NARCOTICS
ANONYMOUS

FOR REVIEW ONLY
UNPUBLISHED LITERARY WORK
NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Dear Fellow Addicts:

We have collected material from individuals and groups worldwide, sharing our experience of recovery. We have compiled the information in the form of a "review" copy, which is proposed as our definitive work on addiction and recovery.

This work is the product of the three World Literature Conferences which were held between October 1979 and February 1981 at Wichita, Kansas, Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee. In excess of 4,500 man-hours were expended at Memphis by more than seventy recovering addicts from thirteen states to produce the final work. In addition, the Memphis conference kept nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette recorders, two telephones and a dictaphone in almost continuous use, and used over 20,000 sheets of paper.

We are asking for your corrections or comments. It has been suggested that a group effort may be most effective.

Please return the attached review-input form promptly. The deadline for input is April 15, 1981, received at Atlanta, or at Los Angeles before the World Literature Conference IV begins April 26, 1981.

Review-input forms will be processed at the World Literature Conference IV in Los Angeles during the last week of April 1981. Everybody is encouraged to attend this conference.

Our goal is to have the review copy approved, Fellowship-wide, and to present the finished manuscript to the World Service Conference in May 1981. Following this approval, the book will be ready for publication in hardback.

Let your H.P. be your guide. We remain your trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,


WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

HARDBACK IN JUNE!
"God, as we endeavor to complete this work, we know that You are with us. We know that without Your strength and inspiration we are not capable of the task before us. We know that this work is not our work, but Yours. Each of us, in our own way, humbly petition You to use us as Your tools; according to Your will. We offer ourselves to You in this way knowing that You are a Loving God and have all power. In this work and in our lives—Thy will be done."

REVIEW INPUT FORM

TRUSTED SERVANT'S NAME(S) __________________________ AREA REPRESENTED __________________________

Please review the material carefully, then check either 1, or 2, below:

1. _____ We find the material complete and satisfactory in its present form.

2. _____ In order that our book be complete and satisfactory we recommend the following corrections.

If you have checked number 2, please list the corrections you would make. Be sure to include sentence number and page number for reference purposes. Please list these corrections in the space below and use additional pages if necessary. If possible include pages to be corrected (or photocopies of these pages) with your list. Mailing addresses are listed below:

BEFORE April 15, 1981:
World Literature Committee
890 Atlanta Road
Marietta, GA 30060
(404) 427-2086

AFTER April 15, 1981
4th World Literature Conference
c/o
2006 Strongs Drive
Venice, CA 90291
(213) 392-8838

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NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
Simplicity is the keynote of our symbol; it follows the simplicity of our fellowship. We could find all sorts of occult and esoteric connotations in the simple outlines, but foremost in our minds were easily understood meanings and relationships.

The outer circle denotes a universal and total program that has room within for all manifestations of the recovering and wholly recovered person.

The square, whose lines are defined, is easily seen and understood; but there are other unseen parts of the symbol. The square base denotes Goodwill, the ground of both the fellowship and the member of our society. Actually, it is the four pyramid sides which rise from this base in a three dimensional figure that are the Self, Society, Service and God. All rise to the point of Freedom.

All parts thus far are closely related to the needs and aims of the addict seeking recovery and the purpose of the fellowship seeking to make recovery available to all. The greater the base, as we grow in unity in numbers and in fellowship, the broader the sides and the higher the point of freedom. Probably the last to be lost to freedom will be the stigma of being an addict. Goodwill is best exemplified in service and proper service is “Doing the right thing for the right reason.” When this supports and motivates both the individual and the fellowship, we are fully whole and wholly free.
We cannot change the nature of the Addict or Addiction . . .
We can help to change the old lie “Once an addict, always an addict,”
by striving to make recovery more available.
God, help us to remember this difference.
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FORWARD

"The full fruit of a labor of love lives in the harvest, and that always comes in its right season..."

The material for this book was drawn from the personal experiences of recovering addicts within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The text is based on an outline derived from the pamphlet (our "white book"), "Narcotics Anonymous." The first eight chapters are based on the topic headings in the "white book" and carry the same title. We have included a ninth chapter, 'Just for Today,' and a tenth chapter, 'More Will Be Revealed.' The remainder of the text is comprised of personal stories and appendices.

Following is a brief history of the book:

Narcotics Anonymous was formed in July 1953 with the first meeting held in Southern California. The Fellowship grew erratically, but quickly spread to various parts of the United States. From the beginning while membership was still very small and the need was seen for a "book on recovery" to help strengthen the Fellowship. The pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published in 1962.

However, the Fellowship still had little structure and the 1960's were a period of struggle. Membership grew rapidly for a time, and then began to decline. The need for more specific direction was readily apparent. N.A. demonstrated its maturity in 1972 when a World Service Office was opened in Los Angeles. The W.S.O. has brought the needed unity and sense of purpose to the Fellowship.

The opening of W.S.O. brought stability to the growth of the Fellowship. Today, there are many thousand recovering addicts in hundreds of meetings all across the United States and in many foreign countries. Today, the World Service Office truly serves a worldwide Fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous has long recognized the need for a complete text on addiction—a book about addicts, by addicts and for addicts, which would serve us much like the A.A. "Big Book" has served that fellowship.

This effort was strengthened shortly after the formation of W.S.O. with the publication of The N.A.
Tree, a pamphlet on service work. This pamphlet is the original "service manual" of the Fellowship. It has been followed by subsequent and more comprehensive volumes, and now the N.A. Service Manual.

The manual outlined a service structure which included a World Service Conference. The W.S.C., in turn, included a Literature Committee. With the encouragement of W.S.O., several members of the Board of Trustees and the Conference, work began.

As the cry for literature, particularly a comprehensive text, became more widespread, the W.S.C. Literature Committee developed. In October, 1979, the first World Literature Conference was held at Wichita, Kansas, followed by conferences at Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee.

The W.S.C. Literature Committee, working in conference and as individuals, have collected hundreds of pages of material from members and groups throughout the Fellowship. This material has been laboriously catalogued, edited, rewritten, assembled, dismembered and reassembled. Dozens of area and regional representatives working with the Committee have dedicated weeks and thousands of man-hours to produce the work here presented. But more importantly, those members have conscientiously sought to insure a "group-conscious" text.

In keeping with the spirit of anonymity, we, the Literature Committee, feel it appropriate to express our special gratitude and appreciation to the Fellowship as a whole, especially the many of you who contributed material for inclusion in the book. We feel that this book is a synthesis of the collective Group Conscience of the entire Fellowship and that every single idea submitted is included in the work, in some form or another.

This volume is intended as a textbook for every addict seeking recovery. As addicts, we know the pain of addiction, but we also know the joy of recovery we have found in the Fellowship and on the program of Narcotics Anonymous. We believe the time has come to share our recovery in written form with all who desire what we have found.

Appropriately, this book is devoted to informing every addict: JUST FOR TODAY, YOU NEVER HAVE TO USE AGAIN!
Therefore,

"With gratitude in our cleanliness, we dedicate our N.A. book to the loving service of our Higher Power that through the development of conscious contact with God, no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life."

We remain trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE-III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

At Memphis, Tennessee
February 8, 1981
INTRODUCTION

This book is the shared common and personal experience of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome you to read this text, trusting that you will choose to share with us the new life we have found. We have by no means found a "cure" for addiction. We offer only a proven plan for daily recovery.

In N.A., we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty-five years, more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are grateful to the A.A. fellowship for showing us the way to a new life.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, as adapted from A.A., are the basis of our recovery program. We have only broadened the perspective of addiction. We follow the same path with a single exception; our identification as addicts is all-inclusive in respect to any mood-changing, mind-altering substance. "Alcoholism" did not cover the total spectrum as comprehensively as does addiction. We believe that we have been guided by a Greater Consciousness as a Fellowship, and are grateful for the Direction that has enabled us to build upon an already-proven program of recovery.

We have come to Narcotics Anonymous by various means and believe that as our common denominator is that we failed to come to terms with our addictions, however varied. Because of the degree and variety of addictions found within our Fellowship, we have approached the solution contained within this book in general terms. We pray that we have been searching and thorough, so that every addict who reads this volume will find the hope we have found.

Based on our collective experience, we believe that every addict, including the "potential" addict, suffers from an incurable disease of body, mind and spirit. We were in the grip of a hopeless dilemma. The solution of which is spiritual in nature. Therefore, this book will deal in great part with spiritual matters.
We are not a religious organization. Our program is a set of spiritual principles through which we are recovering from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Throughout the compiling of this work, the prevailing theme has been the conscious prayer and meditation:

"GOD, grant us knowledge that we may write according to Your Divine precepts; instill in us a sense of Your purpose, make us servants of Your will and grant us a bond of selflessness that this may truly be Your work, not ours, in order that no addict, anywhere, need die from the horrors of addiction."

Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It was for this reason that we began this work. We must always remember that as individual members, groups, and service committees, we are not, and should never be, in competition with each other. We work separately and together to help the newcomer and for our common good. We have learned, painfully, that internal strife cripples our Fellowship; it prevents us from providing the services necessary for growth.

It is our hope that this book will help the suffering addict find the solution we have found. Our purpose is to remain clean, just for today, and to carry the message of recovery.

Thank you,
WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE - LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
CHAPTER ONE

WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

The user may be unaware that a problem exists until, for example, the drugs run out and they begin to feel the early stages of withdrawal. Or, they keep using but start to notice if they try to stop, that they are unable, or when using they have lost control over the amount. We admitted that we used drugs, but many of us did not think we had a problem.

As practicing addicts, we were keenly aware of the difference between right and wrong. Many of us were convinced that we were right and the world was wrong, and used this belief to justify our self-destructive behavior. Many of us developed a loser's point of view which enabled us to pursue our addiction without the restraints of concern about our well-being. Simply, the loser's point of view focuses on the negative in all things.

We realized that our record had not been good, but that was due to being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or so we thought. We were yet to realize that our "bad luck" was caused by situations we had placed ourselves in, through the direct result of our drug use.
As practicing addicts, we could really get down and if we experienced a periodic jolt of self-awareness, it seemed as if we were two people instead of one, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. We became capable of depravity—of betrayal to ourselves and to others. Temporarily clean, we ran around trying to get it all squared away before our next spree. Sometimes we could do this very well, but later it seemed less important, and at the same time, more impossible. After years of trying to make ourselves happy with cars, sex and dope, we were unhappy and less satisfied than when it all started.

Some of us first saw the effects of addiction in the people we were close to. We became very dependent on people to carry us emotionally through life. We were always left disappointed and hurt when they had other interests, other friends and loved ones. We regretted the past; we feared the future. We were constantly searching for "the answer"—searching for meaninglessness and purposelessness. While using, we lacked the ability to cope with day-to-day affairs. As our addiction caught up to us, we found ourselves in and out of hospitals, jails and institutions more and more. Because of these experiences, we began to realize how screwed up our lives really were. Drugs could no longer hide the pain. We just wanted an easy way out. Suicide was on many of our minds. Our suicide attempts were often feeble, and only helped to contribute to our feelings of worthlessness. Part of ourselves could see what was happening; another part would not accept it. We were caught in an illusion of "what if," "if only," and "just one more try."

We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before considering the possible connection between drugs and our misery. We had used all sorts of drugs over the years and experienced numerous living problems as the result of our using and yet did not consider ourselves addicted. The problem was that most of the information available to us, before coming to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, came to us from misinformed people or others who also used heavily but did not
consider themselves to be addicted. We did not see our- 1 selves as being addicted, as long as we could periodically 2 stop using for a day, a week, or even a month or more. We 3 looked at the stopping, not the using. Of course, as our 4 addiction progressed, we thought of stopping less and less. 5 Many of us had reached the point where we saw ourselves 6 hopelessly deteriorating; by that time we asked ourselves, 7 "Could it be the drugs?"

Things did not get bad for some of us, at least on the 8 outside. We never considered ourselves addicts, although 9 some of us have used, misused and abused drugs for half of 10 our lives or more. The term "drug addict" conjured up vi- 11 sions of street crime, fear of the law, and needles. Our 12 belief was that the drug addict lived in a skid-row envi- 13 ronment. We believed we could not be addicts since we could 14 not fit into that picture. We looked at our differences 15 rather than our sameness. Yet the things we had in common 16 put us all in the same dimension, the dimension of addiction. 17

Did we want to stop using and could we do it alone? 18 What did we use and how did we use it? Did we "con" doctors 19 for prescriptions, telling ourselves that it was O.K. to use 20 these drugs because they were legal? Did we have more than 21 one prescription being filled at the same time by different 22 doctors? Did we need something to help us get going in the 23 morning, or something to slow us down at night? Were we 24 using illegal drugs and thinking there was nothing that 25 could be done to kick the habit? Were we in trouble with 26 friends, family, and/or the law because of drug-related 27 incidents?

Something inside said, "No more." We had begun to have 28 silent thoughts that maybe the dope was killing us. In a 29 rare moment of clarity, we were able to look at the whole 30 scene in all its insanity. We realized that drugs were en- 31 slaving us instead of setting us free. We were prisoners in 32 our own mind, condemned to slow execution by our own sense 33 of guilt. We had all but given up on ever getting help. 34

Our previous attempts to stay clean had always failed, caus- 35 ing us many years of pain and misery.
Our futures appeared hopeless until we found clean addicts who were willing to share. In the Fellowship of N.A., the desire to stop using was all that we needed in the beginning. Our recovery began with our first admission that we needed help. Denial of our addiction is what kept us sick and honest admission of our addiction enabled us to stop using. We were able to open up and ask for help by attending meetings. We went to meetings and heard people sharing their feelings and realized that we had felt those feelings ourselves. We were no longer alone. People told us they were addicts and that they were recovering. If they could do it, so could we. We feel from our experience that each individual has to answer the question, "Am I an addict?"

We began to accept ourselves as addicts when we made the connection between our drug use and our problems. We see many differences between us, but more importantly, we see similarities. The differing definitions of addiction are based on our "research" and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are many areas of honest disagreement in defining addiction. Some definitions seem to fit the facts better than others. We know our own viewpoint, but need to listen to others in the hope that we might come to a better understanding of addiction and the addict.

Addiction is a contradiction to living. It is a state of mind which relies on convincing ourselves that drugs are necessary to maintain our sense of well-being. For us, an addict is a person who uses drugs, in any form, to the extent that the individual cannot live normally with or without them. On one hand we sought feelings of superiority, and on the other, we accepted the most intolerable existence on earth.

Some of the highs felt great, especially in the beginning, but the things we had to tolerate to support our habits reflected desperation. We sank to the depths of stealing, lying, prostituting ourselves, and cheating our friends. We manipulated people and conditions and tried to control all of their actions. We failed to realize that the need for control sprang from the fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on
past failures and disappointments, prevented us from making meaningful choices.

Our addiction involved more than drug use. It aggravated our character defects and reinforced personality disorders. Failure and fear of failure began to invade every area of our lives as our addiction progressed. We, in the grip of a compulsion, were often forced to survive in any way we could, at all costs.

All through our usage we kept telling ourselves, "I can handle it." Maybe this was true in the beginning, but not now. We avoided people and places that did not condone our using. We spent our money on drugs, and if there was nothing left, we simply did not eat. We assumed everyone else was crazy, and that we were the only sane ones. The thought of running out of drugs left us with a sense of impending doom. Peace of mind was non-existent. The only relief was a comparatively short-lived "high." We had a distinct desire to consume drugs beyond our capacity to control them. Our using defied all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for drugs, but we yielded to it at the worst possible times. We did not have sense enough to know when not to begin. We went through stages of dark despair and we were sure that there was something wrong with us. Other times, we were under the illusion that we had things under control. We came to hate ourselves for wasting the talents with which we had been endowed and for the trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently, we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could help us. When loaded, we had no concern for the rest of the world.

The mental aspect of addiction comes with our inability to deal with life on its own terms. We tried drugs and combinations of drugs in an effort to cope with a seemingly hostile world. We dreamed of finding the right medication or fix, the magic elixir, that would solve our ultimate problem--ourselves. This reliance on drugs had harmed us emotionally. The fact is that we cannot successfully handle
any mind-changing or mood-altering substance. The addict
who only smoked pot or did non-narcotic drugs is in as much
danger as the "junkie." Our thrills turned out to be a habit
which eventually turned on us, almost killing us. We no longer
had an addiction; our addiction had us.

Drugs ceased to make us feel good. We could not get the
euphoria we craved. When we did seek help, we sought the
absence of pain.

If you think you might have a drug problem, you probably
do. Few of us set out to become addicted, because when we
used, we thought we were in our normal state. We sought eu-
phoria, the highest state of pleasure, at the outset of our
addiction. In the final stages of our disease, we used to
keep from getting sick. We used in order to survive because
it was the only way of life that we knew.

Many of us fall into the old pattern of thinking--remember-
ing only our "good" drug experiences; the fact that drugs could
make us feel great. Such selective thinking can destroy our
lives and our capacity to live.

Modern drug technology and media attention have made a
social anti-hero of the addict. Since many of us were street
addicts, we dealt in illicit drugs and lived criminally. This
could have something to do with our being different. Many of
us have participated in sub-cultural or bizarre behaviors that
may have given us different experiences than those of the non-
addict. The fact that those of us who have become addicted
come from all levels of society is no guarantee that we will
not end our addiction in jail or the graveyard. Miracles are
performed everyday when the laws of nature are suspended. The
most natural thing for an addict to do is to use. Everyday an
addict does not use, a miracle happens. Yet an active addict's
prognosis is poor.

Ironically, drugs can also drive addicts past normal human
limits, often helping them to win great fame or recognition,
until their obsession burns them out. The drug-induced state
can allow a person to exclude normal background awareness and to
focus on a single point. At first, this can be like a handy
magnifying glass used at will. Later, it can become a hor-
rible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up
continually until we find ourselves powerless to control what
is happening. Prescription addicts are usually slow to re-
cognize that they have a problem. Legal doses of prescribed
medication can addict a person because of unknown side-
effects, combinations with other drugs or an inborn suscep-
tability to addiction. We could get high to relieve the pain
of living, through the use of prescriptions, at school or at
work. We found it difficult to face life so we used drugs as
a means of escape.

Addiction isolated us from people except for the getting,
using, and finding ways and means to get more. Hostile, re-
sentful, self-centered and self-seeking, we cut off all out-
side interests from our lives. Anything not completely
familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and
isolation became our life.

