo, y cuando el vino de regreso, me dijo Ramón te vengo a decir que no puedo moverme contigo, por que si me mudo contigo, mi novia me va a dejar porque tu estas enfermo. Y me dije hay Dios mio, me enoje porque lo primero que vino a mi mente fue nosotros no vamos a tener relaciones intimas, ni compartir ahujas y pues esas son una de las formas con que uno puede contagiarse y yo estoy bien seguro que ni el ni yo vamos a tener nada de eso. Yo llore, llore mucho estaba enojado, volvi a tener miedo, porque no era justo como la gente me estaba tratando.

Yo me meti aun cuarto de una reunión y me sente ahí a oír lo que estaban diciendo y me puse a hablar, la rabia y el enojo se me metio por dentro, porque yo se que es mi error por mi enfermedad que tengo, y no culpo a Dios por mi enfermedad. Esta silla en la que estoy ahorita yo la compre, esta silla que me esta salvando la vida, no voy a dejar que la gente hable de mí, ni que me empujen para afuera de los cuartos, esto era mío y yo voy a seguir para adelante.

my spirit rose to the side of the bed, it was like another person was talking with the doctor, but it was me. I was just staring and it took me by surprise. I was very scared, because I knew that this virus kills people.

I didn't know anything, I had thirty days in this town, where I didn't know anybody and I didn't have any family. So I called my friend. I told him my problem. I became disillusioned because he told someone else, and when he did that, then everybody knew. Even with disillusion I went on. Like I said before, I was very scared, feeling lonely and realizing I would never have a normal life. I don't like being by myself. Everyone likes to have a family and someone to share with and not being scared all of the time. I talked with my counselor. I was scared to talk about my disease in the rooms. I was insecure because I didn't want my friends to walk away from me. A lot of times when I was having a friendly conversation with a woman, people would run after her and tell her "did you know this guy has AIDS? Don't do anything with him because you can get the disease." That was making me angry. That's why I put up a wall, but I continued straight ahead without using drugs.

I remember when my room-mate moved out, a

friend of mine was looking for a room to rent and I asked him if he wanted to rent this room. He told me "let me talk with my sponsor and with my girlfriend." I told him, "Its ok, just take your time." So he came back and told me, "You know, I can't move in with you because if I do my girlfriend will leave me, because you're sick." So I said, "Oh my God." I got very angry. The first thing that came to my mind is 'we are not going to be lovers or share any needles.' This is a couple of ways you get the disease. I cried so much because I was so angry. My fear came back because it wasn't fair how the people were treating me.

I went to a meeting, and listened to what they were saying and I decided to share because of the anger and fear I was having. I know it was my mistakes and I don't blame God. This chair that I'm in now, I bought it, it has been saving my life, and I'm not going to let these people talk about me and push me out of these rooms. This was mine and I'm going to continue ahead and this is what I told the people, "I know I have this disease and probably one of these days I'm going to die." Like I said before, we don't have an excuse to use drugs again. I was thinking about what my ex-wife told me one day, "Ramon, don't use the needle of someone else."

Eso fue lo que yo le dije a la gente, si esta bien tengo esta enfermedad, quizás uno de estos días me voy a morir y de todas formas no hay excusa para usar. Yo estaba recordando en la que era mi esposa que me decia Ramón no uses la ahuja de otra persona, yo que era un adicto, no me importaba a quien le pertenecia, de todas formas la iba a usar. Nosotros nunca pensamos en el peligro que va a pasar, y esto fue lo que paso.

Me encontré con un amigo mío y el fue el primero que me dijo Ramón todo va a estar bien sigue adelante, y con eso me dio fuerzas para seguir adelante, porque en este camino yo voy para adelante nunca voy para atras, seguí trabajando Los Pasos Uno, Dos, y Tres eso me ayudo mucho.

Hace como tres meses tuve una recaída y estuve en el hospital perdi mucho peso. Volví a recaer otra vez hace como dos meses, pues tenia un pancreas muy mal me estuvieron dando medicina para el dolor, y la medicina que me estaban dando era muy seca como la droga que yo usaba, tenia muchos problemas, mi esposa me dejo, la noticia de que estaba positivo, el dolor de el pancreas y con la medecina encima, estaba tan mal que ya no sabia si iba para adelante o para atras, la medecina que me estaban dando me gusto, queria volver a usar porque yo decia, este programa no esta trabajando y estoy aquí sufriendo y que es lo que pasa, no entendia, yo llame a mi padrino muchos amigos míos vinieron a visitarme, me dieron la mano y me dijeron todo va a estar bien.

