

# C.A.N.A. NEWS

Capital Area Narcotics Anonymous, Harrisburg, Pa. October 1988 Issue III, Volume I

## Recovery depends on N.A. Unity

By Barb K.

It is stated in the Basic Text that our individual recovery depends entirely upon the unity of the group and the fellowship as a whole. This concept on unity comes from the belief that we all share the same disease of addiction and the same goal to stay clean and to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. The more unified the fellowship, the better chance an addict has to stay clean. The twelve traditions are the principles we must practice in order to have unity. When we believe and practice the traditions we can recover as a unified and stable fellowship.

There is unity in the Harrisburg area, otherwise none of us would be clean today. However, there are many ways in which we lack unity. An example is the racial segregation that exists in our area. Why are east shore

meeting almost entirely attended by blacks and west shore meetings almost entirely attended by whites? Why are black and white sponsor-sponsee relationships very rare? Why does the color of a speaker at Holy Spirit determine the ratio of white to black attendance at the meeting?

The racism in our area is very obvious and cannot be

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contributed to one particular race, but only to the fellowship as a whole. As individuals we can change this character defect in our area. We can practice the first tradition and place the welfare of the fellowship ahead of our own conveniences and prejudices by attending meetings we might not normally attend. We can reach out to newcomers of both races and we can strive to eliminate the walls of segregation that exist among us. It

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# I can't, god can, so let him

By Peter N.

I can't, god can, so let him. It's just that simple. Left to my own devices, I am in big trouble.

Before I entered recovery, I felt like dying. I was powerless. I couldn't stop using. When I looked in the mirror, I was looking at a dead man. I was tired. When I went to bed, I felt like I was dying, didn't know if I would wake up in the morning and didn't care.

The morning after my birthday, my wife looked at me as though she were looking into a

1. We were both in tears and I knew it was over. There had to be something else I could do. For the first time there was a glimmer of hope. There just had to be.

I went to the phone, called my sister, told her I was in trouble and needed to go some place. She said, "Do you mean a rehab?"

"Yes," I said. And I looked over my shoulder to see whose mouth those words had come out of, because I had never uttered the word "rehab" before in my Life. I never considered it. It was time. I was willing to do anything so that I wouldn't have to continue the "unlife" I was living. In retrospect, I have come to

believe that it was god who put the words in my mouth and gave me the willingness to do whatever was necessary.

I went to a rehab and asked, "What do I have to do to stop hurting?"

They said, "Surrender."  
I did.

They said, "Get a god."  
I tried.

They told me that they believed and that was keeping them clean.

I believed that they believed. That was enough for then. I didn't have a choice. I needed to believe and I did.

During my active addiction, I was alive in spite of myself. God did it. He gave me another chance.

Today, I made a decision to turn my will and my Life over to the care of god. Each day I come to believe and trust him a little more. That is what faith is to me - belief and trust. A day at a time.

Think about it. Do I really have a choice? I think not. God has been doing for me what I have been unable to do for myself for quite some time. So why not try to leave it up to him? He does

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## *You are welcome in N.A. Regardless of Sexual Identity*

C.A.N.A.: What do you think about recovery in the Capital Area of Narcotics Anonymous?

J.C.: I believe that recovery and the quality of recovery is a very subjective thing. All meetings are good meetings. Some are better than others. Most of that has to do with my receptivity to what goes on. Not what really goes on. The more I'm attuned to my higher power's will for me the more I will be attuned to what that higher power says at meetings through other people.

C.A.N.A.: You said that some geographical comparisons could be made. Could you elaborate?

J.C.: In larger metropolitan areas there are more meetings, more people - less of the incestuous conflicts that can develop in a smaller town. The larger of the source area that you have to draw from, the more is available. Small towns tend to have in-bred small town attitudes. People in larger cities tend to have more a more cosmopolitan attitude toward people who are different from themselves. One of the things I have noted during my time in Philadelphia and San Francisco is that there tended to be a more

"liberal" attitude toward various minority groups. When I came back to Harrisburg I was struck that many people, in 1988, were still talking about people on the East Shore and the West Shore, attitudes reminiscent of the 1950s.  
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### *Let him do it*

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a much better job than I do. My way doesn't work anymore. I'm not sure if it ever did in the first place.

God has given me the gift of Life. He has given me this program.

My Life is in perfect order today. It doesn't always feel that way or even appear that way, but if it weren't, he would change it. I know it will be O.K. And when I forget, you all, my friends who god uses to help me, give me hope, share your experience and give me strength, remind me. It'll be O.K.

I am grateful, because of god I am enjoying Life just the way it is and it is a Life that I had no idea anyone ever experienced. I am the luckiest guy in the world.

I can't, he can, so let him. It's still that simple.

## ***"White Shore" racist attitude reminiscent of the 1950s***

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There are significant differences in who attends the downtown meetings and who attends the suburban meetings. Much of that has to do with a whole lot of local social factors, but in larger cities there is a greater "natural" diversity of people, attitudes and ideas.

C.A.N.A.: As a Gay person, do you find prejudice against Gay people in N.A. meetings in the Capital Area?