Non-addicts have great trouble understanding our dilemma. It is often nearly impossible to make sense of our behavior
and the consuming drive to use, even after repeated and pro-
longed efforts to stay clean. Identification can guide us
in our recovery, since we can see a little of ourselves in
every addict. We thought of our addiction as hopeless
before finding the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Addiction is a treatable disease: as soon as we begin
to "treat" our addiction by working the Twelve Steps that
have worked repeatedly, we experience very positive results.
When our addiction is treated as a crime or moral deficiency,
we become rebellious and are driven deeper into our isolation.

Addicts who would otherwise waste away in institutions
very often respond to the love and fellowship offered in
N.A. Ours is a proven program of recovery. We have no
choice but to help one another, for the assurance and
strength of our own recovery lies in the helping of other
addicts.

The disease of addiction can also be seen in its social
aspects. Addiction in its broadest sense is a disease of
our times. It embraces all our social ills. Drug manufacture and the innovation of new drugs in modern times have created an availability of potentially addictive drugs never before known in the history of man.

One of the ancient dreams of man seems to be coming true; the ability of modern drug technology to combat disease and alleviate human suffering. Hidden in this blessing, however, is a cruel reversal of effect which is our addiction. The innate susceptibility to our disease through genetic factors and complete knowledge of the sources of our behavioral inclinations is of no concern in our recovery through N.A. The "why" is not important; the "what to do" is our chief question.

We feel it is important to share our experience, strength and hope with others who may suffer from our disease, letting them know what they can do, if they desire to recover.

Although some of us have not been street addicts, many of us have, and we consider the street addict the most conspicuous and the most vulnerable to the more severe abuses resulting from the stigma with which addiction is branded. In many locations, street addicts are processed as habitual offenders when treatment of their disease could restore them to productive lives.

We continued to use time and time again, despite the symptoms of withdrawal. There are many different symptoms of withdrawal from drugs. We can't list them all. We have, however, been addicted to thousands of drugs and know first hand how they feel and what the initial abstinence is like. In this, we can reassure each other and the newcomer that it will get better if they don't use. If we do use, in the face of withdrawal, the next time it will be worse.

Addiction is chronic, progressive and fatal. The cycle can be broken by not taking that first fix, pill, drink, or toke.

Like other incurable diseases, addiction can be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about being an addict provided we accept our dilemma and honestly take action. We are willing to admit without reservation that we are "allergic" to drugs. Common sense tells us that it would be insane to go back to the source of our "allergy." We, as recovering addicts,
can tell you that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. We regained good physical health many times only to relapse. Our past records show that it is impossible for us, as addicts, to use with control, no matter how well we may appear to be in control of our feelings.

Social adjustments failed to bring about recovery. We thought a suitable job or social relationship could be the answer to our dilemma. Addiction, in its progression, causes us to flounder and fail, consuming us with anger and fear.

Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience and love, are sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our living skills may be reduced to the animal level, if we have suffered long enough. The person within is submerged and the capacity to be human is lost. This is an extreme state, but most of us have been there.

Learning to live without drugs is complicated by the fact that it is so hard for many of us to accept our disease. Again, susceptibility and availability have combined in the addict to form dependency. Many of the doctors among us came into the Fellowship with an attitude of denial. We have found in the progression of our addictions that we had been devastated by the disease to the point where denial was futile. Part of the risk run by society in keeping the lid on our addiction is the social stigma that keeps the addict who might seek help from seeking it because of a fear of never being able to live it down.

Addiction is the disease and Narcotics Anonymous is a proven path of on-going recovery. Our experience shows that those who keep coming to meetings regularly, stay clean. We continue in our recovery until we die. In our addiction, we practiced dying. In our recovery, we practice living today! We can feel, care, love and be loved. We no longer have to be isolated, and in time, can feel free to go anywhere and do almost anything except use. We do not use because we do not want to. Today we have a choice.

Many of us sought answers but failed to find any we could use until we found each other. Most of us have become
very grateful in the course of our recovery. We have a disease
that we can recover from. Our lives can return to being useful,
in the course of our abstinence and through the working of the
Twelve Steps of N.A., explained in this book. The use of any
sort of medication may lead us back to active addiction. We
must be careful when seeking treatment from any doctor not
totally acquainted with our disease. We strongly suggest to
one another that we break our anonymity to the doctor admin-
istering drugs to us and trust that our medical records will be
kept confidential. One of the danger zones in our recovery is
that when we get ill and are prescribed legitimate medication,
it may lead us back to our drug of choice. We call this relapse.
All too many times, doctors who meant well, but did not know
of our disease, enabled our addictions. We cannot recover over-
night and we cannot expect sincere physicians to review their
options or methods of treatment overnight. Our place is to help
the addict who still suffers, particularly those who are seeking
help.
All of the psychological and social commentary ever written
on this subject has failed to answer this question thoroughly.
Rather than enter the area of medical theory and legalities, we
feel that it is more worthwhile to discuss the answers we have
found. Instead of concentrating on the problem, let's look at
the solution.
Narcotics Anonymous concerns itself with recovery. We all
know how to use drugs. We know the effect they have had on us.
The primary thing we are interested in is how to stay clean, how
to cope with life without using, how to handle unpleasant feel-
ings and emotions—in other words, how to get better. It was
conceivable in our addictive thinking that something would work
for us without any work on our part. That was how the drugs
worked. How wrong we were. It has been our experience that the
program works as long as we work it, just for today, to the best
of our ability.
The mind begins to accept new ideas which lead to a new
way of life as the grip of drugs and our past way of thinking
and doing begins to relax. We find ourselves no longer pressed
between those who use and those who don't in this new way of life. Our world constantly expands to include new associations and eventually we become members of society. Problems that had no solutions became transparent and unreal in the light of our new understanding. Old grudges and resentments fade as we loosen our sick point of view. A warm feeling of belonging replaces the hole in our gut left by our addictions. It is no accident—it's the way the program works. A miracle takes place as the drugs are washed from our bodies by daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects of our using. We come to understand that our recovery is a gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are made aware of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only that we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we stay clean, the more we will want to clear away the shame and falseness of our lives. It is a great gift to be a human being.

What we have just been describing are some of the benefits involved in recovery. There is only one alternative to recovery and that is the progression of our disease. The progression of our addiction has been compared to an elevator that is always going down. We have found that we can get clean at any level we want. Unfortunately, the nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with the fact. If you are an addict, you can find a new life through the program that would not otherwise be possible.

Many drugs require no extended period of use to trigger allergic reactions, although physical and mental tolerance can play a role. It is not how much we use that makes us addicts, but what it does to us. Certain things follow as usage continues. Setting aside the physical effects of addiction, as the regularity of usage increases, we become accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts; we forget what it was like before we started using. We forget the social graces, acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget how to work, forget how to express ourselves and show con-
1 concern for others and we forget how to feel. We, as recover-
2 ing addicts, have to relearn things forgotten and learn what we
3 have missed.
4 We may lose jobs, get divorced, lose friends and find our-
5 selves unable to account for these changes, as our disease pro-
6 gresses. Generally, our use of drugs increases with all these
7 changes or during intervals between changes. We can continue in
8 this condition indefinitely, or as our using increases, progress
9 rapidly in our addiction. If at any point we make the basic con-
10 nection between our use of drugs and the way things have been
11 going for us, we can begin recovery by admitting our need for
12 help.
13 We addicts value personal freedom highly. Perhaps because we
14 want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of
15 our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed.
16 We are never quite sure that our choice of action is based on a
17 conscious desire for continued clean time or an unconscious wish
18 to return to using.
19 Our addiction developed in us an emotional instability. We
20 became very sluggish or glum without drugs. Some of us felt we
21 had to have drugs to deal with our feelings. We felt, as if our
22 world was hollow, dull, meaningless; that there was no purpose
23 to life but to use and to find ways and means to get more. Some
24 of us eventually landed in the mental hospitals, fearing for our
25 sanity. What we learned behind the walls of the various insti-
26 tutions was that the most sincere and constructive efforts of
27 medicine and psychiatry had few answers for us that we could use
28 in achieving ongoing recovery. We, in the later stages, are
29 usually the very last to recognize our need for help. The prin-
30 ciple of one addict helping another pyramids and the solution to
31 our dilemma has begun.
32 We have also learned that there are few alternatives for the
33 addict. If we continue to use, the problem will become progres-
34 sively worse; we are on the path that leads to skid row, hospitals,
35 jails, institutions or to an early grave.
36 Incarceration and institutionalization sometimes led us to
37 the realization that the drugs were letting us down. Where these
drugs once had given us the feeling that we could handle whatever situation that might come down, we became aware that these same drugs were largely responsible for our having gotten into our very worst predicaments. Some of us hit many institutions and few or no jails. Some of us may spend the rest of our lives in jail for a drug-related crime or a crime committed under the influence.

Addiction is a disease which manifested in us at an indeterminable point in our lives. Some recovering addicts believe that the disease was present long before the first pill, fix, drink or toke. Some of us believe that the disease is hereditary, due to parents, grandparents or other relatives who are addicted. How we got the disease, however, is of no immediate importance to us. What concerns us at present is how we can continue our own recovery while helping the addict who still suffers.

We have found through our experiences that addiction has three major phases, the first of which is practicing addiction. We were using in a manner which seemed to be social or at least controllable with little indication of the disaster which the future held for us. This phase varies in duration from addict to addict. We have found that it is very difficult to help anyone in this phase.

At some point, our using became uncontrollable and definitely anti-social. This phase of uncontrollable using is suffering addiction and usually began when things were going well and we were in situations that allowed us to use as frequently as we wanted. It is marked by a decline and usually the end of good living as we knew it. We went from a state of drugged success and well-being to complete spiritual, mental and emotional bankruptcy. This state of decline varies in length. We can only say that for some it was a matter of months or even days and for others it was a matter of years. We who are recovering and thus alive today, tried to moderate, substitute or even stop using. Those of us that did that did not seek to change died from the disease, went to prison, or were committed to mental institutions as hope-
lessly insane. Some of us who sought out changes were graced
by the life force of the universe and found the N.A. program.

It was when we were suffering that we were willing to stop
using. It was much easier to help suffering addicts when we
were in the latter part of the suffering stage for it was easier
for us to see the destruction, disaster and delusion of our
using. Many times when the problems caused by drug usage were
staring us in the face we could not see it as a problem, until
we reached our bottoms.

The third major phase is in our recovery. We, as recover-
ing addicts in the N.A. Fellowship, practice living and enjoy-
ing life on a day to day basis by living the Twelve Steps. We
realize that we are never cured and carry the disease within us
to the grave. We addicts, recovering in N.A., are convinced
that there is only one way for us to live, and that is the N.A.
way. Due to our Fifth Tradition and Twelfth Step, our primary
purpose in life is to stay clean by carrying the message to the
addict who still suffers.

We can die from untreated addiction. But before we die, the
disease takes from us our pride, our self-esteem, our families
and loved ones. And finally, it takes our very will to live.

We of Narcotics Anonymous were raised from hell to find that
the program is a way of life. We know that a new life is laid
out for us every day if we want it and don't use. A new place
awaits us in the society that, during our using, offered only
misgivings. We come to know success. We have found all this
through dependence on a Power greater than ourselves, a group
of our fellow addicts, and spiritual principles.
CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work."

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

The structure of Narcotics Anonymous is quite unlike any health or welfare agency known to us. Although N.A. practices may vary from place to place, all N.A. services are performed voluntarily by the addicts themselves and without
cost. N.A. does not accept money for its service, is not
funded by any public or private sources or agencies and
accepts no outside contributions.

   Addicts respond instinctively to honest sharing. The
fact that the addict can feel the unconditional love and judge
for themselves the "qualifications" revealed in the stories
of recovering addicts, awakens the notion that at last there
might be hope. The newcomer loses his fear when he discovers
that N.A. members give away the message of cleanliness in
order to stay clean. We of Narcotics Anonymous are currently
trying to bring about more communication, understanding, re-
respect, and cooperation between N.A. and any professional per-
son who works with addicts--so that more and more addicts may
be able to recover. With local groups in many communities,
we are part of an international fellowship.

   In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we make use of
things that have worked for those who have gone before us:
the Twelve Steps, the principles and the many positive tools
that enable us to make recovery possible. We have one primary
purpose--to stay clean and to help others who may turn to us
for help. We are united by our common problem, addiction.
Meeting, talking with, and helping other addicts, we are some-
how able to stay clean and to lose the compulsion to use, once
a dominant force in our lives.

   We are grateful also to see new people coming to meetings
from the streets. There is nothing that compares to a new
person freely talking about the pain and the endless hustle that
goes on out there. As a result, Narcotics Anonymous had had
more than twenty-five years of trial-and-error experience,
face-to-face, with literally hundreds of thousands of addicts.
This mass of intensive firsthand experience with all kinds of
problem drug users, in all phases of illness and recovery, is
unparalleled in therapeutic value. Narcotics Anonymous is here
to share freely with any addict who wants it.

   Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for
whom drugs in one form or another had become a major problem.
We had become so physically, mentally and spiritually ill that we became crazed, depressed and terrified people. We were sick people. The growing fellowship of N.A. supports us in our efforts of recovery. It gives us new friends who understand where we have been.

Our message of recovery is based on our own experience. Before coming to the Fellowship, we exhausted ourselves trying to use successfully, or trying to find out what was wrong with us. After coming to the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, we find ourselves among a very special group of people. Many were a great deal worse off than we were. Here we found hope. If the Narcotics Anonymous program worked for them, it might work for us. We began to ask questions and listened a little more closely to the suggestions. After all there's a chance we could get a little relief.

We do not think we are the only people who have alternatives to the problem of addiction, but we know that the N.A. program works for us. We have seen it work for every one who honestly and sincerely wanted to stop using. The main point is that we meet people, addicts like ourselves, yet they are clean for months or years. We watched and listened to them openly and realized that these people had found a way to live and be happy without drugs.

In all honesty the most we can do for the newcomer is to share our experience, strength and hope and be ready to help when asked. If we go beyond this we risk becoming enablers. Most of us can remember doing nothing as long as we could get someone else to take care of us. We don't want the help we can offer to rob the new person of that essential ingredient of living which setting their own house in order can bring. We addicts have no choice but to help one another. In helping others our own recovery is aided. We don't criticize them better we love them better. As several great men have pointed out, there is more to it than a simple love. We are really talking about survival in a world where we have ceased to be functioning members of
society. This program has given us a belief in a loving God that works through people. Never should we claim to have all the answers, but we can share our experience and the things that work for us. N.A. offers alternatives and suggestions that have worked for others.

We don't want to settle for the limitations of the past. We want to examine and re-examine all our old ideas, and constantly improve on them or replace them with new ones.

We, in N.A., are men and women who have discovered and admitted that we are powerless over our addictions. We have learned that we must live without drugs if we are to avoid the disaster we created for ourselves and those close to us.

The consequences of our addictive using (and thinking) have also varied. Some of our members had literally become derelicts before turning to N.A. for help. We had lost families, possessions and self respect. We had committed many offenses--against society, families, and employers. Others among us had never been jailed or hospitalized, nor had we lost jobs because of our using. Even those men and women finally came to the point where they realized that using was interfering with normal living. When they discovered that they could not live without drugs, the, too, sought to help themselves through N.A., rather than prolonging their pain. The program works a miracle in our hearts. We become new people. The Steps and abstinence give us daily reprieves from our self-imposed life sentences.

We become free to move about without compulsion or guilt.

Communication is a very important part of our program. Without it we would not have the chance to share ideas and new aspects of the program with each other. What one group or area learns can and should be shared with other areas. This is how the Fellowship of N.A. has grown and spread over the past twenty-five years. We need each other.

Our meetings contain a certain atmosphere of empathetic and universal feelings which all addicts have in common. In this atmosphere of recovery, we found we were very much at home and were able to start a new way of life with these people who
called themselves addicts. The unconditional love we find at meetings makes it possible to relax and review our assumptions about ourselves and reality. Working the Steps will give us a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, correct old defects, right old wrongs, and lead us to help others. As we begin the process of change by honestly listening to the stories of people we meet in an N.A. meeting or in private fellowship, we will want to try out some of the solutions that have worked for others. Maybe their solution is part of our solution. Trying to be all things to all people, we have often forgotten what we really think and feel. As we begin to come out of our fog, the layers of phoniness will peel off like the skin of an onion. When the layers are gone, our real selves will remain.

As we attend meetings and hear the experience, strength, and hope of others, we will come to notice that we are not the only ones with problems. We will eventually hear someone who flat out makes us feel lucky by comparison. We will grow to know gratitude, to see where we came from and how far we have progressed. We have all tried many ways to overcome our addictions, and sometimes temporary recovery was possible but always it was followed by an even deeper involvement with addiction than before.

Let new ideas flow into you. Ask questions. The principles of living incorporated in the Twelve Steps may seem strange to you, but they work. This program works for those willing to work it.

We have found that trying to help another addict is good for us whether the addict we try to help uses what we have to offer or not. For this reason, N.A. groups attempt to concentrate primarily on this person-to-person service, without getting involved in any outside enterprise no matter how worthwhile.

We feel loved. More and more we feel we would rather be with each other when we are thinking negatively than by ourselves. Good comes from being with others; loneliness and negativity fall by the wayside. Something memorable,
precious, and beneficial stems from clean togetherness. There is a security of being real; of having brothers and sisters on the road to recovery is a comforting feeling. We recover together.

The only requirement to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous is a desire to stop using. We don't have to be clean when we get here, but after the first meeting, we suggest that you keep coming back to the meetings and coming clean. We don't have to wait for an overdose, or jail sentence, to get help from N.A.; nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is no recovery. It is possible to arrest the need to use with the help of the Twelve Step program of N.A. and the Fellowship of recovering addicts in N.A. We want to reach out to whoever reads this and to lay our lives and our hearts on the line to show what this program and the spirit of N.A. has done for us.

In other words, if you think you have a drug problem, it is likely that you do; and our program might have something special to offer.

We want desperately for the place where addicts recover to be a safe place, free from outside influences. We feel safe at our closed meetings. Everyone is an addict. We feel totally free to express ourselves because no law enforcement agencies are involved. No one judges, stereotypes, or moralizes us. We are not recruited and it doesn't cost anything. N.A. does not provide counseling or social services. The rooms are filled with men and women from all walks of life and persuasions. We do have one must in N.A.: NO DRUGS OR PARAPHERNALIA BE ON YOUR PERSON AT MEETINGS.