Yo queria ir para Nueva York a esas ciudades grandes para cambiar, yo queria terminar todo, pero al mismo tiempo no queria perder lo que yo tenia, por lo que yo trabaje tanto, el querer dar a la gente mi semejanza, y darles fuerzas para que ellos me den fuerzas a mi para yo seguir viviendo, y seguir adelante. Yo se que no puedo llegar muy lejos pero sigo adelante y hay mucha gente que usan excusa para usar de nuevo, andar todos sucios, no traer tenis, por ejemplo en el camino mío, yo le preste mi carro aun amigo mío y me lo choco y no me queria pagar, yo reze, y hable con mucha gente y tenia que dejarlo ir. Me acuerdo una vez de un amigo que estaba viviendo conmigo y llego algo mal, y se volvio a repetir la siguiente semana y discutimos porque yo le dije tú sabes que no puedes vivir aqui si estas tomando o con otras cosas en el sistema, seguimos discutiendo, y como yo estaba cocinando el agarro un plato y me lo tiro en el piso, en ese momento habia un cuchillo y me iba a meter una pualada, yo estaba tan enojado, que estaba llorando de coraje, yo dije no, conte hasta diez, y me dije suave, porque yo no vine a este programa para ir preso, estar en el hospital y mucho menos para estar muerto. Yo se que me voy a morir pero es porque Dios me quiere recoger y es así que yo quiero irme.

Yo me case el ao pasado con una bienvenida, y hay Dios mío que difícil era, tenia solamente 60 días de limpia, y yo queria tener tanto una esposa, no la conocia bien, sabia que era una tonteria mía, ella tenia mucha calle, y pues no

But I didn't care who it belonged to, I was going to use no matter what or who. We never think about the danger and what is going to happen, and this is what happened. I found a friend and he was the first one that came to me and gave me a hug and said "everything is going to be ok, continue ahead." His words made me strong to continue and this way I go ahead and not backwards, and I worked the Steps One, Two, and Three and that helped me a lot.

Three months ago I went to the hospital because I got very sick and lost a lot of weight. Two months later I went back to the hospital because I had a bad pancreas, so they were giving me medicine for the pain. The medicine made me dry like the drug I used to take. I was going through a lot of problems at the time. My wife left me, I got bad news about my disease, I was in pain, and had problems with the medicine. I was just confused, I couldn't think. I didn't know if I was going forward or backwards. The medicine I was using started to give me pleasure and I wanted to go back to using. I thought about not going to the program because it wasn't working, and I was here suffering in the hospital. What is happening? I called my sponsor and then my

friends came to visit me. They gave me their hands and told me "Everything is going to be ok."

I wanted to go to New York, to the big city, to change, to say this is finished. But I didn't want to lose what I had already, the things that I worked so hard for. I want to leave my wisdom and strength with the people and gain strength and hope so I can continue living and going straight ahead, even though the disease threatens.

I know I can't go too much further, but I continue my recovery. There are a lot of people just looking for excuses to go back to using. . . But I didn't come to this program to go to jail, to be in a hospital, to be dead. If I'm going to die it's because God is taking me with Him. And this is the way I want to die.

I got married last year. Oh my God! That was hard. I wanted to have a wife so much that it didn't matter that she had only sixty days clean. I didn't know much about her. The only thing that I know is that this was crazy, but I went ahead anyway. She didn't work the program and we used to fight everyday. She left me and it hurt because I loved her. I tried to get her back, but it was impossible.

Everything was so hard for me and still I did not use.

trabajo, nosotros peliábamos todos los días, yo no le podía decir nada porque empezaba a gritarme, y yo trataba de soportar para tratar de salvar nuestro matrimonio, a ella no le gustaba el hijo mío y ella tenía una hija y habían muchos problemas, pero de todas formas yo trataba de que salieramos adelante, de todas formas se fue, y pase con mucho dolor, porque yo la queria mucho, y yo trate de que ella volviera conmigo, fue entonces cuando perdi mucho peso ya mencionado anteriormente.

Yo hable con mi padrino, con amigos míos, trabajando los pasos, y siguiendo para adelante, y no usando, a pesar de que esta enfermedad que tengo estaba tratando de que yo cayera.

Yo me acuerdo de una vez hace como dos aos, tu sabes cuando tu te sientes bien espíritu, y te la estas pasando bien. Yo iba para Nueva York, con un amigo mío, y me sentia bien feliz, andando por las calles como a las dos de la maana, y no se que paso, que estaba pensando que yo no era adicto, al mirar a una persona usando drogas y al ver como las obtenia, y pues yo me dije yo no soy adicto porque yo nunca he matado a nadie nunca, ni robado, ni por historias que yo habia escuchado, y como yo no he hecho esas cosas que ellos hacen, pues estaba pensando que yo no era adicto, pero en realidad si lo sabia, pero mi enfermedad estaba trabajando en contra de mi. Y yo le platique aún amigo mío lo que me estaba pasando y simplemente me recuerdo lo que decia el Paso Uno, que yo no tenia que pelear, dejale eso a Dios, así

tu no tendras que cargar con eso, daselo a Dios y Dios trabaja contigo, y en ese momentito que el me dijo eso, senti como que desperte.