J.C.: Yes. However, it is natural that people bring their own prejudices from the surrounding community into N. A. meetings. How could it be otherwise? The concept of bigotry, prejudice and sexism hinges on awareness. I heard early on in my recovery several Gay women sharing about relationship problems who were laughed at. It was an unfortunate situation. My own past experience with societal discrimination made me make a conscious decision when I first came into the fellowship to not disclose my gayness. This did not have anything to do with an discomfort that I had about my own gayness, since I have been "out" since the mid 60s. It had to do with things specifi-

cally related to my recovery in N.A. I knew that if people met me initially with the label of "Gay" that many people would be put off. The knowledge that I was gay would interfere with our ability to openly interact as people. As it turned out, people got to know me first as a human being and subsequently as someone who happened to be gay, just as I happen to be an addict. I very specifically chose that avenue so that the quality of my recovery could be enhanced. My recovery is my reason for being in N.A., like all addicts; I'm in N.A. for the hugs, not for kisses.

C.A.N.A.: Our basic text says, "Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion." Do you believe this to be the case?

J.C.: I believe that's the ideal, not the reality. Anyone can join. It is a totally different question to ask if anyone can join and feel comfortable with being openly gay. And, to this end, many of us have chosen to not disclose openly to the fellowship that we are gay. To this end, many of us have formed a special interest meeting in another fellowship.

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## *What about special interest meetings?*

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C.A.N.A.: Would you prefer to not have to operate within a special interest meeting. Would it be better to find acceptance for who you are?

J.C.: I would prefer a regular closed meeting and I think that would be the consensus of most gay people, though I can only speak for myself. I have personally disclosed my sexual preference at a couple of small closed meetings. I have found a very supportive attitude from most of the people present. But again, this was because they had already come to know me prior to this revelation.

C.A.N.A.: How do you feel about special interest meetings?

J.C.: I've noted special interest meetings for non-smokers and women, and previously men. There are precedents already established for special interest meetings. However, if we are truly attempting to progress to the ideals of the Basic Text, I know that we'll all be meeting together. I wish we there now, but we're not. We are only progressing toward perfection. We haven't arrived individually or as a

fellowship.

C.A.N.A.: Do jokes about gays heard before or after meetings embarrass you?

J.C.: I'm not sure how to respond. They embarrass me for the person who has told them because it shows both a lack of awareness and sensitivity to N.A. principles. They often anger me personally. Anger is something I'm still working on. It never ceases to amaze me that people who will no longer tell a racial or ethnic joke of any kind will still feel comfortable telling a "fag joke." There was a line that I heard in the 60s about the "nigger" was the black man who just entered the room. Today we're still very much willing to talk about the "fag" who just left the room. One of the most repulsive situations I've ever encountered in the fellowship was standing around after a meeting listening to a number of people seriously discuss going over to the "queer" meeting just to see who was there.

C.A.N.A.: When you told the people in the small N.A. groups that you mentioned before that you were Gay did you notice a change in their sensitivity.

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## ***Recovery put in jeopardy by racism***

*(Continued from page 1)*

is only when we find differences among ourselves that our recovery is in jeopardy, because, "As long as the tie the the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that tear us apart, all will be well."

## ***People in my home group accept me***

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J.C.: Yes. People in my home group especially have striven to change. My experience since having shared my sexual identity has generally been positive. The thing that I now know is that those people who continue to be open, honest, loving and supportive are so "in spite" of their knowledge. They are living the principle of complete acceptance as established in the Basic Text.

The material in this newsletter was submitted by N.A. members. It does not reflect the opinion of N.A. as a whole.



## **October 16**

**York Hayride & Bon Fire**

**Speaker meeting after the hayride**

**For information call:**

**Bob G. 755-9403**

**Steph 854-6970**

## **October 28-30**

**Pittsburgh Convention**

**"Start to Live"**

**6th Annual Tri-State Convention...**

**at the Vista International Hotel**

**\$45 for the whole 3 days (not including room rates)**

**For information call:**

**Roz 412-361-6250**

**Bob 412-661-5799**

**Gloria 412-521-1086**

# ADVENTURES OF — COLD TURKEY



FRANK

# Capital Area N.A. Notes

**Tidbits from the September meeting of the Capital Area Service Committee and elsewhere**

*Hospital & Institution Sub Committee - Pressing need for support at Camp Hill S.C.I. Monday evenings from 6 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. There has been no support there for more than a thousand addicts who need to know that there is a way out of the nightmare of addiction. Anyone who is interested in attending meeting or the Dauphin County Prison's Men's Meeting call Tony A. at 540-1814.*

*HOW Group - Meets at 8 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, N. West and Louthier Sts., Carlisle and needs support, especially from recovering addicts with some clean time.*

*Hershey K.I.S.S. Group - Has started having alternate step and tradition meetings on Wednesday night at 8 p.m. During November the fifth and sixth steps and traditions will be discussed at this lead step meeting, 500 W. Chocolate Ave, Hershey.*



**C.A. N.A. News  
Needs  
YOUR  
help.**

**Send your stories, Letters-to-the-editor, poems and graphics to us.**

**If possible, type and double space and give to your GSR, so that they can be passed on to the newsletter committee at the monthly Area Meeting.**