In a sense, the Program is a way for addicts to find the Higher Power that traditional religions have pointed to. The difficulty here is that we can quickly fall prey to the notion that we were not sick, but merely misinformed, if we stop doing the things that began our recovery. In the days before N.A. began to serve the needs of the growing numbers of addicts in our population, spontaneous recovery through religion was rare and quick to fade. Claim of a spiritual awakening is worthless
if the life of the individual is not changed for the better.

Upon entering the Fellowship, some notices a strong spiritual glow among members. Then we could see and feel that a Higher Power was at work in N.A. After having a few months in the Fellowship, we see how the spiritual need for a Higher Power keeps us clean.

Our program is in fact a way of life. We learn the value of principles such as humility, surrender, and service. The idea that we have to do it alone is obsolete. It helps things go more smoothly when we find sponsors to confide in and let them help us. We learn the art of helping others appropriately, without creating resentments.

We, of Narcotics Anonymous, do not promise to have all the answers, but we've found that our lives steadily improved if we didn't use and learned to maintain our spiritual condition. In time we met an addict seeking recovery and discovered ourselves really able to respond to their needs.

We gave others what we found. The truth is that the more we give in this way, the more we have to offer. Our own needs are met when we learn to live for others. Through practicing our honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try, we develop humility, tolerance, and patience. We are able to love the unlovable and discover self-acceptance. We are not likely to create problems in our daily living.

We finally realize we have a choice in the matter of our lives.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, our new friends and our sponsors help us to deal with our feelings. In N.A. our joys are multiplied by sharing our good days with our fellows, and our sorrows are lessened when we share our bad days. For the first time in our lives, we don't have to experience anything alone. Not only do we have the group but hopefully, as time progresses, we will develop a relationship with a God of our own understanding that will always be with us.

We learn to experience feelings and realize that the feelings themselves can do us no harm, unless we act on
them. We learn to call someone if we have a feeling we can-
not handle, and by sharing that feeling with a friend, we
learn to work through it. Chances are that our friend has
had a similar experience and can relate what worked for him.
By close work with a sponsor, we can utilize the Twelve Steps
of the program as a guide to dealing with situations we have
not dealt with in the past. Sponsorship is a give and take
partnership, with both gaining strength from the relation-
ship. It was suggested that we look for a sponsor as soon
as we became acquainted with members in our area. We look
for someone who has been down a path similar to ours, under-
stands where we are coming from, and has learned to cope with
the same types of situations. We, who are recovering, must
share with others. We have to in order to maintain our pro-
gress in the N.A. program and our ability to function without
drugs. Being asked to sponsor a new member is a privilege,
so don't hesitate to ask a person with whom you can identify.
Sponsorship is a rewarding experience for both, and we are
all here to help and to be helped. Get phone numbers and use
them. Ask questions about the program and get acquainted with
the people.

Many books have been written about the nature of addiction.
This book primarily concerns itself with the nature of re-
covery. If you are an addict and have found this book, please
give yourself a break and read it!
CHAPTER THREE

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these—all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible.

In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we were irresponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our humiliation, guilt, inferiority and feelings of inadequacy.
Many of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work or went to work loaded. Many of us stole to support our habit. We hurt the ones we loved, whatever it took to get that fix, pill, drink or joint. We denied all these things and told ourselves we could handle it. We were looking for something new in life, possibly a way to be accepted. Eventually we started looking for a way out. We didn't face life on life's terms. In the beginning, using was fun. It became a habit and then it was necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was not apparent to us. We continued on the path of destruction, unaware of where it was leading us. We had the disease and did not know it. We avoided reality through the use of drugs. The pain and misery was postponed. When we came down, our problems came back, and were compounded with additional problems that had built up. We felt the need to use more often as our disease progressed.

We knew we needed help, but had nowhere to go. Most of us explored different alternatives. Doctors didn't understand our dilemma. Usually they helped our disease by giving us prescriptions. Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us anything in hopes that we would stop using. We tried substituting one drug for another and this only created a vicious cycle. We tried limiting our usage to "social" amounts, but our success with this was short-lived or non-existent.

Some of us sought spiritual guidance through churches, different religions, meditation and cultism. Some of us sought cure by geographical change, blaming our surroundings and living situations for our problem. This attempt just gave us new people to take advantage of. Some of us sought approval through sexual activities and change of peers. This approval-seeking got us back where we started from, or worse. Some tried marriage, divorce and desertion of our families. Many tried psychiatrists and institutions. All these attempts at controlled usage or abstinence were futile.

We had reached a point in our lives where we had become a lost cause to society. Our worth to our jobs, families and
friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed and unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We didn't know what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, we had to use more and more to mask the feeling of hate. We were sick and tired of pain and trouble. We were frightened and ran from the fear, but no matter how far we ran, the fear followed us. We were hopeless, useless and lost. Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure had become our way of life and self-esteem was non-existent. The peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are, acted on us. To some of us, our appearance didn't matter. We had no pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we looked. For some, personal hygiene became a thing of the past. For others, it became an obsession. We tried to cover up our inner pain with outside appearances. Any hope of being anything different disappeared. Helplessness, emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were complete failures. Personality change was what we really needed. Change from a self-destructing to a self-affirming pattern of living was imperative. We started experiencing how powerless we really were. Nothing seemed to relieve the paranoia and fear. We hit bottom and became ready to ask for and accept help.

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and found the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first N.A. meeting in utter defeat. We were searching for something, but we did not know what. After sitting in a meeting, we felt that people cared and were willing to be patient with us. Although our heads told us we would never make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by insisting we could. We found that no matter what our thoughts or past actions were others had preceded us. Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not alone. We were told that if we put things ahead of our clean time, the program would not work. Nothing happens in the room but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We
learned old friends, places and ideas were threatening to our recovery. We had to change our playmates, playgrounds and playthings.

When we came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we faced many disturbing realizations. One: we were powerless over our addictions and our lives were unmanageable; two: we are not responsible for our disease but we are responsible for our recovery; and three: we can no longer blame people, places and things for our addiction. We had to own up to our problems and our feelings.

In N.A., we learned that members concentrated on recovery and how they felt, not what they had done in the past. We found that the ultimate weapon for recovery was the recovering addict. Having realized that we were unable to maintain on our own, some of us immediately began experiencing depression, anxiety, hostility and resentment. We began to feel emotional pain that we had always been afraid to feel. We began to grow and open up into our new lives that we had found in N.A. Many of us felt that our lives, due to petty frustrations, minor setbacks and losses, were not getting any better. An honest look was often a grateful one. It was in those times that many of us found out who we were. It allowed us to make important discoveries like "it's O.K. to hurt and feel the pain."

Today we have feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, sadness and friendship. Before we were either elated or depressed with very little in between. Our negative sense of self was replaced by a positive concern for others. Our own problems seemed to resolve themselves. It is a great gift to be a human being, and the opportunities we seek are determined by our own sense of self-worth. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we degrade ourselves in our own eyes. We have had enough of self-destruction. We want to learn to do the things that will transform us into self-affirming people.

The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't normal. When we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass away and we start to learn to live again. Continued abstinence,
belief in a God of our understanding, and participation in the program will restore us to sanity.

What a change from how we used to be! That's how we know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that ever convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, instead of trying to change the people and situations that irritated us. It gave us a Twelve Step blueprint for doing just that. By working the Steps, we came to accept our Higher Power's will and this acceptance led us down the road of recovery. We lost our fear of the unknown through practice of the Twelve Steps. We were freed to live and enjoy life just for today without the old ghosts of our addiction haunting us in the morning of every new day.

We all have our personal stories of recovery, and everyone has their own way of working this program. This is the way the program works. It is available to each addict seeking recovery. Our personal natures differ, so our experiences of recovery vary.

Recovery is a beautiful chance that many addicts thought had passed them by until the found the Fellowship of N.A. It's the chance to live again. Recovery from the disease of addiction encompasses many things: carrying the message to the suffering addict; being with people we really love and care about; spiritual principles; a Higher Power of our own understanding; a sincere desire for ongoing recovery; open-mindedness; loving service and, of course, the vital spiritual experience that results in and perpetuates the expansion of Narcotics Anonymous.
CHAPTER FOUR

HOW IT WORKS

If what you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovering possible.

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 inure 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 those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

28
This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember --EASY DOES IT.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are Honesty, Openmindedness, and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the problem of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

The substitution of alcohol has caused a great many addicts to form a new addiction pattern, which in its progression brings as many problems as before. We seem to forget that alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. It would appear that we are people with addictive personalities who are strongly susceptible to alcoholic addiction.

Are we sure we want to stop using? Do we understand and believe that we have no real control over drugs? Do we recognize that in the long run, we don't use drugs—they use us? Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop using or control our using failed? Do we know that drugs have the power to change us into liars, thieves, and schemers? Do we know in our guts, that as successful drug users, we have failed? We admit to ourselves that everytime we hurt someone, we were loaded, or trying to get loaded.

When we came to N.A., we were physically, mentally and spiritually bankrupt. We hurt long enough and badly enough that we were willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. To live by the example of those who had faced our dilemma, and had found a way out, seemed to be our only hope.
When we first came into the Fellowship of N.A., we were often resentful at the suggestions some of the members made to us. Regardless of who we are, where we have come from, or what we have done, we are accepted in N.A. Our addiction gives us all a common ground for understanding one another.

When we were using, reality became so painful that oblivion was preferable. We had to keep other people from knowing about our pain. We isolated ourselves, and lived in prisons built out of our own loneliness. Through this desperation, we sought out Narcotics Anonymous.

After attending a few meetings, we began to feel like we finally belonged somewhere. It was in these meetings that we were first introduced to the Twelve Steps of N.A. We work them in the order they were written, and we use them on a daily basis. They are our solutions. They have become our survival kit, for addiction is a deadly disease. Our Steps are suggested only, but they are the principles that make our recovering possible.

STEP ONE
We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean. We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we open the door to a power greater than ourselves.

We have an incurable, progressive, terminal disease called addiction. It doesn't matter whether we just take a few pills, fix eight times a day, suck on a pipe, drink bottles of cough remedy behind drug stores, or have one tranquilizer with our first martini each day—we have certain things in common, no matter to what degree or what kind of addict we are.

When we hit bottom, we were searching for an answer—looking for a way out. We reached out and there was an answer. Until we took Step One, we were full of reservations. We felt
different. Upon working Step One, we affirmed our surrender
to the principles of N.A., and only then did we overcome the
alienation of being a drug addict. We became a part of society.

Where is help? How did we get it? What was it? We went to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. We are inclined to be skeptical. We needed proof. In that N.A. meeting was our proof. There we found people like ourselves with the same, or worse, patterns of drug dependency and failure, yet they were clean. They smiled. Their eyes were clear. They cared for each other. They introduced themselves to the newcomer and made them feel welcome. During the meeting, we heard a little bit about ourselves. We understood and believed that we had no real control over drugs. We accepted the fact that every attempt we had made to control our using had failed. We knew in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something we didn't want to be, and we of all people had surely had enough of self-destruction. We wanted first to learn, then to do the things that would help us become self-affirming people.

We had to take Step One. We had to admit that we are powerless and we had to continue going to meetings to hear other addicts talk about this powerlessness. Do we understand and believe that we have no real, long term control over drugs? Do we fully accept the fact that every attempt on our part to taper off, or stop using, or to control our using had failed? Do we know in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something that we don't want to be: liars, thieves, schemers?

Step One means that we don't have to make excuses for the way we are, and that is a great freedom. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. It took a while, for some of us, to realize how unmanageable our lives had become; for others, this was about the only thing of which we could be sure. In a way, we were like gamblers, and we didn't like the odds against us. This is the way we recover when we
hit bottom; it's like the slide has stopped. With the admission of complete defeat, we stopped it right there.

After struggling through the daily burden with the monkey on our backs, we reached despair. When we were beaten, we became willing. The pain of working the program did not seem as great as the pain of addiction, so we surrendered. The hole in our gut was filled with a new understanding of our place in the world and love for others. As we got clean and worked this Step, we were released from our chains. We are now free people. None of the Steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of the Steps; we live them.

Some of us found getting clean a battle. The program is simple. No one ever said it was easy. Recovery is a contact process. We don't have to hug each other but it helps. We read this book and attend N.A. meetings. We see for ourselves if the Fellowship has something to offer us. It is not where we are that counts, but where we are going!

None of us stumbled into this Fellowship brimming with love, honesty or open-minded willingness. We have all reached the point where it seemed we could not longer continue because of intense pain: physical, mental and spiritual. However, life was not unbearable; it only seemed unbearable because of our old familiar ways and our thinking. We found that we had no choice but to change, or go back to using. All that was required was willingness. When we gave it our best go, it worked for us as it has worked for others. When we could stand our old ways no longer, we began to change. All that was required is that we try. Only under attack by severe and unyielding pain did the walls begin to crumble.

We began to see where we had rationalized the most errant sort of nonsense in order to justify the mess we had made of our lives. We could admit that we were truly powerless over our addiction and that our lives were unmanageable. We could admit complete defeat, and the help came.

This was a great paradox for us--we who were so proud of our self-sufficiency and will power. But life had brought us
little happiness. We had used our will power a lot. The more we exerted our will, the worse things got. Often, when things got really bad, we had said, "This time, I have got to get my act together." By sheer will power we had gotten clean, temporarily. When we began to see that will power alone wasn't going to pull us through anymore, we tried countless other remedies—counselors, psychiatrists, hospitals, lovers, new towns, new jobs—everything we tried, failed. We quit for a day, a week or a month perhaps, but sooner or later we took that first pill, fix, drink or toke and we were gone again—worse than ever. None of our best efforts got us anywhere in the long run. Our unaided will was not enough.

We had nothing left to lose. We gave up—quit struggling—surrendered, completely and unconditionally. Then and only then did we begin to recover from the disease of addiction. Recovery begins with the first admission of powerlessness. From that point forward, we can see that every clean day is a successful day, and that any seeming failure is only a temporary setback.

We quit fighting. We accept our addiction and life the way it is. We became willing to do whatever was necessary to stay clean, even those things we didn't like doing. We had been beaten by our addictions, and left miserable and desperate. We were addicts. Drugs would no longer do for us what they had once done.

We had been beaten into a corner by our own actions, and we were in the grip of an overwhelming addiction. We had found hope. We began to see that the Steps of the program would be our source of strength and that the obsession for drugs will eventually disappear. We saw that we could learn to function in the world we live in, that we, too, could find meaning and purpose in life, and that we could be rescued from insanity, depravity and death.
STEP TWO

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

1 We have a disease: progressive, incurable and terminal.
2 The most amazing single fact about the disease is that we went out and bought it on the time plan! That is insane. Think about that--you, me, everyone we meet in N.A.; the junkie snatching purses on the street, and the sweet ladies hitting two or three doctors for their perfectly legal prescriptions. All of us have this one thing in common--we buy the disease that kills us and, one way or another, we usually pay for it, a bag at a time, a few pills at a time, or a bottle at a time until we die. That is at least part of the insanity of addiction. The price may seem higher for the girl who prostitutes herself for her fix than it is for the woman who merely lies to her doctor; but ultimately, both pay with their lives. Ask yourself this question: Do I believe it would be insane to walk up to someone and say, "Would you please sell me my own death--on the time plan?" or "May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?" If you can agree that this would be an insane thing comparable to giving yourself an injection of deadly poison, only slower, you should have no trouble with the Second Step.

The Second Step is the most important thing that must happen for us to achieve any sort of ongoing recovery. The First Step leaves us where we need to come to believe in something that can help us with our powerlessness and sense of helplessness. Belief became the most important thing for us to work on. We have some type of belief and unless we examine it and seek to improve it, it may be insufficient to give us recovery. Certainly our belief didn't help us with our active addiction. We now have a workable idea of a Higher Power.

You may be one of us who says, "I need help with my drug problem and I can see that N.A. has that alright, but the Second Step says this Power greater than ourselves will restore
us to sanity and I'm not crazy. I just can't handle drugs." Many of us started out with that attitude. Our first instinct is to say "no way." But when we approach it with an open mind, and talk and listen to others, we begin to see evidence of some power that cannot be fully explained. Confronted with this, most of us will at least admit to the possibility of a greater power. Eventually, we will come to some kind of personal understanding we can use.

Belief is the beginning. It is helpful to stop at this point to review our thinking in this respect. We should not take the chance that our understanding of a Power greater than ourselves is sufficient. The Power can be the group itself or it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Power cares about you. If you can accept the fact that a large number of addicts like yourself, have found a way, in the program of Narcotics Anonymous, to live clean, then you only have to believe what you see in order to experience Step Two.

N.A. has many members. This collective Spiritual Power is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What is impossible for one alone is often light work for many, because the many are a greater power than the one alone. You don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power greater than yourself! Just look around with an open mind and you will see a positive Power all around N.A. You can call it love, or harmony, or peace, or cleanness, or good, or you can call it God. It doesn't matter, and by looking and listening as openly as you can, you find that N.A. has the Power to help addicts.

The Higher Power we use in N.A. is a lot like this: We begin by simply admitting to the possibility of a power greater than ourselves. From the very beginning, we discover that power in our lives, and that Power lives in the Fellowship.

We had no trouble admitting that addiction had become a destructive power greater than ourselves. It logically follows that there can also be a constructive power greater than our-
selves. When drugs are washed from our bodies through daily 
abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects, a 
miracle takes place. Many fortunate things occur mysteriously, 
but there are no accidents. We come to understand that our 
recoveries are a gift from a Power greater than ourselves. 
There is a spirit that is guiding all living things. Call it 
Higher Power or whatever you like. If you choose, call it 
nothing at all, but find it, and learn to benefit from its 
power. You will gain a new life--free from drugs and the pain 
they have caused.

We have begun to see only recently how much a Higher Power 
has to offer. Clean living is only the beginning of a new life. 
Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of accept-
ance.

We gradually begin to find some order in the universe, and 
accept that "some power" was supplying us with a conscience we 
had never had before, and was somehow giving us the power to 
overcome the compulsion to use. It certainly wasn't us, indi-
vidually. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of 
life know what our real needs are and will take care of us when 
undisturbed by self-will.

We learn to keep a watchful eye on our daily H.A.L.T.S. 
maintenance: We eat when Hungry; we talk with a recovering 
addict when Angry or Lonely; we rest when Tired; and when we 
begin to take ourselves Seriously, we get to an N.A. meeting 
and share. Sanity is having our priorities in order. We don't 
use drugs; we go to meetings; and through the N.A. program, we 
learn to rely on God to provide what we need on a daily basis. 
We have been restored to sanity as far as the obsession to 
use is concerned.