Tengo una amiga mía que se acaba de morir haces apenas unos días de sida, nosotros venimos del mismo pueblo, ella siempre siguió a adelante hasta que murio pero nunca uso drogas, nunca puso ninguna excusa para usar, y por eso yo pienso que esto es una semejanza grande para probar que uno no debe de usar, no importa que este pasando, y la verdad no hay ninguna excusa. A veces yo me pongo a pensar que excusa podría yo poner para usar y lo unico que viene a mi mente es que uno quiere usar. Yo fui de consulta con el doctor, el me dijo Ramón ya no hay mas nada que yo pueda hacer por ti, y como yo estaba tomando antibioticos, el me dijo ya no los tienes que tomar, porque tienes el virus completamente en tu cuerpo, no hay mas nada que yo pueda hacer por ti, y yo le pregunte como cuando voy a empezar a sentirme mal, y el me dijo dentro de unos cuantos meses tu vas a perder mucho peso, y yo le pregunte usted cree que yo voy a celebrar mi aniversario y el me contesto pues no se cuando es, y yo le dije va hacer en Septiembre, el me dijo bueno tal vez podamos hacer algo pero eso no lo se.

Yo hablo me pongo hablar con Dios, yo rezo que encuentren una cura, yo rezo que me muera o me ponga mejor, pero que si el desea llevarme yo estoy contento, porque este programa me dio cuatro aos de ser felicidad, tuve la oportunidad de estar con mi hijo por tres aos para no estar

I didn't let the disease take full control. I ended up talking to my sponsor and friends.

I went to New York with a friend, I was in good spirits and felt so happy walking on the streets. I was thinking I wasn't an addict, and I was criticizing someone that I saw using because my disease was against me. I thought because I never committed a big crime that I was different and I talked about that with a friend. He reminded me of what the First Step says. And he told me I "don't have to fight anymore, give that to God, and God will work with you." And that moment, when he told me that, "pow," it quit.

I had a friend and she just died of AIDS recently. She continued through this disease without using, and never used her disease as an excuse. I think this helps to prove that you don't have to use no matter what. A lot of people use excuses, but there are none. A lot of times I wondered what would be the best excuse for me to use. The only thing that came to mind is that we just wanted to do it.

I went to the doctor and he told me, "You have to stop taking your medicine, because the virus has spread throughout your body." So I asked him, "Am I going to celebrate my anniversary in September?"

And he said, "I don't know."

I talk and pray to God to take me, or find a cure for this disease. If he wished to take me I'll be happy to go, because this program gave me four years of happiness. I had the opportunity to live with my son for three years, and nice friends on my way. This program taught me to be a better person and I believe that today I am a better person than I was yesterday. I have my family, and a friendship with my ex-wife. If I would have stayed outside using, I'd be dead by now. I didn't know how to be friends with anyone.

Now I have so many friends that love and care about me and I feel the same for them. This program gave me the opportunity to know how to love another person, without taking something from them. This is something very precious, and I never felt this way before.

The message I want to leave is whatever is going to happen will happen, but never use.

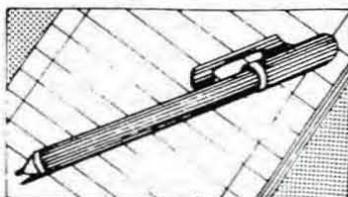
Note: This sharing was first recorded in 1991. Ramon *did* celebrate his fifth anniversary clean.

solo, puso buena gente en mi camino y que la aprecio, este programa me enseo hacer una persona mejor, y yo creo que hoy soy una mejor persona de lo que fui ayer, y estas son las cosas que nosotros podemos tener, porque soy feliz en este programa que me ah ayudado, tengo mi familia de nuevo, mis hijos, ahora tengo una buena relación con la que fuera mi esposa.

Si yo me hubiera quedado afuera usando, desde hace mucho tiempo ya estuviera muerto, yo no sabia ser amigo de nadien y me encuentre siendo amigo de mucha gente, que me quieren y se preocupan por mi, y yo los quiero a ellos.

Este programa me dio una oportunidad para saber como querer a otra persona sin esperar nada a cambio, y esto es algo muy hermoso porque yo nunca habia sentido eso. El mensaje que yo les quiero dar es que pase lo que pase va a pasar, pero uno no tiene que usar.





Viewpoint

Who are "We"

Here's a response to the February *Viewpoint*- "Whose God anyway?"

When I was first introduced to the Twelve Steps of recovery it was suggested that I find a Higher Power of my own understanding and it didn't have to be anybody else's understanding, just as long as it was something that would help me in my recovery instead of being something that was negative.