The important thing to remember as the urge to use occurs 
is that just because the mind is asking for drugs, doesn't mean 
the body is. We are so into denial and over-controlling our 
emotions that the occasional thought of drugs may be the only way 
our mind knows to get our attention. The mind signals drugs 
when the body may actually be asking for vitamins, food, rest or
companionship. So we need daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance.

Most addicts have strong feelings about their Higher Power and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding of Higher Power. The strength to move into action comes from our Higher Power.

Asking for help in specific terms usually precedes getting that help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready to receive the help we need.

We need to accept this step to start our road to recovery. When our belief has grown to some point of comfort, we are ready for Step Three.

**STEP THREE**

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

As practicing addicts, our will and our lives were controlled by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We were trapped by our need for connections and cash. Then, when we got the drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe a few days. During that time our total being, the mind, body, the soul was dominated by the drug.

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages of addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and then the drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our nerves were jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. Either we suffered withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all addicts, the day comes when there is no longer a choice. We must have more drugs. Whether we are under the influence or not, our will, our lives and every single action is directly controlled by drugs.

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step,
anyone can take it. We don't have to be religious. All that is required is a willingness to believe. We had to be willing to do anything to get that next fix. What have we got to lose?

We have only to believe what we see with our own eyes in the transformed lives of other N.A. members. That's all it takes—an open mind. If the word God bothers you, as it did many of us in the beginning, substitute Recovery, Good, Love, N.A., Peace or anything positive, just so you mean it.

None of these Steps of N.A. work by magic. They work when they are lived. The Steps of N.A. are easier to live by than the law of the needle, bottle, pill or joint. If you want to stay clean and are willing to do a few simple things and are honest with yourself, we guarantee that you can recover.

We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave our best effort to the program, it worked for us as it has worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say "We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It says, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him." We made the decision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. We did. For the first time since that first high, we have made a decision for ourselves. If you understand God to be simply whatever keeps the rest of us clean, that's fine. Ask that Power to take care of you as it takes care of us—even if it makes you feel stupid! Go off by yourself and say silently, "God, I've made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems and I ask you to take care of me and show me how to live."

When you honestly try, it will work. Many of us start our day with that prayer or a similar plea: "Thy will be done."

The release by letting go and letting God helps us develop what works here and now. We can experience this release daily by using the N.A. program.

In the Third Step, we simply recognize that there is a force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force.
We let good things happen to us. Every action we took in regard to drugs was an effort to get comfortable. It did not work, or we wouldn't be where we are today. When we turn to the God of our own understanding for care and direction and guidance, we learn the real meaning of comfort.

If we have come this far in the N.A. program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. However, the change may not be as fast nor as dramatic as we wish. We turned to drugs because we are people who demand instant gratification and drugs gave us that instant satisfaction. We are impatient people. It is one of life's great problems for us. Just because we stop taking drugs, the problem doesn't immediately go away.

We find that we will continue to have living problems. There are bills to be paid. We still have to function in society. Most of us still have families. We still have many of the same fears, doubts and insecurities. In fact, because we are now facing life without anesthesia, these problems appear to be more difficult and painful than ever. Do not lose heart. At these times in our recovery, the Third Step is our greatest source of strength and courage. We are no longer bogged down by addiction. We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a power greater than ourselves. We are now a part of the Ultimate Reality which has brought Order out of Chaos. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, remorse, self-pity, anxiety, depression and a thousand other ills.

Day by day, we discover the magnitude of the Third Step. This is the Step where we come into contact with sanity we are promised in Step Two. Reliance on a spiritual way of life is now possible for us. Our addiction is no longer a roadblock to God-consciousness. We are slowly beginning to lose those paralyzing feelings of hopelessness. We who have lived in darkness and horror for so long begin to walk freely in the sunlight of reality.
We find that our mood-swings are less dramatic. We have
natural highs followed by occasional lows. We are beginning
to gain balance and harmony. We have learned to stop fight-
ing and are learning to live. The only price is to quit
fighting, surrender quietly and let the God of our own under-
standing take care of us.

We have come to enjoy clean living and want more of the
good things that the N.A. Fellowship holds for us. We know
now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want
all we can get. We are now ready for our first honest self-
appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.

STEP FOUR

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of
ourselves.

Step Four helps us see exactly what our problems are and
shows us our strengths.

Let's face it, when we were using, we weren't very honest
with ourselves. We are finally beginning to become honest when
we admit our addiction has whipped us and that we need help.
It took a long time to get where we could admit we were beaten.
We are probably not going to recover--physically, mentally or
emotionally--overnight. Step Four is going to help us toward
recovery more than we can imagine. Most of us were surprised
to find that we had many good points in our inventory. Ask
anyone who has some time on the program and who has the kind
of life you want for yourself, they will tell you that the
Fourth Step was a turning point in their lives.

Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step
as if it were a confession of how horrible they are--what a
bad person they had been. This is not the purpose of the
Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old,
useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the neces-
sary strength and insight to enable us to grow in this new way
of life. A binge of emotional sorrow over real or imagined wrongs will not help us. In fact, it can be quite harmful.

Our purpose is to be rid of guilt--not wallow in it! We must be done with the past, not cling to it. We want to look our past in the face and see it for what it was--and then to release it so that we can live today. The past, for most of us, has been a ghost in the closet. We have been afraid to open that closet for fear of what that ghost may do to us.

You don't have to do this alone. Your will and your life are now in the hands of the Source of all strength--tap into the Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looks impossible to most of us. It is--if we are operating under our own "power." Take a few quiet moments before writing and pray for "the power to carry it out."

Don't write the inventory with any particular person in mind. If you do that, you may wind up "slanting" what you write in order to please them. Only time will tell, and the Fifth Step will take care of itself. Stay here in the Now--you are on Step Four. We cannot do Step Five until we have completed Step Four.

You may approach the Fourth Step in a number of ways. It is advisable that before you start, go over the first Three Steps with your sponsor. Be comfortable with your understanding of these steps. Allow yourself the privilege of feeling good about what you are doing. Don't be driven as you were so long driven by drugs. We have been trashing about for a long time and have gotten nowhere. Now, we are going to take it easy and not let things frighten us.

With pen and paper, we begin the moral inventory. If the word moral bothers us, we call it a positive/negative inventory, or a good/bad inventory. The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, theorizing the inventory will not get it written. Sit down with a notebook, pray, pick up your pen and start writing! All we seek to do is find out which things about ourselves need changing. If we were grocers we would not hesitate to...

41
1 separate the rotten fruit from the good and throw out the
2 rotten fruit. The N.A. program has the Fourth Step with which
3 we examine ourselves.
4 It is important to remember where we came from so that we
5 don't return. We had to go through what we did to get to where
6 we are now.
7 A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, but
8 we never write too much. The inventory will fit the indivi-
9 dual, we simply write until the brain is emptied. Anything we
10 we think about is possibly inventory material. We realize how
11 little we have to lose and how much we have to gain. We plunge
12 into this step without reservation.
13 We remove these thorns in the side by listing them on paper.
14 As recovering addicts we sit down with paper and pen and pray
15 for God's help in revealing the defects that are causing pain
16 and suffering. We pray for the courage to be fearless and
17 thorough so that this inventory may help us put our lives in
18 order. When we pray and take action it always goes better for
19 us.
20 As using addicts, we lived under a regime of fear. In
21 attaining our new life, we want it free of unreasonable fear.
22 A lot of times we try to look good in front of other people,
23 but deep down inside we are really afraid of who we are and
24 where we came from.
25 We write down our fears, our resentments and our guilts.
26 We examine in depth our relationships with people, places and
27 situations asking ourselves what we have demanded of these re-
28 lationships. Often the answers will show that we are placing
29 unreasonable demands on reality. We find that we are demanding
30 other people to stop being who they are.
31 Most of us have found that we were neither so terrible nor
32 so wonderful as we supposed. Ultimately, we are just human,
33 with the same fears, longings and troubles as everyone else.
34 One of the greatest benefits of the N.A. program is discovering
35 that we need never be alone again. Others have felt as we feel.
36 Others have failed where we failed. They are here now in the
strength of the Fellowship, ready and eager to help us.

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing our past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to be rid of. This Step has the reputation of being difficult. In reality, it's quite simple.

As recovering addicts, we now have the right to reach for levels of greater comfort and we can reach them, when we get a handle on what we've been doing wrong. If we want to feel good, we have to stop doing the things that make us feel bad.

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use the tools available to us, and because we do not want to lose any of what we have gained, we will want to continue in the program. It is our experience that no matter how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting effect, unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough Step Five.

**STEP FIVE**

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

After taking a thorough Fourth Step, we have to deal with what we have found in our inventory. We have decided what our defects are, but we still don't know how to deal with them. We are told that if we keep these defects inside us, they could lead us to using again. We have to beware of half-measures on this Step. Holding on to our own "garbage" would eventually sicken us and hold us back from really taking part in this new way of life. If we take a Fifth Step, but we really don't get honest, we will have the same negative results that dishonesty brought us in the past.

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this, and will help to free the fear of facing ourselves and another human being. Many of us, before we take Step Five, fear that
1 God will turn away from us, when we reveal ourselves to Him.
2 It seemed unnecessary to some of us to admit the exact nature
3 of our wrongs to God. "God already knows all that stuff", we
4 rationalized. True, God does already know all that stuff, but
5 until we face God with it, we will never really believe that
6 He does. The admission must come from our own lips to be truly
7 effective for us.
8 For years, we have avoided seeing ourselves as we really
9 are. We were ashamed of ourselves and felt isolated from the
10 rest of the world. Now, we've got this shameful past trapped
11 on paper. We can sweep it out of our lives, if we face it and
12 admit it. It would be tragic mistake to have it all written down and then just shove it into a drawer.
13 We have feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we
14 really were, we would surely be rejected. Maybe this was be-
15 cause we had already rejected ourselves. We were so self-
16 centered that we didn't realize just how much we had in com-
17 mon with our fellow addicts. Before coming to Narcotics
18 Anonymous, we had felt that no one could ever relate to us
19 or understand the reasons behind the things we had done. We
20 quickly realized that we had been unrealistic in feeling that
21 way. N.A. people did understand us.
22 We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth
23 Step. Although there is no hard rule about what kind of per-
24 son we should choose, it is important that we trust that per-
25 son. Only complete confidence in the person's integrity and
26 closed mouth can make us willing to be thorough in this Step.
27 Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, but
28 most of us feel most comfortable choosing a fellow member of
29 N.A. We know that a fellow addict would be less likely to
30 judge us with malice. People often select clergymen, or mem-
31 bers of the medical profession, because these people are
32 accustomed to keeping confidences in their work. Whoever we
33 select, we make certain that they know what we are attempting
34 to do and why we are doing it. We are often amazed at how
35 willing most people are to help us. We never knew that people
actually cared enough about us to want to help in our recovery.

Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we proceed with enthusiasm. We want to be very definite and thorough. We realize that this is a life and death matter.

There is a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and an equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our part in situations. If we are anything like we were when we first entered the N.A. Fellowship, we will still tend to want to "sound good". This is a luxury we can't afford. This Step must cut into our character defects and expose our motives and our actions for what they really were. We have no right to expect these things to reveal themselves. It isn't easy, but it is simple. We want to tell the truth, cut and dry, as quickly as possible. We do not procrastinate.

We will never be able to name all of our past mistakes, so we need not expect our first spoken inventory to be perfect. If we choose, we will be continuing the process of self-assessment for the rest of our lives. For now, we will try to get most of the "garbage" out in the first session.

For many years, we have covered up our low self-esteem by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. Unfortunately, we ended up fooling ourselves more than anyone. Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on the inside. "One thing you can't hide, is when you're crippled inside." The masks have to go.

Once we had taken this Step, we felt lightened and refreshed. We were finally free to be ourselves, because we were not trying to cover anything up. It was a great relief to be rid of all our secrets, to share the burden of past guilts. Usually, as we share this Step, the listener will share some of his story too, and we will find out that the things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or different weren't all that unusual. We see, by the acceptance
in the eyes of our confident, that we can be forgiven, even
loved, just the way we are. Even though our examination of
ourselves usually reveals some things about ourselves that
we don't particularly like, facing these things and bringing
them out in the open makes it possible for us to deal with
them constructively. And, now that they are out of the closet,
ready to be faced and dealt with, we realize that these things
about ourselves can be changed. We cannot make these changes
alone. We need our Higher Power's help, and the help of the
Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

STEP SIX

We were entirely ready to have God remove these
defects of character.

Let us go back to the First Step for a minute. Remember
that we had to surrender completely to obtain relief. We had
to admit we were whipped. In examining ourselves as honestly
as possible it is probable that we have discovered some things
about ourselves that we don't like. Perhaps we call them de-
fects. Whatever we call them, we recognize that we must change
if we are to grow. The Sixth Step is the same situation; we
can't do it ourselves; but we know that God as we understand
Him can do it for us.

Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our angers,
our fears? Do we really understand that they are a deadly
poison in the heart of an addict? Many of us cling to our
fears, doubts, and self-loathing or hatred of others, because
there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It
seems safer to hold on to the old familiar pain than to let go
of it for the unknown. Letting go of character defects should
be done with love. Fear and hate cannot give us new lives. We
should approach old defects with patience and understanding,
for they have served us well in days past. They have kept us
from situations we couldn't handle before we found the program
and a source of power. We should be more grateful that our
defects are not more pronounced or of a more harmful nature. When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life.

We look to the Fellowship for the kind of life we want for ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Without exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of our ability."

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember that we are human and should not place great expectations on ourselves. We should be serious when we say "entirely ready to have all these defects removed." This is a step of willingness. That is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is as if to say that we are now willing to move along spiritual lines toward a destination we couldn't imagine. Being human we will of course fall short.

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if we are too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or too serious (H.A.L.T.S.). We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection. Adequacy can be achieved, but perfection cannot. We can reach and awaken the force of life within ourselves; it can do anything, even give us a new life. The breakdown of old ideas and old ways seems to be beyond our conscious control. The only control of the situation we seem to have is a choice of acceptance. What areas we change in, how fast we change, and in what order all seem to be predetermined by our very nature. If we accept God's will, we will be able to follow the necessary path to a better life.

Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. The tools we use to maintain our willingness are practice and prayer. How sincerely we work Step Six will be proportionate to our desire for change. We often feel that we will never be ready to have all our defects removed, but we should remember that the main point is that we are on a journey, and the destination isn't what matters. Willingness to serve God is what we strive for.

Without these defects, life is ever sensational and deeply wonderful. We learn that we are growing when we make new
mistakes instead of repeating old ones. Life with these defects may cause perpetual frustration, tension, and relapse.

We decide what our priorities are and envision life free from defects. We recognize our defects and surrender to the simple suggestions that the program offers us.

We feel that the Sixth Step is the honest willingness to let go of those shortcomings about ourselves. We become ready to part with the fears and doubts of that other life.

We continue to attempt to manage our lives and will need to go back to Step Six to renew our readiness to have our defects removed.

**STEP SEVEN**

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Having decided we want God, as we understood Him, to relieve us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities, we have arrived at the Seventh Step.

We have all spent much of our lives being anything but humble. We have been humiliated by many of the things that happened to us while using, but most of us avoided true humility until we worked the First Step. Then again, in the Third Step, we asked God to direct our will and our lives. Now, in the Seventh Step, we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

The key to this Step is an understanding of the humility. Humility is a part of staying clean, as food and water are to staying alive. As we struggled along in our addiction, we devoted our energy towards satisfying our material needs. We always had to have a satisfaction of our basic desires, such as power and prestige. We never thought of spiritual growth or asking a Higher Power for direction. Drugs were our Higher Power.

We couldn't handle the trials and tribulations of life all by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives that we realized that we couldn't do it alone. By admitting
that we achieved our first glimpse of humility.

If the defects we have discovered are real and we have a chance to be rid of them, we would surely experience a sense of well being when we rid ourselves of them. Some will want to get on their knees for this Step. Some will be very quiet or put forth a great mental effort to show intense willingness. The word humble applies because we approach this Power greater than ourselves to ask for the most wonderous gift of the program; the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. However we want to handle it, we go all the way.

Think of what we have to lose! As soon as we feel ourselves willing, we should go ahead and ask God to remove our shortcomings.

When we were using, our spiritual and emotional growth came to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal person. Now that we are clean, there are many situations in our daily lives that are difficult to understand. By practicing the virtue of humility and asking for help, we can get through even the toughest times. "I can't, we can!" It is a sign of growth.

We have to realize that people can give us direction and that our way of thinking is not the only way. We must puncture our egos and realize that we have much more work to do. When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is one of defensiveness. If we truly want to grow, we will take a good look at what is pointed out. We must realize we are not perfect and there are things we must change.

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we become ready to let God remove our defects of character; we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. This is our road to spiritual growth, to change our character, day by day, to gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of addiction into this mainstream of useful Fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to
get out of ourselves and strive for achieving the will of our Higher Power. Our will didn't work.

If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning of this Step, it will seem an unbearable chore, impossible to complete and unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles. Like all the Steps, the point of this one is freedom. None of these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection; for perfection is a divine quality.

STEP EIGHT

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

The last five Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, the Eighth through the Twelfth, are the "get out and live" Steps. Just as the First, Second, and Third Steps give us the necessary tools to begin a clean life, and the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Steps complete the process of self-forgiveness and the beginning of new attitudes. The Eighth Step starts the procedure of forgiving other people, being forgiven by them, and learning how to live in the world as a drug-free human being.

The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we willing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; once, and for all, clear away the shadows of fear that our past holds for us?

The preceding Seven Steps looked pretty rough until we took the plunge and go into them. This one is no different. It seems hard now, but once we've done it, we'll wonder why we didn't do it long ago.

The Eight Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people. We had to feel better internally before we could even bear to think about whom we had harmed and how we had harmed them, and exactly what was the way we perceived ourselves.
This Step is a good test of our new found humility, we consult with our sponsors in this matter. Again, as in the Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless and dangerous self-loathing. Our purpose is to achieve freedom from the guilt we have carried so far, with so much pain, so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggressiveness nor fear.

We admit we are at fault regardless of what the other person did to arouse our hostility. We admit that we hurt them, directly or indirectly, through some action, some lie, some broken promise, neglect or whatever.