Then it was suggested that when ready, I make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand "Him." That word "Him" didn't appeal to me very well, I must say, nonetheless I accepted it as it was suggested.

My viewpoint is this—That if we are allowed to have a God of our own understanding which the Basic Text states, then why does the Third Step say that "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care

of God as *we understood Him.*" I can see the confusion and also feel it. My understanding of God is not the same understanding as your's or anyone else's. So the next time you begin to say the Lord's Prayer, just remember who's father you're praying to. I believe we may all have the same disease of addiction, but please respect my understanding of God and I'll respect yours.

K.N., California

Dislikes reprints, especially graphics

I just finished reading the March issue of the *NA Way* and I have to express that I am disappointed. Yes, the art work brought back memories, but I can view this artwork anytime I want to just by picking up my old issues and paging through them.

Are you so hard up for input that each March issue has to be reprint of

the past, and this year nothing but the graphics?

I am not including a copyright release form with this letter because I haven't seen those in issues for quite some time, but feel free to do anything you choose with this letter. If it ends in the garbage I'll understand.

I know better than that. I have faith that you listen to the direction that the fellowship gives.

In March couldn't part of the issue be devoted to what's on the floor of the WSC? Yes, I know all motions from the CAR were printed in the February issue, but many of these have little meaning without the stated intent and an explanation of what they really are. I would like to see an explanation of what is "service structure," and just what is the function of the WSO Board of Directors or the Board of Trustees.

I live in a rural community in South Dakota. My home group has been hanging on by a thread, with only three regular members, for the past two years. The nearest neighboring NA group is seventy miles away. I need the reminder that we aren't alone in the world and that recovery goes beyond my home group. I need those shared thoughts of other addicts in various stages of recovery. I look forward to every month when I open my mailbox to find the *NA Way*. I usually read one entry each night, at bedtime, and then sleep on it. I find this contact with another recovering addict very beneficial toward maintaining a working, living, program on a daily basis. This may not mean much to you but it has been a con-

tributing factor in these past eight years of my life.

I know that next month will be different so I am including another subscription. Now you do your part.

L.J., South Dakota

On changes

The *NA Way* has changed, as has NA as a whole. Change is not always bad, but, then again, it is not always good.

The *NA Way* early on told of addicts growing, changing and staying clean through it all. But over the last two years or so the *NA Way* got more into controversies, which I feel makes NA look bad and divides us. Also the magazine is more "slick" and less real.

I've been clean over nine years, one day at a time, and I find more disunity and less focus on recovery in the *NA Way* and, more disturbingly, in our meetings.

T.V., New Jersey

Opinion piece

I received my May issue of the *NA Way* today, and I'm responding to something I read called "Against price increase," by B.B. of North Carolina.

Easy does it! The NA World Service Office does a good job. The special workers employed at our world office—most of whom are also NA members with substantial recovery—are bright, capable, and honest employees. They are under stringent reporting guidelines that ensure high performance and productivity standards.

As a business (albeit a non-profit business,) the WSO's revenues are subject to the same market fluctuations that all other businesses must contend with. The fact that recession-al declines in the sales of our largest revenue contributor (the Basic Text) have temporarily compromised the office's profitability is not the fault of our trusted servants and special workers.

It's easy to sit back and critique the world service structure for sending NA representatives to international delegations, for scouting future world convention sites, for our Basic Text strategies, for our compensation and expense account policies, and more. But the truth of the matter is that the folks who make the decisions behind these policies are held accountable to the NA fellowship through the service structure.

J.D., Tennessee

Debate continues

The smoking-in-meetings debate continues. I have read comments implying that anyone who has a problem

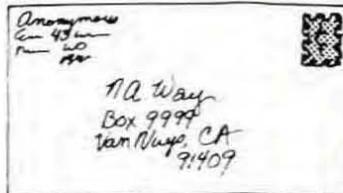
with cigarette smoke somehow isn't putting their recovery first. Surely the idea that health and recovery are unrelated is a little simplistic? As I understand it, recovery involves more than abstinence from drugs and as part of my recovery I'm learning to look after myself, and that includes my health. I don't want to risk contracting lung cancer or other diseases through smoking, passive or otherwise, so I avoid cigarette smoke, as I have every right to do. I don't try to force my views on others because, frankly, your health is your own responsibility.

What does bother me is the suggestion that if I can't stand it I should "check my motives." As I see it, I have a right to attend meetings and recover. I should not be required to endanger my health to do so. Nor, if you think about it, does the Third Tradition require me to. In reality, I am putting my recovery first. I have another illness and cigarette smoke makes me ill; far too ill to remain in a smoke-filled room. Can you imagine how I feel when I read the comments of those who imply that this related to the quality of my recovery in some way?