It will not make better persons to judge the faults of another. The thing that will make us better is to clean up our lives by relieving ourselves of guilt. The Eighth Step is a mighty stride away from a lie dominated by guilt and remorse.

We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate list. In preparing to make the Eighth Step list, it is helpful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition is inflicting pain, suffering or loss.

The damage may be caused by something that is said or done, and the harm resulting from these words or actions may be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the person who is inflicting the harm. The degrees of harm can run from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or even death.

We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and add to it any more people we can think of and we face that list honestly and openly and examine our fault. Are we willing to make amends? In many cases we cannot do it, it is not possible nor practical in some instances. We may not know who it was we wronged. In other instances we might run the risk of involving a third person, some companions of our days of using who do not wish to be exposed. We do not have the right nor do we need, for any moral reason, to endanger that person.
Just about anyone that comes into contact with an active addict risks being harmed. Many members mention their parents, spouses, children, boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts, casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, landlords, and total strangers.

A problem many of us seem to have with the Eighth Step and the admission of the harm we did is the belief we were victims, not victimizers in our addiction. Avoiding this rationalization is crucial to the Eighth Step.

We had to think of disassociating what had been done to us and what we had done. We were forced to cut away all our justifications and all our ideas of being a victim.

The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separating it from the Ninth Step. Projecting about the Ninth Step can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming willing. We do not even think about making amends, but just concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to make a list and to become willing.

"We try and work this Step as if there were no Ninth Step."

The Eighth Step is actually an action Step. And like all the action Steps it offers immediate benefits. "The main thing this Step does for us is to build awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves, and how we deal with other people."

STEP NINE

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

We want to get free of our fear, but we don't wish to do so at the price of anyone. It is very important that we take guidance from our sponsors or spiritual advisors in this matter.

We recommend turning over our legal problems to lawyers. Professional help is available to help us with our financial and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on problems and responsibilities that we are not equipped to handle.
In some cases we may be beyond our means. If it is, we can only proceed with direction.

Timing is an essential part of this Step. We should make amends when the opportunity presents itself, as long as to do so will not cause more harm. When it gets to the point that we cannot hold the hurt any longer, amends will be made.

In some old relationships an unresolved conflict exists. We enter the old conflict and resolve it by making our amends, and step back from future antagonisms and ongoing resentments. In many instances of past wrongs we will need to go somewhere and humbly ask forgiveness. These are the old tapes that would keep playing back as long as we live. Sometimes, this will be a joyous occasion when some old friend or relative proves very willing to let by-gones be by-gones and welcome us back to the land of the living. However, some people are not so willing to let go of their bitterness. We can only make our amends to the best of our ability and they can either accept it or deny it. We feel relieved, instead of feeling knocked down and drained in our lives. Our addiction put a negative attitude about us in others. Step Nine helps us with our guilt and others with their anger.

This Step should not be avoided. If we avoid this Step we are simply reserving a place in our program to get loaded. Pride, fear, and procrastination often seem an impossible barrier and stand in our way of progress and growth through the Ninth Step. The important thing is to take action and be ready to accept the reactions of those persons we have harmed. We have made amends as best we could.

There are some things we can make direct amends for; some we can only make partial amends for; and some that we remember nothing about.

We can make amends by our actions. They don't always have to be verbal. Staying clean is also an amend because we're no longer part of the problem. Now we're part of the solution.
When it came to making amends for all the things we did there was a lot to be done. In the progress of our recovery we were restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively relating to others. We will less often view people as a threat to our security. Real security in our gut and in our recovery will replace the physical ache and mental confusion. We will want to address ourselves to these people with love and patience. Fear of relapse will make many of our most sincere well-wishers reluctant to accept our recovery as real. We must remember the pain they have known. In time, many seeming miracles will occur. Many of us that were separated from our children succeed in re-establishing deep emotional bonds. However, estranged mates can be dangerous to our recovery if they don't learn some of our program. If the relationship is real, it will survive. Re-acceptance into the family of our birth, is eventual for most. Clean time speaks for itself. Patience is the great method of the Fellowship. The unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will to live and each positive move on our part will be matched by an unexpected opportunity.

The benefit of this Step is to be able to face people we have harmed with a clear conscience. By discovering and admitting our faults, we experience a miracle.

STEP TEN

We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

We as addicts, suffer from a problem deeper than the drugs we took. Because of this, we must live by spiritual principles. Step Ten and all the Steps are to be applied to every area of our lives.

There is no area of our lives that the disease does not affect. The truth is that fear is present in every area of our lives. So, in our experience, the program can and must be
worked continuously in every area of our lives. If this were 
not so, then the disease could not creep into an "unrelated" 
area of our lives and kill us.

Step Ten is a continuation of a fearless and searching 
look within ourselves in order to repair disorders that fear, 
pride, jealousy, and other ruinous defects can cause. It helps 
us avoid the occurrence of relapse due to other areas which 
we may be reluctant to look. "If you take the drugs away from 
a drug-crazed maniac, you still have a maniac." Since our 
problems entail much more than using, we cannot recover until 
we recognize the need for taking a good look at our attitudes 
and motives.

Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage 
of getting our own house in order. We can recognize ourselves 
as the heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for 
many years and we are not able to change into complete saints. 
Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed. 
We must remain teachable if we are going to stay clean in this 
program. The smart ones who argue a lot usually die. The 
open-minded ones get to live. We do not entertain the thought 
of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive for 
stability in our lives so that we can live happily and be at 
peace with ourselves.

Step Ten helps us to do this. The process of inventory, 
the good and the bad about ourselves, is essential. As addicts, 
we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing 
the wrong thing at the wrong time. Many forms of the disease 
manifested in self-centeredness, fear, resentment, and so on 
can drive us into a place that we feel we cannot get out of 
clean.

Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we 
still growing, or are we slipping back into the old fears and 
resentments? It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer 
these and similar questions. Those defects of character which 
we found in the Fourth Step are deeply ingrained in us. The 
thing we do is check for the surfacing of defects early on 
by working Step Ten daily.
How to take inventory that is effective will depend on the severity of the particular trouble we are having. We look at our actions during the day and we practice the art of looking at where we were wrong, considering what we could have done differently, and the amends we need to make. We find it helpful and humbling to admit to another human being where we were wrong.

These are practical applications and theory has no place here. We work it or we will die.

There is the inventory we can pause and make when we run into trouble during the course of the day. Stopping, thinking and remembering that by the grace of God we are clean is a basic. Often, when we get home, write out a resentment, explaining how we feel and how we became angry, and the part we played. We find out how to restrain ourselves later so we don't repeat that action.

We do, however, remember that God, not us, is responsible for our change. The line between where God does or does not help us is absolutely irrelevant. All glory to God as we understand Him is our attitude here. We find when we have practiced this, we benefit; for pride can creep in and we addicts cannot handle success very well. We usually fall into the mode of the hero, and when this happens, our self-centeredness eats us alive and we can die.

In Step Ten we strive for genuine humility. In this humility we can better interact with others. We are not readily angered, frightened, or maddened by greed or lust. We remember our part in the divine partnership with God and we are more tolerant and patient with other people.

Step Ten is worked while the day's ups and downs are fresh in our heads. We list wrongs we have done. We do not rationalize our actions. We honestly chalk up our achievements. Thus, we get our own house in order. We feel more room to grow. The mess is cleaned up. We know ourselves better and there is strength.
A warning about rationalization is that it has killed more of us than anything else. At times, our motives will be obscured by clouded thinking. We can pray for humility and use it as a light to examine our real motives. Did we act out of negative emotion? If so, then we can work the program on it.

If we want to share it at once with another person, we do. Others can help us see our clouded thinking for what it is. Love and pain will keep us in the middle of the road. We have defects, but a willingness to live as our Higher Power would have us is freedom. In life we will be tested in patience and tolerance. We must keep spiritually fit to act in a spirit of love and helpfulness. When we are willing to grow toward these ends, wonderful things are ahead.

Continuing to take personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, our attitudes, and our relationships on a regular basis. We try to come up with honest evaluations and to put out more or less energy in certain areas we are concerned with.

It is very important to keep sharing with other people so that when we come up with a rationalization for negative behavior, we can be told about it. This highlights the preventative part of the Tenth Step. You ask yourself as you go through the day, "Am I being drawn in by some old pattern of fear or resentment?", "Am I too tired?", "Am I too hungry?", "Is my thinking getting cloudy?" It's a vaccination against insanity on a continuing basis.

We have discussed the preventative side of the Tenth Step. The love was there all the time, waiting for us to accept it. Though we still face human pain, life finally begins to get meaningful. Clean living is possible when we rely on a Higher Power daily to provide us with spiritual progress, establishing us in useful living.

In the Third Step we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understand Him. We renew this effort daily in the Eleventh Step. Most of us rebelled against this in the beginning, as if on a self-willed trip.
The first time we hear someone say, "Let go and let God," it sound idiotic. "No," we said, "If I let go I'll disappear or get taken advantage of." What happens instead is, the more we improve our conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I don't know what to do. Please teach me." It's a fact. When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a peace unmatchable to a drug-induced high. We begin to experience an awareness and an empathy with other people.

The Eleventh Step helps us, in the face of a problem, to be aware of God. The underlying principle of this Step is God-consciousness. 'We try to avoid asking for specific things. It's hard because we're so sure that we know what's right for us. We now know if we pray to do God's will, we will receive what's best for us. A person who has realized their powerlessness and seen the vision the Higher Power has for them will see why we pray only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out. Our deepest longings and recurring images of the kind of people we'd like to be are only glimpses of God's will for us. Our outlooks are so limited we can only see our immediate wants and needs through a loving God. It is our own real dreams that come true.

When we pray a remarkable thing happens; we find the means, the ways, and energies, to perform tasks far beyond our capabilities. By the surrender of our own power, we gain a far greater power that will see us through. It is important we keep faith and renew it through daily prayer.

It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis to insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not force his goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask. This is not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the force that comes from our own choice.

Many times, our efforts have produced in us feelings of peace and serenity that we have never known before. We know that in doing God's will, our lives will be fulfilled.
STEP TWELVE

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we sought to carry the message to addicts and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

The idea of a spiritual awakening takes many different forms in the many different personalities we find the Fellowship. This awakening does have some things in common throughout the Fellowship. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering has cleansed us of some of our illusions. In time we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts.

This great Step is to be proceeded by the working of Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to stay clean without the benefit of "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps," and they are no longer with us. The ones who continue to "practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey is a feeling of gratitude.

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still-suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person because by this time we recognize that by helping others--giving away that which has been given to us--is our best possible insurance against relapse to the vague, torturous existence of a practicing addict. We call it "carrying the message" and we do it in a number of ways.

The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean with the help of God and the Fellowship. Our new way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street and remember us as furtive, frightened loners. They notice the grayness and fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive.
spring comes into our step and a twinkle into our eyes. The message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do live it, we give it more meaning with our lives than any words can express.

Learning the art of helping others when it is appropriate, without creating resentments, is a marvelous benefit of the N.A. program. Remarkably, the Twelve Steps guide us from a state of humiliation and despair to a state wherein we are able to act as instruments of God's will. We receive the gift of being able to help fellow suffering addicts when no one else can. No greater change of personality is possible; it is God's love present in our lives. We see it happening among us every day. This miraculous one hundred and eighty degree change is evidence of spiritual awakening.

We attend N.A. meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, our services and our experiences to our fellow addicts. We do not shirk when called upon to practice these principles. We know that the more eagerly we wade in and work to stay clean, the higher we're going to get and the richer our spiritual awakening will be! Helping others works. We do these things because they are the things that grant the new lives we are enjoying.

In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principle of giving away the N.A. message of recovery in order to keep it. This is like reaping what we sow. The old habit of using drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, and helping others to get clean. Even a member with one week in the N.A. Fellowship can turn to a newcomer and say, "Live One Day At A Time", or "An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company."

When we share with someone, we may say, "Lord make me an instrument of Thy Will." We don't do it alone, and we don't have to. It is just a matter of getting another N.A. member to go with us on the Twelve Step call to carry the message to a suffering addict. We don't set ourselves up as God. That is why it is spiritual. We get to be an instrument of God's
grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such a call. Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people on God's earth! Those who have been in the pits of despair, now strive to help other people to find a new and better way to live.

We help newcomers, whether they are detoxing or just beginning to learn the principles of N.A. We do what we can to make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish these ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about their problem. Next we can share our experience, strength, and hope and then accompany them to their first meeting.

The selfless service that comes from this work is the very principle of Step Twelve. It is clearly an awareness of God's grace working that provides so much of what the practicing addict needs. Just as the grace of a loving God was given to us, we now have the opportunity to share this gift with others. One Twelve Step call of this nature can make a life worthwhile. There are plenty of such calls for those of us in N.A.

The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean and live these Principles, we are doing Twelfth Step work. We are attracting people to us and the N.A. Fellowship by our example of being clean. We no longer wish to participate in the problem. We now serve God. In this manner of service, we renew our vow to turn our will and lives over to the care of God. Even if we have no such understanding, we will acquire it through seeing others recover. Fellow addicts show that God is loving and we will know a life free of drugs that we never dreamed possible. The Steps do not end here, they are a new beginning.

All will be well as long as we remain abstinent and trust in a Higher Power of our understanding. Living just for today relieves the burden of the past and alleviates fear of the future. Clean, we learned to take whatever actions were neces-
sary and to leave the results in our Higher Power's hands.

We learned to trust God with our fate and to let Him help us
do our best each day. The most important thing we can do is
stay clean today, through reliance upon a Higher Power.

We want freedom. Clean, we see that the greatest freedom
we can achieve is acceptance of God's will. But, we recognize
that we are human and subject to mental and spiritual sick-
ess. Each day, we ask our Higher Power to help us stay clean,
for that day. Each night, we give thanks for the gift of
recovery. Thus we begin to practice spirituality.

We are clean, but by no means perfect and our lives remain
unmanageable. We become egotistical from time to time. It
is hard for people in the Fellowship to reach us at these
times, but not impossible. Our newly found friends usually
call our bluff, and cut through the dishonesties. When things
get rough, and spiritual contact is difficult, we learn that
it won't last. If we do not use, and continue to maintain
spiritual contact within the Fellowship, we can get through
these trying times, and grow stronger.

Trusting others doesn't come naturally to us, but we must
learn to trust because an addict alone is in bad company. The
needed strength wasn't there until we found N.A., which showed
us how to make faith work for us. We had a lot of energy, but
we channelled it into self-destruction. Now, we can put the
same energy that we had used to perpetuate our pain into
strengthening our faith and becoming healthier, more loving
people. We first learn to love our N.A. groups. Later, through
service, we learn how to put our energy to work, and the more
we serve, the better we get at channelling energy.

Remember, we didn't become addicted in one day. We can't
possibly solve all our problems at once, no matter how much
energy we have. Take it easy! The only way we recover is to
apply what we learn from each other, on a daily basis. Our
growth is a lifetime process. We never stop learning, and we
never stop needing one another's guidance and support. So,
we say, "Keep coming back; it works!"
Addiction is physical, mental, and spiritual. Therefore, we believe that we must develop faith in a Higher Power before we can hope to recover from its destruction. When we have a strong faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and use that faith in our daily lives, that Power will be able to reach us and supply us with the strength and guidance that we need to recover.

The N.A. program is a spiritual program. Our members who are living a spiritual program have learned enough of their spirit to develop and maintain a conscious contact with a Higher Power. We become more spiritual as we share ourselves with our fellow addicts. We gradually change from being dull and uncaring to feeling clean, and unclouded by earthly concerns. Most of us experience steady growth towards serenity and towards God, as we understand God. Some have profound spiritual experiences, dramatic and inspirational in nature. Regardless of which category we fit into, we all go through a profound change in our basic natures, which is much deeper than anything merely physical or mental. After a while it becomes obvious, even to outsiders, that a real and lasting change is taking place in us. The most obvious change is the simple fact that we are staying clean. When we rely on God to guide our thoughts, changes are inevitable in our feelings and actions.

As new members, the talk of God we hear in meetings scares many of us. We are suspicious and skeptical because of disappointments we have had with religion. We assume that someone will try to take away our freedom to believe as we choose.

That is not the case. Spiritual and religious freedom is one of our most basic principles. Each of us are free to work out our own concept of God, or reject the concept of a God. We each build our relationships with our Higher Power in our own way in our own time. Many of us come into N.A. as atheists or agnostics. Some of us come in as religious fanatics. Nobody is here to correct or change one another. We operate in an atmosphere of complete acceptance and respect.
for one another's beliefs. We try to avoid the arrogance of
self-righteousness, because it is one of the deadliest forms
of self-deception. Even though we avoid pushing any ideas on
anyone, we do suggest, strongly, that each person make an honest
attempt to find a Power greater than themselves.

From our experience, we have found that addicts who stay
clean, find and develop a relationship with a Higher Power.
We are taught to "act as if" we believe in God, by applying
spiritual principles and practices to our lives. Three "musts"
are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. Agnos-
tics and atheists generally start out by just talking to "What-
ever's there."

There is a spirit or an energy that can be felt in the meet-
ings, and it is sometimes the newcomer's first perception of
God. This spirit, or whatever it is, relaxes and helps us to
get honest with each other. We let go of our egos and learn
from our fellow addicts. Honest sharing speeds our recovery
and makes us believe that this Power is taking care of us, and
working for our good. We no longer blame God and others for
our problems, and see that our problems have been of our own
making.

After we accept that we created our own hell and that there
is a God that wants to help us, we begin to make progress in
solving our problems. Through open-minded effort, we "act our
way into right thinking", letting our Higher Power find us,
rather than searching for God with only our minds. We come to
rely on a growing daily relationship with a God of our under-
standing. One way to develop our conscious contact with God
is to make up a "gratitude list", count our blessings and
thank our Higher Power for them. Another way is to practice
accepting conditions as they are, and trusting that they will
improve if they're supposed to. We do these exercises several
times a day, until they become a routine part of our lives.
In this way, we begin to face life on God's terms, and that
gives us the necessary sense of peace for us to live clean
successfully.
We must re-evaluate our old ideas, so that we can become acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life. We cannot throw out old ideas without replacing them. We believe that the old self-destruction and self-centeredness can only be replaced with spiritual principles. The three basic spiritual principles are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. We say that they are the "HOW" of our program.