When someone drinks a cup of coffee or ingests sugar they can do it next to me and I am not affected. When someone smokes next to or near me, I am affected. People have the right to harm themselves; they do not have the right to harm me.

J.B., England

From our readers



Greedy, not needy

When it comes to my program. I guess you could say I'm greedy. Yes, I share with others. My program comes first, before my children, before my fiancé, before anything else in my life.

My relationship with my Higher Power is the most important relationship in my life.

It wasn't always like this, but this is where I've found my serenity.

You see when I got here and things started getting better, I wanted to fix the world. I saw so many that I felt needed the program. I tried to share with them, yet many were not willing to hear. I learned how to work the steps on them, slowly.

I saw them in so much pain, losing more than I did. I couldn't understand. I talked to a friend. He said, "It takes what it takes." In time I started praying for others and stopped trying to fix them. I come to understand what my friend had told me.

I realized the program isn't for the "needy" as I see them, but for the "greedy," those that want it more than anything else in their life. That's me.

R.H., Indiana

News!

I've never written to *NA Way* before but after running across an old issue (Nov. 1991 "Aloha NA friends") I felt a desire to share my experience, strength and hope. In my area there are several members with time in the program that have stopped going to meetings altogether, or are going to another fellowship. I personally have not felt the need to go to another fellowship, but I have gone long periods of time without going to meetings.

I had surgery several months ago and for two months surrounding that surgery I isolated. I went to work and school and came directly home. I called the women I sponsor once or twice to see if everything was ok, but mostly I fell deep into a depression based on fear. During this time, no one called me or came by to see me. I needed help, but I wasn't willing to reach out to anybody. I remember how much we reach out to the newcomer, and the people in the program with time are supposed to be "RECOVERED" enough to not need help. I have news for everyone! People with time in NA need hugs, they need phone calls and phone numbers. They need to be asked to make coffee and chair meetings. They need to be told to keep coming back! They need to feel that unconditional love we so freely give to the newcomer.

Some of the people who stopped going to NA have listed the reasons above, but the biggest reason is that they say there isn't any recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. I find that funny since I'll be able to celebrate seven years in three months. I also find it ironic that they would say that when this is what saved their lives in the first place. I know that when I go to a meeting and my Higher Power is with me, there's recovery there. I am a part of this program, not a product of. We have a responsibility to Narcotics Anonymous to prepare NA for the newcomer that walks through the doors. The door swings both ways and I may be that newcomer needing the experience, strength, and hope of members who have time in the program. I owe NA my life and whether I'm told to or not, I will keep coming back.

J.G., Alabama

Till you can love yourself

How many times I heard and felt those words at meetings and from my sponsor during that first year in recovery, I cannot say. Being told that I was "the most important person" as a newcomer meant the world to me. That I could possibly give something to them blew me away—because I could tell they meant it and it made no sense to my raw and painful brain. But it did ring true in my ear and I kept coming back for more.

Somewhere in my next couple of years in recovery I lost touch with that feeling. I knew I had to keep giving it away in order to keep it. Everyone who has what I want, a recovery

they are living in their lives and feeling with their hearts-gives back in hugs, sponsorship, rides to meetings, late phone calls and NA service. Doing all those things has given me back the gifts of my feelings my heart, my soul, and the kind of dear friends I've always longed for. But there was this little period of envy because I wanted to be "most important" again and was secretly PO'ed that I was once again "less than" someone else.

Since my fourth NA birthday though, these precious "most important people" have been giving me messages like I've never been able to hear before. It seems that every H&I meeting at the local rehab has someone there who thought they'd graduated when they hit five years and then relapsed. Tonight as the after work "squirrely" hit me, that ego eccentric insanity of this disease tried to tell me this meeting wasn't good enough that I was planning to go to. Someone who has bounced in and out for awhile came in beaten and desperate and every word he said rang true deep down to the bottom of my toes. I don't know how to describe the love I felt for him other than "the flow of empathy from one person to another" as it's so simply described in our Basic Text. There were two other newcomers tonight also, and the love I felt from the other addicts in the room toward them was more powerful, touching and real than any high I was ever able to imagine out there.

If it hadn't been for those newcomers tonight I wouldn't have received the gift I did to this depth. And I felt them loving me until I could love myself. Full circle. And to-

day I believe for me too, "keep coming" it gets better and better-beyond our wildest dreams! Please HP, help me keep remembering I'm a newcomer everyday, its never been "me and them" but always WE DO RECOVER.

Anonymous

Comment

Just a comment about "Principle Perspective" by K.B. of Georgia in the May issue of the *NA Way*.

K.B., in Step Six and Step Eleven or your worksheet you refer to God with the pronouns "She" and "Her." In Narcotics Anonymous, God is referred to through the pronouns "Him" and "He." Why alter the steps as they are written? Why pass on a worksheet that has in effect, rewritten the NA steps to suit one perception?