Rigorous honesty is the most important tool we have in learning to deal with the past and to live today. Although honesty is a difficult tool to practice, it is a most rewarding one. We practice honesty under all conditions because it is the antidote to our diseased thinking. We lose the fear of being cornered. Our lack of fear and our new found faith serves as a firm foundation for courage in the future.

Being honest is not a natural thing for us to do. We don't expect to practice total honesty in all things overnight. It is a gradual process in our daily living.

The situations that seem hardest to maintain our honesty have produced the most rewarding results. When we are honest in really difficult situations, the feelings of happiness and serenity are overwhelming.

We have never before experienced gut-level honesty because we covered up our feelings by using. We must learn to get to the bottom of each emotion we have, and face it, so we can be our true natures. Our lives become so much simpler, when we get to know ourselves.

"Cash register honesty", is a good beginning in developing self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on facing and living by the truth. When we honestly evaluate what we really have, we can learn to appreciate it. The gifts of recovery are things that we can carry with us everywhere.

Managing our own lives got us to the program of Narcotics Anonymous. What we knew about living when we got here had almost killed us. We came in sick people who knew very little about how to be happy and enjoy life. Complete open-minded-
ness is necessary for us to learn a new way of life. Being open-minded allows us to hear something that might
save our lives. It allows us to listen to opposing points
of view, and come to conclusions of our own. Open-minded-
ness leads us to those very insights that have eluded us
during our lives. It is this principle, open-mindedness,
that allows us to participate in a discussion without jump-
ing to conclusions or predetermining who is right and who
is wrong. We no longer have to make fools of ourselves by
standing up for some non-existent values. We have learned
that it is O.K. to be ignorant, for when we are ignorant we
are teachable and can learn how to live our new life success-
fully.

However, open-mindedness without willingness, will get us
nowhere. We must be willing to go to any lengths to get our
recovery. We never know when the time will come when we must
put forth all the effort and strength we have to stay clean.
Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try, work
hand in hand. The lack of one of these principles in our pro-
grams can kill us. Living a personal program without these
principles, will make recovery difficult and painful for us when
it should be beautifully simple.

Remember too that H.O.W. are spiritual principles which
mean that they can be relied on to get us out of trouble that
dishonesty, closed-mindedness and unwillingness got us into.
If it were not for this program we would be dead. This
program is a vital part of our everyday living. We go to
any lengths to help this Fellowship and it helps us.
If you come to Narcotics Anonymous to use people to help
you continue your habit, then we cannot help you. We cannot
play dishonest games anymore. A closed mind is a barrier
against any change. On the other hand, a spirit of open-
mindedness, coupled with an admission of powerlessness, seems
to produce a positive change when asking for help. If you
have a drug problem and are willing to try it our way, we
will share with you how we stay clean.
In this Fellowship, the importance of togetherness is expressed by some sayings: "United we stand, divided we fall", and "I can't, we can!" These slogans tell us that if we don't stick together and help each other, then we will surely die.

We have a deadly disease, that before coming to the program we did not know about. We were in the depths of despair, degradation and lost in a destructive chaos. We came in puking, sweating and shaking. Some of us stayed. Was it through our own merit? We think not! Our way got us here. Recovery was done through the help of others, the tools they shared with us, and a Higher Power.

From the isolation of our addiction, we were thrust into a fellowship of people with a common bond: addiction, N.A. is like a lifeboat in a sea of isolation, unwillingness and chemicals. We share the good times and the bad, victories and failures, all without defeat as long as we don't pick up the first fix, pill, drink, or joint. We get all our faith, strength and hope from people sharing their recoveries.

We usually react angrily as recovering addicts if anyone tells us what to do. In N.A. meetings, we share what it was like in our practicing addiction, our suffering that brought us to the turning point and how we stay clean today. By telling our own story, someone else is bound to be suffering from a similar problem and our experience tells them how to deal with it—what works for one, might work for another. Most addicts are able to accept this type of sharing, even from the very beginning. In time, we have a new source of strength that will guide us in our recoveries.

By sharing in regularly scheduled meetings and one-on-one with recovering addicts, we learn that part of our approval-seeking behavior helps to keep us clean. Meetings are an important part of recovery. Those who attend meetings regularly and work the steps stay clean. We need the approval of people around us. Attending meetings encourages us to stay clean and reminds us what it was like to be a newcomer.
and re-enforces how progressive the disease of addiction is.

This force in the meetings isn't just the people there, but also something within the people. We return to these meetings and use them like medicine in the form of unconditional love.

A meeting is like a fence around our clean time. It protects us during all of our recovery. At first, the members in the meetings helped us through our remorse and self-pity by accepting us just the way we were and showing us the necessary care and love to begin to live clean. By returning to meetings, we came to believe in a loving God as he expresses Himself in the group conscience, that continues to save us from our addiction and help us in our daily living.

Finally, throughout our lives, we surround ourselves with fellow members who continue to let us know we can count on them. One of the advantages of the N.A. program is that it places us in an intimate, regular contact with recovering addicts who can most understand and help us in our recovery.

Our experience is that those who begin sharing innermost feelings, emotions and thoughts with other recovering addicts, rather than giving a drug history, tend to make more rapid growth. When we tell our stories, whether one-on-one or in groups, we can get out of the superficial personalities we thought other people believed us to be. Only another addict can understand and accept us as we are. We recover through this process. The Steps guide and the meetings give us the opportunity to say and hear thoughts and feelings that would otherwise be held in.

On the outside world, a lot of the rules that apply will not work with our new life in the Fellowship. Expressing our need for help at the time of crisis seems like a logical thing to do, but we are sometimes illogical. To us, at first, it feels like insanity to give another person knowledge of our pain. As we become more closely involved with others we will learn to share our pain and it will lessen. Part of the horror of addiction is being cut off from this human experience. Our fears and guilt kept us from receiving the benefits afforded
to everyday people. Sharing enables us to return to the realm of human experience, increasing our capacity to feel the problems of another addict.

By sharing our experience of recovery with newcomers, both by sponsorship and at meetings, we help ourselves stay clean. We find ourselves being constantly reminded of things that help us want to stay clean. Being able to serve as an instrument of a loving God and participation in the recovery of others keeps a sense of wonder and gratitude in our lives. Giving comfort and encouragement to others encourages and comforts us. Today, we have people in our lives who stand by us when it's rough and help us do what we can do and not worry about what we can't. Getting out of ourselves gives us more perspective on life and makes it easier to live with reality. We no longer feel like we have to run from ourselves. This program has given us a sure way to explore ourselves, rooting out defects and learning to live.

If you want to change your life--risk sharing! It is by taking risks we have almost lost our lives, by asking for help in the same way, we can change.

If we find ourselves in a bad place or we sense a bad scene coming, we call someone or get to a meeting. We have learned to seek good counsel from qualified people before making difficult decisions. By reaching out and practicing the virtue of humility, and asking for help, we can get through even the toughest of times. I can't, we can! It is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of growth. In this way, we as recovering addicts find the strength we need when we need it most. It is a way of life for the addicts who want to learn to live clean and have discovered one another. We share our mental and spiritual resources for the good of everyone.

Recovering addicts take great pleasure in helping other suffering addicts recover. Recovery as found in Narcotics Anonymous must come from within and no one can get clean for anyone else.
In the course of carrying the message, each of us comes to our own understanding and if we have difficulties we trust our groups and the Twelve Steps of the program to guide us. These things should be used to help others.

The Steps guide us into our place in society. We begin by straightening out our internal disorder and obtaining release from the defects that prevent us from being all we should be. We emerge as individuals reconceived with a new awareness and the ability to take our place in the world. Our viewpoint changes from that of a loner to a participating member. We emphasize setting our own house in order and trying to do more than our part. We trust in our Higher Power to give us strength and to meet our needs. If we feel that we have more than our share of difficulty, we should share more with others and remember to be grateful for the good things we already have. If we're not grateful for the things we've got, we won't be grateful for the things we are yet to receive.

Responsibility is a key word here. There are certain situations that demand more than we have to give. We should avoid these or seek help if we find ourselves already in such a situation. We are no longer asked to do the impossible. Most of us are accustomed to getting bored and disinterested when we find ourselves without major problems. We want to change. Serenity not prayed for is likely to appear as boredom. In the past we have relied on desperation to give us the strength to periodically re-order our lives. There is another way.

When we accept that we are responsible for our problems, we realize that we can be equally responsible for our solutions. It simply takes clean time for us to realize who we are and what we want to do. What we can do is remember that we are addicts. Being clean is abnormal to us, and we must learn how to live in an on-going manner. A great magic is found when we help others. As clean addicts in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we help ourselves by helping others.
Our attention focuses on the solutions, and our old ideas break up and dissolve like icebergs in the tropics. When the compulsion to use is lifted from us, and we begin to think of others before ourselves, a true miracle begins. Working the steps, practicing the principles and using the tools, we begin to see ourselves in a new light. We find ourselves helping others and securing help for our own problems. We redefine ourselves. We become feeling people, capable of responding appropriately to our environment. We put spiritual living first and exercise patience, tolerance and humility in our daily lives. The further we get from the last pill, fix, drink, or toke, the more we see of our past and the more we realize the miracle of the release from our disease of addiction.

What we have today is the wonderful fact of our recovery and all that it means to us. Each day we live clean, awakens us to the freedom we had all along, but failed to realize. We succeed now where we had known only failure before. Many of our dreams, forgotten and obscured by our addiction, return and help us regain the sense of wonder and excitement at the miracle of living clean. The old compulsions fade and the habits of mind associated with addiction weaken and are broken. A great many things become possible for us. Since we live clean and grow, we are able to take our place in the world.

If we want to reap the benefits of staying clean, we find it necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. Hidden fears and needs are still potential driving forces. Just because we don't recognize fear or anger doesn't mean that it isn't influencing our lives. We found it important to examine places where we grew angry or our beliefs were tested. The areas we didn't want to question were those that most needed to be looked at.

We also found it important to examine the other side of the coin, the so called "good" qualities like truth. Truth seems to be something that is impossible to understand until
it becomes obvious. Truth is something we never suspected until we knew it. There are no exceptions—only incomplete truths. Everything we know is subject to revision, especially what we know about truth.

Another desirable quality is love. We love the ambitious for they can inspire us; we love the failures for they can teach us; we love the kings for they are but human; we love the meek for they are divine. We love the poor for they are so many. We love the rich for they are lonely. We love the young for the faith they hold; we love the old for the wisdom they share. We love the beautiful for their eyes of sadness; we love the ugly for their souls of peace.

We think of love as a shield against the attacks of other people, and as a weapon to blast through walls of hate, and to open closed hearts and closed minds. We feel protected by our love, through adversity, discouragement, anger, and insecurity. We even feel uplifted by love, in the moments of despair that still sometimes come to haunt us. As our love is strengthened, we become stronger, and better able to meet life's trials.

In dealing with the other people in our lives, we develop a loving attitude. We forgive more easily, anger more slowly, expect less, and give more to our brothers and sisters. We come to see all people as our brothers and sisters. We have learned this kind of unconditional love from our fellow addicts in Narcotics Anonymous.

Through the love we have received in our Fellowship, we begin to feel lovable ourselves. From there, we can truly start to love and respect ourselves. This feeling of self-love is totally alien to the egotism that we used to bolster ourselves with, as practicing addicts. It is one of the things that brings a sense of calmness to us, a feeling of solidarity that comes from knowing the truth about ourselves, and accepting it. In the old days, we knew, deep down inside, that we were faking it whenever we indulged in our delusions of grandeur and self-importance. Now, because we are beginning to love
ourselves unashamedly, we can love other people more com-
pletely, because we no longer feel like we have anything to
hide from anyone.

Our egos used to control us in all kinds of subtle ways. For one thing, it seemed important for us to compete with
others in almost all of our endeavors. Some of us even refused
to try something that we might not be the best at. We watched
other people closely, not with any concern for their well-
being, but to check and see if we were measuring up to their
standards. Some of us had no idea who we were, or who we
wanted to be. We only knew we didn't want to be ourselves.
Now, we realize that we were unwisely comparing our insides
to others' outsides, which could only work to frustrate us in
the long run.

The Twelve Steps to recovery, that N.A. outlines for us,
hold the answer for all of our ego-trips and insecurities. They seem to hold the only answers for us that we can really
use. In living these Steps, we first begin to let go of
old egotism. We then open up to a Higher Power, so that we
will lose all fear of facing ourselves and of facing other
people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of
action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our Higher
Power, ourselves, our loved ones, and even the "cold, cruel
world." We develop a solid base to work from, which assures
us that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete
assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With
that kind of attitude, we have a real basis for living happily,
and we are able to really be of help to the addict who is
still suffering.

The Twelve Steps led us to a point of recovery that
seemed to make the world change before our eyes, for the
better. By practicing the N.A. principles in all our affairs,
we attract other addicts to us, addicts we are now capable
of helping.

Humility is a word that now loses its old negative con-
notations for us. In the days of our active addiction, we
were humbled by the drugs and the behavior patterns of getting and using. We learned to place ourselves last, and the addiction first. In a way, how we live now is similar to that. We place our recovery first and our own petty desires and egos last. We begin to actually want to do what is best for all concerned, especially in our N.A. groups. We have found that the best results in staying clean can come, only when we serve to unify our groups by attending meetings, and by serving N.A.

In our past, we were usually irresponsible. After we face ourselves in the inventory steps, and make amends to others in our amends steps, we can no longer allow other people to "pay our way" for us. We want to serve.

Earlier, we mentioned that it was important that we learn to trust each other in N.A. In our groups, we all need to open up; first, selfishly, for our own recovery, and later candidly, for the inspiration of the newer members. We need to maintain an atmosphere of confidence by not using opportunities to look down on our fellow members, or gossip about them. Speaking up in meetings and on a one-on-one basis with a sponsor are absolutely necessary for our survival, and a break of confidence could cost another addict their life.

Those of us who are consciously working and using the Twelve Steps to recovery in our lives are seldom bothered by gossip. Our lives are lived like "open books", and really don't feel like hiding anything, or judging anyone. We no longer feel a need to put up a front, because we are doing the best we can.

However far we are in our recovery programs, we each need to draw on the strength of the other people in the group. We bring that strength out with us, into our every-day lives. We apply what we learn in the meetings to all our affairs, using these teachings as a basis for living, but returning, again and again to our groups, both to help and to be helped in our recovery from addictions.
One of the simplest and most important parts of our whole recovery process is the concept of "live a day at a time." Often, we have to extend that idea to "live a moment at a time." In the course of our daily lives, we usually tend to forget to keep things simple, and we build our problems into unmovable mountains.

Patience is not exactly one of our strong points either. We are experts at making ourselves so frustrated that we lose perspective completely. That is why we need our slogans, and our N.A. friends to remind us to face what we can, as we can, and no sooner. We try to avoid setting goals for ourselves that are too high for us to reach. They set us up for defeat. We become willing to lower our goals, allowing ourselves to give our Higher Power credit for all things we accomplish, and to be grateful for them, even when we would rather accomplish more. Not only are many of us impatient with ourselves about what we expect to accomplish, but we are impatient about what we expect to have. During our active using, we often lived way beyond our means, out of necessity. Unfortunately, not all of us lose our extravagance and greed easily, even after we stop using.

It isn't easy, but, if we want to live happily, we have to learn to live ethically, and within our means, facing what we have and what we have not, with honest acceptance and gratitude.

In both, the case of accomplishing things and of acquiring things, we usually need to develop a habit of lowering our goals, to a more reasonable point, and reaching them in our own time. After a while, our ability to produce and to use what we have improves. As that happens, we gradually start raising the goals again, but only with the guidance of our Higher Power. As we do this, we insure our own success in meeting the goals we have set for ourselves, letting go of fear and impatience and raising our self-esteem.

We mentioned humility earlier, as a quality for us to shoot for, particularly, in the confines of our Fellowship. For most of us, it is much more than that. It is an attitude...
that must be developed, before we can ever expect to live happily
in the world. Humility is an honest self-acceptance, which
leads to further acceptance of the conditions around us. It
goes hand in hand with the qualities of patience and toler-
ance. As we recognize our own humanity, we become much better
able to recognize others, to let them make mistakes, and to
be themselves. We bring this new humility with us everywhere
we go, because each of us touches many lives.

One of our greatest enemies is resentment. It has the
power to kill. The only way to be rid of resentment is to
develop humility, in the form of forgiveness. We can't lose
our resentments, by using our own will-power, no matter how
hard we may try. Only through earnest prayer, and through
dealing with our resentments up front, can we start to forgive
the people we have hatred toward.

The benefits of forgiving our enemies are many. First, we
are able to use our thinking time on more important subjects,
instead of plotting our revenge, or writing little scenarios
about what we "ought to say or should have said." So, having
all this time, we are free to improve ourselves. We eventually start to see the very same defects that we had found
so intolerable in the other people in ourselves. We can do
little exercises in tolerance by making up our minds to let
people be themselves, and not lifting a finger to change them.
Sometimes, the best revenge we can have over a manipulative
or unpleasant person is in not allowing them to "pull our
strings" by making us react unkindly to them. If we really
believe that a person is wrong, we have no business letting
that person have control of our emotions. We are not re-
ponsible for another person's behavior, but we learn to
take responsibility for our reactions. Remember, we can't
change other people. We can, through the program of Narcotics
Anonymous, change ourselves.

We have just been talking about the qualities of patience,
tolerance, and humility. We also mentioned acceptance.
Actually, all of the first qualities mentioned are mere
aspects of acceptance. Those are the main ways that we use
acceptance in our lives. But, acceptance goes forward, to
the new member that comes into our Fellowship.

Alienation and isolation are symptoms of the mental part
of our disease. To the practicing addict, life is just a
movement between connections and oblivion. Normal concerns
are pushed to the side, as the disease progresses. Our
behavior confounds our friends and relatives, so we seek the
company of the only people who understand us: our fellow
addicts. As the drugs consume our physical reserves, we
pass into the desperate state where getting and using is our
main activity.
CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT CAN I DO?

Begin your own program by taking Step One from the previous chapter "How It Works". When we fully concede to our innermost selves that we are powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery. Many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible at the start. Go to Step Two, and so forth and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind, you have gone through complete withdrawal and have stopped using for the present. Now, with a clear mind, try this way of life.

Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of N.A. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet come to our meetings. Here you will find the answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using for today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period of time. If the obsession or compulsion becomes too great, put yourself on a five minute basis of not using. Minutes will grow to hours and hours to days and so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you. You have stopped using and have started to live.

1 It all begins with that first admission and surrender. From that point, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won. At first we can do little more than attend meetings.
2 Probably we cannot remember even a single name, word or thought from our first meeting. What we do remember is the
feeling we got. That no matter what we have done or what course our addiction had taken, we can relax and enjoy the love that fills the room at every meeting which follows the Twelve Traditions. Meetings strengthened our grip on recovery.

Having begun attending meetings regularly, we were introduced to the Twelve Steps. Working the Steps got us out of our old attitudes. When we admitted that our lives had become unmanageable, we didn't have to argue our point of view. We didn't have to be right all of the time. We could relax and allow others to be wrong. We found a new source of energy to put the wreckage of our lives back in working order. Things that we have done to hide our illness no longer seemed worth it; and we were free to open our minds to new ideas. Destructive behavior could be corrected as soon as we loosened our grip on our old ways. We found that the fear of change was replaced by a sense of wonder and adventure. Freedom to change seems to come mainly after our acceptance of ourselves.

Freedom from our destructiveness covering up the wreckage of the past has been the main stumbling block in relating to others. By recognizing the defects in our characters, and letting go of them spiritually, we were ready to have sanity restored to us. In applying these spiritual principles to our lives, we should keep an open mind. Patience, humility and tolerance are well worth any price that we must pay for them. It would seem that the path to spiritual recovery involves spiritual principles: Spiritual indifference will surely lead to relapse.

As we went to meetings regularly, we also learned the basic value of talking to other addicts who shared our problems and goals. As we became responsible for our own recovery, we became responsible for our fellow addicts. We found this responsibility was two-edged. As recovering addicts we must share what we have found with other addicts, because we know how important it is for one addict to talk with
another. If sharing the pain we have been through helps
but one person, it will have been worth the suffering. The
other edge is our own need to preserve our recovery. We
found from experience that our own recovery is strengthened
when we share it with others, who ask for help. If we
keep what we have to share, we lose the meaning. Words
mean nothing until we put them into action.

We often miss what we are looking for because it isn't
hidden. Most addicts have great insights and abilities that
offset their weaknesses. Gratitude for our assets shouldn't
keep us from growing in areas where we are weak. Being
grateful begins when we realize that something other than
ourselves blessed us with what we have.

Facing problems is a necessary ability to stay clean.
If we have had problems in the past, it is unlikely that
simple abstinence will eliminate the defense mechanisms
and emotional walls that enabled us to live in past days.
In searching for the end we often miss the journey.

These old ways have to go if we are to find new lives.
We will successfully face the days to come if we take advan-
tage of the help the program of Narcotics Anonymous has to
offer. Help from one addict to another; help that says, "I
had something like that happen to me and I tried so and so".
Not preaching or judging but sharing the experience, strength,
and hope that comes to anyone who accepts our way of life.
The willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions will
help open the door to our recovery. One discovery leads to
another, and soon we are established in a new way of life
where people, places and things are kept in proper perspec-
tive. The old "all or nothing" point of view will no longer
seem a useful idea.

Now we have learned that we can, and must, go to our
Higher Power for help in solving problems. Fortunately,
many problems can wait. The program doesn't work when we
adapt it to our life, we have to adapt our life to the
program.

When you can feel the program beginning to work, don't
freak out. Personality change is a natural progression set
in motion by our surrender to the program. The slogans
are the sayings that seemed to help us most when we first
came to the Fellowship. They apply to the little, dangerous
daily situations that seemed so heavy at first. Things go
smoother if the newcomer finds a sponsor to confide in,
someone whose judgement he can trust. We do not think it
weak to put a little faith and trust in a person with more
experience on the program.

We may still, however, feel that we cannot have a
happy life without drugs. We may suffer from the fear of
insanity and feel we have no escape from using other than
an insane and depressed existence. We may fear the re-
jection of all our friends if we go cleaning up our act,
this is common. We could be suffering from an overly
sensitive ego and many of those things within us that we used
drugs to escape from.

Obsession is the fixed idea that takes us back to a
particular drug, trying to regain the ease and comfort we
once knew. We know that the comfort we once experienced
from using can no longer be obtained. When we accepted
that we were addicts, we realized that never again could we
use successfully. Try not to think about drugs, old
friends or old hang outs. But when the obsession hits us,
we improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power
through fellowship in N.A.

Just as we went to any length to get drugs, so must we
go to any lengths to learn to get clean. This involves
the honesty to admit our need for the help of others, who
have been where we have been, and have learned to live with-
out chemicals. The essence of addiction is that it is
easier to change our perception of reality than the reality we perceive.

Cash register honesty, honesty in giving a "fair day's work for a fair day's pay", can help us begin. As the benefits of basic honesty in the world begin to roll in, we are ready to consider honesty at a deeper level. Self-honesty is being in touch with the way we really feel and the way we spend our time.

As we began to learn how to change our perception of reality, we, as newcomers, were encouraged to avoid making any major decisions on our own. The ego of the addict must be busted for him to have a chance at recovery. "Terminal hipness" and "fatal cool" are symptoms of the addictive personality. We should be very intent and watchful. Old ideas and street practices won't help us stay clean.

After establishing our new desire to live clean in the Fellowship and acquainting ourselves with the tools which have helped other suffering addicts to recover, we can then proceed with the business of living. At least one meeting a day for ninety days seems to be a good guide for those who are going to any lengths. There is a special calm that settles over a person with our disease when they find out there are many others who share their difficulties, past and present. We should begin to work the Steps in earnest, going over each Step word by word. Reading our literature and talking over the implication of each Step with our new friends and our sponsors and asking God's help improves our understanding of the program. A meeting a day, getting and using phone numbers, and reading literature each day are good forms of insurance for cleanliness. It has been said that no one who has asked their Higher Power for help in the morning and worked the steps has ever gotten
loaded that day.

Guilt and worry keep us from living in the here and now. The denial of our disease, or reservations, keep us sick. We lack humility, clinging to old ways. Not from preaching nor from judgment, but from sharing our experience, strength and hope do we recover. Our willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions to problems will help open the doors to recovery.

Let us apply our efforts to the obtainable and let the rest go. As we do the job at hand the balance changes and new opportunities for improvement present themselves. Opportunities now in sight did not even exist until we got the ball rolling. Life then becomes for us what we always wished it to be -- a constant state of awakening. As soon as we became acquainted with the Fellowship and the basic ideas of the program. We began to put these ideas into action. A good tool to remember is to counter our natural tendency to saddle ourselves with concerns that go beyond the twenty-four hours of each day.

Living clean each day at a time will reveal to us the things that truly come from within and give us better understanding over things that would interrupt our flow.

Recovery will provide for our re-entry into society. We can always find people who have had difficulties similar to our own and do succeed. It is difficult to get rid of the notion that we must be great or do great to be O.K. As we recover we will often find ourselves saying and doing things that suddenly make no sense to us, even if we've been doing them for years. We literally see our mistakes. This is necessary for our recovery. Self-condemnation has little place here. When we see our errors, we should simply correct them.

As we go about the task of changing our lives, we are
confronted with our character defects. Letting go of character defects should be done with love. It is important we think, to be gentle with ourselves when putting our ego to rest.

In our addiction, we feared change because we had lost control of our lives and most changes were for the worst. Clean, we had to learn to face another enemy - boredom. If we allow ourselves to stagnate and cling to our old ways of desperation and fear, our chances of a real and lasting recovery decrease. We had to reach out and to accept the love and understanding the Fellowship had to offer. Clean, we face the world together. No longer do we feel backed into a corner and at the mercy of events and circumstances. We can expect to succeed in many areas of our lives where we have known only failure and despair. Our new friends and the tools for living in the program of Narcotics Anonymous will enable us to experience these changes. Working the Steps will broaden our horizons and practicing the principles will reduce our commitments to some manageable level. Our new friends and awakened spirits will help us. Our common effort is recovery.

Being clean we will eventually have to learn to cope with success. Success scares us because in the past it preceded failure. We could not afford to feel good because we remembered the pain of disappointment. It was better, we concluded, to keep moving on and holding back. Actually this made a great deal of sense when we were using. Now, it makes no sense at all.

In time we may become a trusted servant. We can participate in Twelfth Step work, and try to share the message of recovery, with the addict who still suffers. It has been our experience that personal problems will be resolved
when we are willing to accept responsibility for them. It is good form to allow others in the group to help us with them from time to time. Service will get us out of ourselves, and our concern for others will be reflected in our own ability to accept concern from others. When we find ourselves opening up and facing difficulties that used to have us on the run, we will experience periodic surges of good feeling that can give us the strength to begin seeking God's will for us.

Well before we surrender, we have ceased to feel as if we are participating in the human race. Our tenuous grasp on reality is invaded by fears and self-hatred, which leads to paranoia, and away from the rest of humanity as a whole.

When we finally became desperate enough to seek help, we, once again, sought out the company of our fellow addicts. But, this time, the addicts were clean. The acceptance we found in the Fellowship was amazing to us, since we had known only loneliness. N.A. reawakened old memories of what it felt like to be a member of the human family. Slowly, we opened up, reached out, warmed up, and let ourselves love and be loved. The original desire to be clean leads us to a desire to help others. Touching, sharing, and loving are actual tools of recovery for us.

The only way we keep from continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill, drink or toke. People like us know that one is too many and a thousand are never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

Abstinence is the basis of our program. Any mood or mind-altering chemical, prescription or not, is poison to our bodies. Those who relapse and live to make it back,
1 keep us well informed of the fact that there is nothing so
2 bad that a relapse can't make it a whole lot worse.
3 If we clean our bodies by daily abstinence we should
4 clean our minds of preconceptions based on past experien-
5 ces. It is those who stay clean when it seems like it
6 isn't worth it who make it. It means remembering that we
7 are just one fix, pill, drink or toke away from total
8 disaster. It's amazing the power that total abstinence
9 has in changing our life. The bottom line of Narcotics
10 Anonymous is staying clean. When we realize that we can't
11 use drugs in any form and live, we are ready to admit our
12 powerlessness. It takes some of us a while to realize
13 how unmanageable we were and are still. For others this is
14 the only thing that which we can be sure. We as adults are
15 allergic to all drugs, although individual tolerance can
16 play a valuable role. Generally the effects of any amount
17 of usage are immediate and devastating.
18 Some of the most common excuses for using are loneliness,
19 self-pity, and closed-mindedness. Past thinking patterns,
20 known as "stinkin' thinkin'", have proven lethal. Our
21 experience shows that we do recover from these old games.
22 We simply live each day at a time without drugs. We believe
23 the solution for the problem of having drug-fogged minds,
24 sick bodies and tormented emotions is in a spiritual way of
25 life. This is why the Twelve Steps are used as a program
26 of recovery and ultimately a method of trusting in a Higher
27 Power that we can have faith in.
CHAPTER SIX

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions. As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

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. N.A. 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.

We come to this program from homes and apartments, offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks and gutters. We come from many different places, but they all share loneliness, pain, and fear. Somehow addiction draws us together in Narcotics Anonymous.

We came to this program for many different reasons. Those of us who stay, do so for the same reasons—to stop using and stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and the fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see what this program is all about. We start trying to do the things we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to the Twelve Steps and try to work them the best we can. The result is a degree of freedom that we never have known before. We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them; and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves that has been destroyed.

We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it away. So we seek out and give our hand to other addicts who have problems like ours and want help. Usually one of the first things we try to do when we're working with a newcomer is to get them to a meeting. After all, that's what worked for us.
Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's so special? Usually, about all we can say is that there is a feeling there, a feeling of strength and hope and love; an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special to most of us. They're a place where we feel safe; a place where we fit in. But what keeps it that way? One would think that any time people like us get together the results would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, self-willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely; but we do. The reason that we can is that we have Twelve Traditions that help to keep our groups "safe" and free.

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little information here and there as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow our traditions. Because we hear about "suggested steps" and "no musts" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume that this applies to our groups the way it applies to the individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not suggested, and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that keep our fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with others in N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems. That isn't to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems. We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of opinion, internal controversies, problems with individuals, groups outside the fellowship. However, when we apply these principles we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predecessors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to
the Traditions; and our own experiences have shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday. Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together, but they don't work automatically. It is only through understanding and application that they have power.

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.

It makes sense that our First Tradition concerns unity and our common welfare. One of the most important parts of our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts also seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of our groups and of our fellowship.

Before coming to N.A., most of us tried to clean up or stay clean on our own. Many of us sought treatment or professional help. These efforts were unsuccessful for us; it wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery seemed possible. This program can do for us what we could not do for ourselves. We came and saw this program work in the lives of other addicts. Their recovery gave us hope for ourselves. We became part of a group and found that we could make it, too. We also learned that those who did not continue being an active part of the Fellowship faced a rough road and often relapsed. Most of us agree that without N.A. we would be in real trouble. We know we can't do it alone, and nothing else ever worked for us. For our own good we try to do what is best for the group.

This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the individual's throat. Most of us had never experienced the kind
of attention and personal care that we found in the program. We are accepted and loved for what we are; instead of "in spite" of what we are. The individual is precious to the group, and the group is precious to the individual. No one can revoke our membership or punish us, or make us do anything that we don't choose to do. We are taught this way of life by example rather than direction. We share our experiences and learn from each other. In our addiction we consistently placed our personal welfare before anything else. Here we found that in the long run what's best for the group was usually good for us. We chose to conform to the common good because that's what worked for us.

Our personal experiences while using differed from member to member. However, as a group we found many common themes in our addiction. One of these shared symptoms was our need to prove self-sufficiency. We convinced ourselves that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on that basis. The results were disastrous, and, in the end, each of us had to admit that our self-sufficiency was a lie. We found that we could no longer control our using, nor could we manage our own lives. This surrender was the starting point of our recovery, and is a primary point of unity for the Fellowship.

Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but we find that in recovery we also have much in common. We share a common desire to stay clean. Each of us has learned to depend upon a Power greater than ourselves, which is our source of strength. Our purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We have our Traditions, the rules that protect us from ourselves. We share many things, and each is a point of unity for us.

Unity is a reality in Narcotics Anonymous. This isn't to say that we don't have our disagreements and conflicts; we do. Whenever people get together there are differences
of opinion and impressions. However, when the chips are
down we pull together. Time and time again we've seen
this; in times of crisis or trouble we set aside our
differences and worked for the common good. How often
have we seen two members who usually don't get along very
well working together with the newcomers? How often have
we seen a group doing menial tasks to pay the rent for their
meeting hall? How often have we seen members drive hundreds
of miles to help support a new group? These activities and
many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must
be, because without these things N.A. could not have sur-
vived. Without N.A. few of us would have survived, and
fewer still would have found recovery.

TRADITION TWO

For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--
a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group con-
sience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not
govern.

In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves
from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is another example of
this. By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered
people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money,
power, and sex. An important part of our recovery is
learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our
misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities,
how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to
rechannel our energies toward constructive ends. In other
words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living
program". Early in our recovery we learned that we did a
pretty poor job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our
best ideas got us here". This seems apt as we look back
and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into
trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless over our addictions and could not manage our own lives. Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanagers all, not one of us capable of making consistently good decisions. When we realized this had related to our new group oriented way of life we often experienced a sort of gut-level panicky feeling.

At this point our old timers usually come forward to reassure us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and addicts. This is a spiritual program and He won't let us screw it up", they say. They go on to explain that in N.A. we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. In working the Steps we need to come to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turned our will and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, he will express Himself on a group level. When a decision needs to be made for a group, each of the members should take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our common welfare. If we do this, then the results will truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group.

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but sometimes we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When personalities and self will creep into our efforts then the results suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, powerful personalities, or popularity. Some of our most painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made in the name of "group conscience". Our experience has
shown that there had been nothing spiritual about some of our decisions.

"We took a Group conscience and decided that..." Wait a minute! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes.

One group decided that members must be graduates of a specific treatment program, another felt that only heroin addicts should attend, another accepted only Christians. Another decided that residents of a halfway house could attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the collection. Another decided to pay its officers wages.

One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings would be able to get a job at a local counseling center and so on and so on. We've made a lot of bad decisions and pawned them off as Group conscience. This worries many of us. How can we really tell if our decisions are really Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful mistakes?

There is one truth which helps guide us. True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they always complement each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group will never contradict any of our other spiritual principles. Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centeredness. Then we review our decisions to make sure they are not in violation of any of our Twelve Traditions. If we take another look at our decision and try to resolve it. This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent problems many times.

The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leadership in N.A. We have seen that we try to rest authority in the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this, we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship,
leadership by example and by selfless service works, and that direction and manipulation fails. The way we designate our trusted servants insures this. We choose not to have presidents, masters, chairmen or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives. These titles in themselves imply service rather than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't stay, and members stop coming. The group must then change or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing process. Those who stay grow through the experience; but what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere of recovery in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and personalities.

Those of us who have been involved in service for a long time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time letting go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor self-image and low self-worth. With time and some successes, we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier egos. We enjoy these feelings for they are healthy for us. We like recognition and attention and we often deserve them. However this sometimes gets out of hand. We begin to pursue these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in trouble. With more time and maturity we grow in humility and learn to deal with these new feelings in a more realistic and spiritual way. Another situation which often causes us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are
afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new members, something terrible is going to happen. We may even have tried to get others involved before without success. It doesn't matter, whenever we are unwilling to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when we become afraid of change, we are playing God. Our friends may tell us to let go and work the Third Step, but sometimes we are deaf to their love. In these cases it is ourselves who must go and grow. But again, what about those we lose in the process? Still another situation which causes leadership problems is when senior members are thrust into positions of power. Sometimes a group or part of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down gracefully. The members time and time again draft the same leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard because it seems that only a crisis will do the job. Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve. This goes against the grain because we've been told never to refuse an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our program. To refuse to lead because it's not what's best for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility.

Most of those involved with service sooner or later have to deal with these problems. At first they are unaware. They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention. After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part of them revels in the spotlight, while another part is very uncomfortable because they know they are just another member. This period is often followed by a period in which they deny their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship. They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater
whole, that they in themselves are not indispensible or dis-1
pensable. Along with this they also accept that they do have 2
special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. 3
They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to 4
control the group not to set themselves apart. It is at this 5
time that their long service truly contributes the most. 6
They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. 7
Even though their services are less dramatic than when their 8
group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation 9
of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellow- 10
ship can grow.

TRADITION THREE

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop 12
using.