Perhaps a misunderstanding about the implication of a masculine pronoun usage is behind the "revised" set of steps. Let us understand that just because God is referred to through "Him" and "He" in the Basic Text does not necessitate that God be a man, or have any gender at all. If we look in our dictionaries we will see that "He" refers to "any person or entity for whom gender is not specified," and for our purposes in Narcotics Anonymous, for whom gender is not even needed.

In summary, we all as individuals have the right to a God of our understanding, whether it be man, woman, doorknob, etc. Yet as members of the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we are responsible to our literature as

it is written. In gratitude for a new way to live through NA.

P.D., Iowa

How, how, how?

One day I sat in a meeting, and as people shared, with each problem they expressed, I thought to myself, "Ah, that's an easy one." They were easy ones too—like changing playmates and playgrounds, like making amends for something that wouldn't cost money, time in jail, or a relationship. As the discussion went around the table, I couldn't believe my ears. In early recovery I was a fairly obedient sponsee. I did what the people in the rooms suggested. I even listened to the people who said, "Take my advice. I'm not using it." And things happened fast for me. Really fast. Then one day, I was sitting in a meeting wondering how people could struggle over such simple problems. And then someone who had been through the same thing said to me, "You're not a newcomer anymore."

And today I find that I don't get as much out of meetings as I used to. So, naturally, I don't go to as many meetings. I try to share my experience, strength, and hope; but it seems as though what I say is ignored. And when I hurt, I find there are very few who will listen without judging me for not going to enough meetings. Frankly, I find that my level of serenity is higher the less meetings I go to. And yet, I resist this. I force myself to go to meetings, take on sponsorship, and serve the group. Odd as this may sound to some, I come to the meetings feeling happy, joyous, and free; and leave feeling sad.

Our fellowship is far less than ideal. Principles before personalities. I find myself repeating this over and over. The principles found in the steps have not let me down. Maybe I just understand the principles a little differently than other people do. To me it's not just about not using drugs. It's about not using people, places, and things. Sometimes I sit and wonder as people are sharing, people with more time than I have, "Oh where, oh where, did Step Six and Seven go?"

And so today I find myself with a whole new set of problems. How do I share what I feel is right, and still let others learn for themselves? How do I practice one-disease/one program without being an NA policeman? How do I learn to take criticism from NA members who haven't been where I am today? How do I practice service work according to the guidelines when group opinion directly conflicts the guidelines? How do I have empathy for my fellow addicts who seem to have little empathy for me? How do I share what works for me without implying that you should do it too? How do I keep my seat in NA without turning it into a high-chair or throne? Only God knows. H.P. only knows.

Cornerstones

I was offered suggestions when I got here; "get a sponsor, get a Basic Text, get a H.P., get phone numbers of other people, go to meetings," etc. I got these things and continued to go to meetings. Nothing changed.

Only when I realized that I had to use these things did it begin to get

better. I began calling my sponsor regularly, even when things were ok with me. I listened to what she had to say. I began using the suggestions she had for me.

I wiped the dust off my Basic Text and began reading it regularly.

I began working the steps with the help of my sponsor. She helped me learn how to use the steps in all areas of my daily life.

We worked on this God thing. I, at that time, didn't want any part of God. I could deal with a Higher Power.

I started using my Higher Power. I would talk to him each morning and I would say, "Thank you," each night.

I began using the phone numbers of other people in the meetings. I found lots of friends, real friends.

I began using things I heard in meetings. Things that had worked for others just might work for me.

Using the right things, Just For Today, are still working 1953 days from that first day.

The basics are still the roots of my recovery. I still go to meetings, talk to my sponsor regularly, I read my Basic Text. I use the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. I talk to my God often. I use suggestions. I'm still teachable and still willing.

Today, serenity is a big part of my life. From time to time there still comes a challenge for me to deal with, but I'm grateful for the gifts that challenges bring.

I'm grateful I've learned to use the right things.

R.M., Tennessee

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FORM

Please fill out the following form and include it along with any article you submit to the NA Way magazine.

AGREEMENT between WORLD SERVICE OFFICE, INC., dba THE NA WAY MAGAZINE, hereinafter referred to as "assignee," and (author's name):

hereinafter referred to as "assignor." Assignor is the owner of attached material described as the following (title of work):

The assignee is the publishing arm of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The assignor hereby grants and transfers to assignee as a gift, without exception and without limitation, any and all of assignor's interests and copyrights and rights to copyright and rights to publish, together with all rights to secure renewals and extensions of such copyright, of said material.

Assignor hereby covenants, warrants and represents to assignee, and this agreement is made in reliance thereof, that assignor is sole owner and has the exclusive right to use of said material, and that the material is free and clear of any liens, encumbrances and claims which are in conflict with this agreement.

This agreement is binding on assignor's heirs, assigns, administrators, trustees, executors, and successors in interest, and such are directed to make and execute any instrument assignee may require to protect copyright for assignee.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this agreement at the assignor's address:

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE/PROVINCE _____

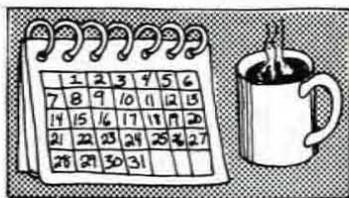
ZIP CODE, COUNTRY _____ PHONE _____

Assignor's signature _____ Date _____

Assignor's spouse's signature _____ Date _____

for World Service Office, Inc. _____ Date _____

Comin'up



BELGIUM: Jul. 24-26, 1992; 9th European Conference and Convention of NA; Antwerp Belgium; info. 32-3-281 08 62

CALIFORNIA: Jul. 25, 1992; Southern California NA Birthday; Veteran Memorial, 4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City, CA; info (714) 673-2436

2) Aug. 14-16, 1992; 4th Annual Humble/Del Norte Unity Weekend; Camp-Kimpu, Willow Creek, CA; info. (707) 444-8645

3) Aug. 14-16, 1992; 6th Annual Mountain High Campout; Camp Richardson; info (916) 577-1042; South Shore ASC, 1230 Margaret Avenue, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

4) Aug. 28-30, 1992; SCACNA Campout; Hurkey Creek, 307 1/2 Island Avenue (private address) Balboa, CA 92661; info (818) 338-3339

CANADA—NOVA SCOTIA: Aug. 7-9, 1992; 3rd Nova Scotia Area Convention; "We Grow Through Spiritual Principles"; Agricultural College, Truro, NS; info (902) 455-7160; NSACNA, PO Box 809, Armdale NS, Canada, B3L 4K5

CANADA—ONTARIO: Jul. 18, 1992; Multi Regional PI and H&I Learning Day; Columbus Center, 901 Lawrence Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario; info. (519) 837-2947; Learning Day, PO BOX 5939, Depot A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P3, CANADA

CANADA—SASKATCHEWAN: Aug. 21-23, 1992; SSACNA VIII; "Reaching Out for Recovery"; Royal Canadian Legion Hall, 238 High Street West, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; info (306) 692-3083

COLORADO: Jul. 24-26, 1992; 5th Annual Colorado Retreat, "Standing on Higher Ground"; Telluride, Colorado; info (303) 728-9738

DENMARK: Jul. 31—Aug. 2, 1992; 2nd Denmark Convention; "Frihed gennem accept"; Halsted—Avnede Centralskole, Horslundevej 6, 4900 Nakskov, Lolland; info 45 53 93 96 28

FLORIDA: Aug. 1, 1992; 7th Annual H&I Awareness Day; First Coast Area; info. (904) 765-5673; First Coast Area, Attn 92 H&I Awareness, PO BOX 17388, Jacksonville, FL 32245-7388

FRANCE: Sep. 18-20, 1992; 3rd Paris Area Bilingual Convention; Cite Universitaire, 19Bd Jourdan, 75014 Paris; info 33-1-42 37 57 79; Narcotiques Anonymes, CBPNA 3, B P 630-04, 75160 PARIS Cedex 04,

GEORGIA: Aug. 6-9, 1992; 3rd Midtown Atlanta Convention; Atlanta Hilton Hotel; info (404) 755-9043

2) Aug. 21-23, 1992; 3rd Annual Northwest Georgia Area Campout; Red Top Mountain State Park

IDAHO: Aug. 7-9, 1992; 3rd Annual Campout; Register Rock Campground, I-86 Massacre Rocks exit, American Falls, Idaho; helpline (208) 236-8954

ILLINOIS: Jul. 17-19, 1992; 8th Annual Flight to Freedom Campout; South Marcum Recreation Area; Southern Illinois; info (618) 529-4036

INDIA: Sep. 6, 1992; 4th Group Anniversary; Saint Mary's School, 92 Ripon Street, 1st Floor, Calcutta

INDIANA: Jul. 11, 1992; 11th Annual Picnic; Indiana Dunes State Park, Wilson Shelter, Cheston, IN

2) Aug. 21-23, 1992; Spirituality Under the Stars Campout; Tippecanoe River State Park, Winamac, IN

IOWA: Jul. 31—Aug. 2, 1992; Mid Coast Convention VIII; Blackhawk Hotel, Davenport, IA; info (319) 326-3720; rsvn.s (800) 553-1173; MCC VIII, PO Box 1132, Bettendorf, IA 52722

2) Aug. 15, 1992; Greater Illinois Gathering of Regions; Loras College in Hennessey Hall, 1415 Alta Vista, Dubuque; (815) 626-0790

KANSAS: Jul. 31—Aug. 2, 1992; 3rd Annual Free Campout; Lucas Park, Wilson Lake; Campout, PO Box 544, McPherson, KS 67460

2) Aug. 7-9, 1992; 5th Annual Just For Today Free Campout; Thunderbird Marina, Rolling Hills Area of Milford Lake; Hosted by Crossroads NA; info (913) 238-1531

3) Sep. 18-20, 1992; Multi Regional Learning Day; Wichita Plaza Hotel, 250 West Douglas, Wichita, KS 67202; rsvn.s (316) 264-1181; info (918) 664-4883

MAINE: Sep. 11-13, 1992; We're A Miracle IX; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred, ME; info (207) 721-0516; SMASC, Convention Committee, PO Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101-5309

MASSACHUSETTS: Jul. 18-19, 1992; Unity Day VI Family Reunion; Madison Park High School; 100 New Dudley Street, Roxbury, MA; info (617) 282-4187

MICHIGAN: Jul. 17-19, 1992; 4th Annual Recovery Under the Stars Campout and Picnic; Sponsored by the Public Meeting of NA; The Pontiac Lake Recreation Area; East Loop Campground; info (313) 335-5621 or (313) 683-3774

MISSOURI: Jul. 24-26, 1992; 13th Annual High On Life Picnic; Stockton Lake; info (417) 623-6883

NEBRASKA: Aug. 14-16, 1992; 9th Nebraska Regional Convention; Lincoln, NE; Looking for speaker tapes for those interested in speaking, 5 years clean time required

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Aug. 16, 1992; H&I Awareness Day; American Legion Hall corner Main and Glass Street, Suncook, NH; helpline (603) 432-0168; Granite State Area H&I, PO Box 4354, Manchester, NH 03108

NEW JERSEY: Aug. 14-16, 1992; 2nd Annual Northern New Jersey Convention; "A New Beginning II"; Parsippany Hilton, Parsippany, New Jersey; rsvn.s (908) 862-5899; info (201) 881-9658

NEW YORK: Jul. 24-26, 1992; NNYNRCNA VII; Wells College Campus, Aurora, NY; info (716) 454-7809

2) Aug. 7-9, 1992; WANA Weekend with the Winners Campout; Camp Waubeeka Campground, Copake, NY; info. (914) 633-8516

3) Sep. 11-13, 1992; Recovery in the Catskill Three; Friar Tuck Inn, Catskill, NY; info (800) 832-7600; A combined recovery effort of Mid-Hudson Area and Greater NY Regional Council; Convention, Route 32, Rural Delivery 1, Catskill, NY 12414

NORTH CAROLINA: Sep. 25-27, 1992; 1st Annual Central Piedmont Area Outdoor Convention; Van Hoy Farm's Family Campground, Union Grove, NC; info (704) 278-9536

OHIO: Jul. 10-12, 1992; 8th Annual Columbian County Camp-Vention; StoneRidge Terrace Campground; 33807 Winona Road; Winona, OH

OKLAHOMA: Jul. 31—Aug. 2, 1992; 7 1/2 Northside Stroll, Troll and Chicken Flying Contest; Greenleaf State Park, Braggs, OK; info (918) 744-0956; Northside Stroll Group, 400 Ridge Drive, Sand Springs, OK 74063

PENNSYLVANIA: Sep. 4-6, 1992; Little Apple Area Birthday Celebration; info (215) 776-7306; LAA Birthday Committee, PO Box 274, Allentown, PA 18105

2) Sep. 25-27, 1992; 4th BCACNA; "The Growth of Recovery"; Royce Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Longhorne, PA, 19047; rsvn.s (215) 547-4100; Bucks County ASC, PO Box 12, Morrisville, PA 19067

PUERTO RICO: Jul. 24-26, 1992; 3rd Annual Puerto Rico Convention; "Unidos Podemos III"; Sands Hotel, Isla Verde, PR; info. (809) 763-5919; English Translations Available at meetings; Sub-Comite De Registro, PO Box 19311, Fernandez Juncos Sta, Santurce, PR 00910

TENNESSEE: Aug. 7-9, 1992; 1st Midwest Tennessee Area Campout; Camp Clark, Williamson; info (901) 424-5312

UTAH: Jul. 24-26, 1992; 9th Annual CampVention; "The Ties That Bind Us Together"; Hobbie Creek Canyon, Springville; info. (801) 489-3930; Convention, PO BOX 2086, Orem, UT 84059

VIRGINIA: Jul. 24-26, 1992; 11th Blue Ridge Area Campout; Natural Chimneys Regional Park, Mount Solon, VA; info (703) 434-6744

2) Sept. 25-27, 1992; OLANA UNITYFEST I; Holiday Inn, Chesapeake; info (804) 569-9498

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.