This Tradition is very important for both the individual 13
and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic 14
ideas of our program. Desire is the key word in this 15
Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. In 16
our story and in our experience of trying to carry the 17
message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one 18
painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict 19
who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They 20
can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, 21
threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't 22
stop using until they want to. The only thing we ask of 23
our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they 24
are doomed, but with it miracles have happened.

This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction 25
does not discriminate, why should recovery? Our disease 26
does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, 27
economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate 28
themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is con- 29
trolled by drugs." The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and 30
when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open arms. We don't care who or what they are or even what they used. As long as they want to stop using there's a place for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that place. Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program which accepted us when we wanted help. We originally came to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have stayed have done so for the same reason—the desire to stop using. Many of us didn't even know that addiction was a problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we only wanted a little relief. It wasn't until after we came to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that recovery was possible for us. Membership in N.A. isn't automatic when someone walks in the door; it isn't every automatic when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can become a member of N.A.

We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction, other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs. Individuals come with problems that express themselves in various ways. They don't clearly fit into our fellowship. Many of these people become valuable and active members of several fellowships while others single out the fellowship with which they are the most comfortable. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers; where they find recovery is not our basic concern. We know of members with a history of drug abuse who have found recovery in other fellowships. We support these members and
rejoice in their recovery, and addict who has found freedom and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours. Although we would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out or force them to join N.A. This would not be in keeping with our spiritual aims.

The twelve step fellowships do not compete. We are mutually supportive and cooperate for the common good. For us recovery is more important than membership. However, some newcomers seem to have trouble finding a fellowship or fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop around, to attend various meetings and find out where they most fully identify. They might ask themselves: "Where do I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there members who are living the kind of life I would like to live? and Where am I most comfortable?" We have also met members who are uncertain about where they really belong. We suggest that they ask themselves three questions:

1.-What message do you carry? (What is the nature of your recovery and what have you recovered from?)
2.-Who are you trying to carry this message to?
3.-Where are you trying to carry this message?

We suggest that the answers to these three questions should not be in conflict; we cannot give away anything we haven't got. We cannot carry any message that is not our own.

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want to. We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict stop using. However, we have learned that recovery is a reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can find what we have found; but knowing that only those who have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer...
will join us in our new way of life.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole.

The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What is it to be autonomous? Webster defines autonomous as "having the right or power of self government", "undertaken or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable of existing independently", "responding, reacting or developing independently of the whole". Autonomy is all these things to us and more. Our groups are truly self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Each group can exist on its own if it must. Each group has had to grow on its own and stand on its own two feet. One might ask: Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about our service committees, our offices, our activities, our hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A.? The answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road may be easier. Whether or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats. Some have taken offense to this, they say that when they started out they were told they had to register their group. This may be true, but many groups exist that have never registered. We ask groups to register because we can't recognize them unless we know that they exist. Once a group registers
they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the group. Whether or not they take our suggestion is their decision. In this starter kit it says that we must abide by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics Anonymous. This is also true, but these Traditions are part of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A. Without the Traditions, N.A. does not exist. It really is up to the group, in the end they must choose for themselves. They are autonomous.

But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also creative freedom. It gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard our autonomy so carefully.

We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to do, regardless of what anybody says. Well, yes and no. Each group does have complete freedom except when their actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. This is the other half of Tradition Four and the way we use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. In the past group autonomy has been used to justify the violation of other Traditions. This should never be allowed to happen because as we have said spiritual principles are never in conflict with other spiritual principles. If a conflict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true principles.

When we use our autonomy for the good of our group we
must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups
or N.A. as a whole. Again we are given a simple rule of
thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are
clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't
represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to
other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take
the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead
of time, then all will be well.

TRADITION FIVE

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict
who still suffers.

"You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the
message? I thought we were here to clean up? I thought our
primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?" For
the individual this is certainly true, our members are here
to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life. How-
ever, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our
groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts
together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring,
sharing, and service can do its thing. The purpose of this
Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is
maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups
newcomer and service oriented. The fact that we require
each and every group to focus on carrying the message pro-
vides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want
help. Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible
what seemed impossible for us--recovery.

The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that
we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
This is no coincidence. Working with others is one of our
most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict
helping another is unparalled." For the newcomer this is
how they find out about N.A. and how they stay clean; and for
the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have learned. The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. When a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his interpretation and personality. The problem with literature is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, with all personalities, the message is a recurring theme; an underlying reality.

What would happen if our groups had other primary purposes? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get healthy. If our group purpose was anything other than carrying the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? We hear this question answered many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength and hope and this is our message - that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find a new way to live. Their message is hope and the promise of freedom. When it's all said and done, our primary group purpose can only be to carry this message to the addict who still suffers because this is all we have to give.

TRADITION SIX

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.

Our Fifth Tradition defines our primary purpose and our Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect this spiritual aim. This Tradition tells
us that we ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A.
name to any outside enterprise. And then we are warned
effectively what can happen if we ignore this advice. This
Tradition is the basis for our policy of nonaffiliation
and is extremely important to the continuation and growth
of N.A. Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point
of controversy within our Fellowship.

Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really
says. First thing a group ought never to endorse. To en-
dorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements
can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements
everyday in T.V. commercials. Direct endorsements can also
be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional
sales material. A direct endorsement is often used to try
and persuade someone to do something. An implied endorse-
ment is one that is not stated. Although we don't usually
recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our
stories. We say, "The big kids used it and if they used it,
it had to be good." The next thing we ought never do is
finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply
funds or to help support financially. The third thing
warned against is lending the N.A. name. This means letting
someone use the name, Narcotics Anonymous, for something
that is not Narcotics Anonymous. It also means letting an
outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes.
Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics
Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify
a finding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been
letting them use our name. These are the "ought nevers" in
the Sixth Tradition.

This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility
is any other facility or place that involves N.A. members.
It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling
center, a clubhouse, or anyone of a number of such places.
Oftentimes, people are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities. Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with N.A. and N.A. with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference. The second "who" outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any fellowship. Most of these are pretty straightforward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse N.A. with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems.

Let's face it; Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional Health Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction, the other twelve-step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation". The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "...lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose".

If you say this quickly it almost sounds like "money, power and sex;" our old enemies. If you say it real quickly, it might sound like "people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common. The often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. They are the sort of
things we get involved with and run with until we are consumed. For the individual, this type of abuse can be devastating, but for the group, even the slightest touch can be disastrous. When we as a group waver from our primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.

The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort of read and let it go at that. It's hard to understand. But when we really take a look, when we really try to understand, it's simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money, property and prestige; and we can foresee the results of this abuse and the heartache it can bring.

TRADITION SEVEN

Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change. In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places and things. We looked to them to support us and to supply the things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the inner strength we get in our relationship with Him. We who were unable to function as human beings now find anything is possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now become realities with God's help. Addicts as a group have been and still are, millstones around society's neck. In N.A., our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their own two feet, but demand the right to do so.

Money has always been a problem for us. We could never find enough to support ourselves, our habits and our self-gratification. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold
ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside. In our recovery, money is often still a problem; we stopped trying to support our habits; we got to work and often find unexpected success. We clean up the wreckage of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. However, financial security can still seem to run like water through our fingers. We've got a lot of growing up to do and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are things most of us usually have to learn from scratch. Learning how to live can hurt a lot, but for most of us it's a great adventure.

N.A. needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, supplies to buy and literature to pay for. We pass the hat to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose. Unfortunately, there's usually pitifully little left over after a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford it kick a little extra in to help. Sometimes a few get together and put on some activity to help raise funds. These efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been given to do would have had to be left undone. N.A. remains a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we know the price would be too high to bear.

Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our Fellowship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn that we really are a part of something greater than ourselves.

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self-supporting. We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no such thing as a free ride. Everything has its price, regardless of intent. Whether the price is money, promises,
concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or anything else; it's just too high for us. Even if those who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still would not accept their aid. The price would still be too high. Nor will we charge for our services for to do so would distract from our spiritual purpose. We cannot even afford to let our members contribute more than their fair share. Because for us the price is paid within our groups: disunity, controversy, insanity and death. We will not put our freedom on the line again; not for "an easier, softer way", not for anything; never again!

TRADITION EIGHT

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

Some have described N.A. as a fellowship made up of the failures from other programs. To a great extent this is true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought re-
covery in many other programs, in many other ways. "Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use." We ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do any-
thing with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them with open arms." Somehow N.A. works when other programs and methods have failed. What is it about us that makes this so? We don't have any secret or special methods. We don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have many of the things that others offer addicts. What is it about N.A. that makes us the most widespread and success-
ful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's some-
thing simple. Perhaps it's because we don't have these things, that it is possible for us to succeed where others have failed. What do we have? We have our steps; we have mobility; we understand and care; and we are motivated; we have each other.
The basis of our program is the Twelve Steps. We got these Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough of them to give them freely. A.A. got the Steps from various sources. The Steps are based on spiritual principles that have been known and followed for centuries. Most religious or spiritual orders utilize these same principles in some way. These principles are certainly not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and that makes them special. Spiritual principles are basic truths that do not change with time or place; they simply work in all cases.

This program has been called a "hip pocket program". We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It doesn't take special training to make this program work. We carry this program with us wherever we go. We carry our message to the addict wherever he is and whenever he's ready. This program fits every addict because the addict learns to apply our Steps to his life in his own way. Our ability to reach addicts anytime, anywhere has certainly been a great advantage for us.

Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy, our ability to understand and identify with the newcomer. We know what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. We know what it's like to face life without drugs, each of us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; we've all had to pay them. We can't look down on the addict who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con each other; we've played all the games. We understand the addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, after all, this is the life we lived. We care for and love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict really is ourself.

Our motivation is simple; this program was given freely to us by addicts who cared. We only do the same. We have
learned that "we can only keep what we have by giving it away". We know that recovery is a matter of life and death for the newcomer and for ourselves.

These are the things we are and how our program works. They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have mobility; we really understand and care; and we are motivated by survival. All these things are a contradiction to traditional recovery approaches and to professionalism. The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very nature prohibits this. Professionalism as such is not the problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his sphere. Many of our members in the endeavors outside the Fellowship have become professionals in their own right. It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N.A.; for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is truly without parallel.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We do the best we can and sometimes we need a little help. Volunteer work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training necessary or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we may employ special workers in our service centers. Without their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those who reach out to us for help.

TRADITION NINE

N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
This Tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. A lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpretations of our Ninth Tradition. Our members are addicts who have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to offer, and who have chosen to join us. Our meetings are a gathering of members for the purpose of staying clean. Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions.

Another point of confusion is the term organized, which has several meanings. Our Steps and Traditions are uniform and set in a specific order. They are numbered; they are not random and unstructured. Certainly they are organized, but this is not the organization of our Ninth Tradition. For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having an administrative structure, and this implies management and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or management nor controlled by individuals within an administrative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on our insanities.

Even without this Tradition, organization such as this would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience would find no place within an administrative structure. How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service and management are contradictory. Government implies control, but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in an administrative structure? Specialization and professionalism are the basis of any management scheme. Any administrative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is a contradiction in terms and any attempt to force organization on us would destroy us.

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the
things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says that we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our service structure, but keep in mind that although these entities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure consists of our groups and their business sense: our area service committees, regional service committees, World Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsible through the service structure, to the members of N.A. and to be loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

TRADITION TEN

N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anonymous must be known and respected. Nowhere is this more obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953. For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure. In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become a worldwide condition and began to look for answers. Along with this came a change in the way people conceived the addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were never tolerated before. Recovering addicts paved the way for more groups and more recoveries. Today, N.A. is a worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.

If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most important things we can do to help in our primary purpose is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do
this, and if our reputation is good, we will surely grow. We were led to addicts so we could give to them what others gave us.

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Traditions protect us. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't endorse any causes. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a Fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopardize our reputation. Those who agree with our opinions might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always disagree. This would effect the way they see us.

With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose not to take sides in society's problems? For our own survival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep ourselves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, and so that others will not mistake our purpose.

TRADITION ELEVEN

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.

This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those outside the Fellowship. It tells us how we should relate to the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct our effort at the public level. This has meaning for dealing with both potential members and the general public. We have learned the value of teaching by example rather than direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this principle when we work with other addicts. Our message is most obvious in our lives. In this sense we are the message. When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where we
came from and what has happened to us. If they can identify
with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they
may join us. This is attraction. We never promise anything
other than a chance to stop using if they want to. This is
all we really have to offer and to make any other promise
would be to distract from our primary purpose.

We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by
doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend
our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We can tell an
addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery.
Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a
free meal, or housing, or money, or a job, or a lover, or
any kind of free ride. But how many would have a desire to
stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found
out we wouldn't keep our promise? How many would never
come back? How many would die without ever having a chance
to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as
something we are not. In order to accomplish something we
want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come
to us and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more
acceptable. Our successes speak for themselves.

Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need also main-
tain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. Most
of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or
show our faces publicly as members of N.A. What would
happen if a member publicly declared that he was a member of
Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the wonderful
things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later he was found
dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard his
declaration and also knew about his death think about the
value of N.A.?

Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point
of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A. should
ever place themselves in a position where they have to make
a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is N.A. and no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor special members. Each of us has our story, and our own recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellowship we can achieve great things.

TRADITION TWELVE

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even more inter-related than our Steps. They compliment each other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. We've heard "principles before personalities" so often it has become a cliche like "Take it Easy" or "First Things First". But what does it mean? What is the principle of anonymity?

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set aside the differences we live by and become a part of a greater whole. The awakening of anonymity in each of us occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves.

Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common welfare before personal welfare in the group setting is a direct application of anonymity. The "I wants, I wills and I shoulds" are replaced by "we"-oriented thinking for the common good; the result is unity. Unity is the direct result of the application of the principle of anonymity within the group and the fellowship.

The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate
authority. No single person (no personality) has authority. This is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over our will and is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over our will and lives. The anonymity of the servant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are not important; it is only the service which counts.

The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do not define our members. We only insist that they have a desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. This desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must either come with it or develop it before this program will work for us.

Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group would set itself up as something different from the rest—something special. Our groups would begin competing with each other for members and for recognition. The resulting loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that binds our groups together. Our groups are not truly different; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This anonymity, and the anonymity of the groups, make it possible for an addict to depend on us for help.

Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance, endorse, or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside enterprise. To violate this rule would be to lose our anonymity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over and problems of money, property and prestige would surely divert us from our primary purpose.

Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help anonymously. We uniformly reject outside contributions
regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to encourage the loss of their anonymity.

In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their chance to experience personal recovery and grow. Not forcing power and status on our members is yet another form of anonymity.

The service board and committees of our Ninth Tradition are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a group conscience. They are not responsible to any particular personality or set of personalities.

In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having no opinion on outside issues. When controversy exists, people take sides, personalities come forward, and as this happens anonymity fades. Here again we find consistency of action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we relate to the outside world is in fact using personal anonymity. None of us are singled out, no one of us represents N.A.; to do so would be to place our personalities ahead of others and this would be a violation of our anonymity. In attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The principle of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and differences have no power. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles.
CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOVERY AND RELAPSE

Many consider continuous abstinence and recovery as noteworthy and therefore synonymous, while relapers are sort of pushed aside or worse yet, used as statistics that in no way give a true picture of the entire addiction pattern. We in the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous have noted with some satisfaction that many of the relapers, when again active in their prime or substitute addiction, have dropped many of the parallel behaviors that characterized them in the past. This change alone is significant to us. Honesty of a kind has penetrated their character. Yet there are others completely abstinent, whose dishonesties and self-deceits still prevent them from enjoying complete recovery and acceptance within society. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, is still the best ground for growth. In close association and identification with others in N.A. groups, our chances for recovery and complete freedom in a changing and creative form are enhanced a hundred fold.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the ground work for complete freedom. At other times only by grim and obstinate willfulness to hang on to abstinence come hell or high water until a crisis passes, can that freedom be achieved. An addict, who by any means can lose even for a time the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be the decisive factor in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here at times in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves and the
giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy. Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working to give us the answers that alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Quality and not quantity is the most important aspect of abstinence. Emotional sobriety in reality is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse may prove the charge for the demolition process. A relapse can do the job of awakening us to the necessity for vigorous personal action.

For us, to use is to die. We have seen addicts come to our Fellowship, try our program, stay clean for a period of time, only to drift gradually away. They lose contact with other recovering addicts and eventually return to active addiction. We have learned that to try is not enough; we must live the program. Although we know nothing about prevention of addiction, we have seen that through the determination to stay clean, working the Twelve Steps, reading this book and attending meetings on a regular basis, we can and will prevent relapse thus promoting recovery.

Many of us would have nowhere else to go if we could not trust our N.A. groups and members. We were no longer afraid to ask for help. How then did we lose our fear? At first we were both captivated and intimidated by the Fellowship. No longer comfortable with our using friends, we were not yet
at home in meetings. Basically, we lost our fear through the experience of sharing. We share our fears with other addicts. The more we do this, the more our fear slips away. We accus-
tom ourselves to sharing our problems no matter how angry, scared or hopeless we feel. It surprises us how often another addict has had a similar experience. Helping each other is a two-way street.

An important part of our recovery is the development of self-esteem. We had turned our lives and wills over to so many Powers greater than ourselves that it was hard to see how one more time would help anything. Many of us did not come to our Fellowship with a sincere desire to stay clean. That came after the fog had lifted and after we realized that staying clean was possible. The first thing in recovery for which we felt gratitude was this clear state-of-mind. We encourage members to tell the truth to the best of their ability and recollection. We have been told that our primary aim should be to tell the truth about our recoveries. Then, no matter what, we cannot be disputed. Our recovery began when we accepted the truth another recovering addict shared with us. Even if we did not like it, we could trust it.

Trusting our feelings and trusting our fellow addicts in recovery are learning to live processes. It is worth the effort when many people-haters who come here can tell us that they now see the point in being nice to someone, of showing compassion for someone other than themselves. When we found out that we all hurt at times we became aware that it is O.K. to hurt and to make mistakes while clean. We become trusting of people with whom we are only mildly acquainted if we sense their sincere desire not to use—a desire found in N.A. Fellowship.

Addicts must patiently re-learn things forgotten and learn how to live. This is what Narcotics Anonymous is about. It is about people who can care about a desperate, dying addict and who can, in time, teach him how to care and love also. It is beautiful!
In recovery it is perfectly all right for us to get in touch with our emotions. We will not flip out or make our fellow N.A.'s mad at us. We eventually make a one hundred eighty degree turn in growth and in dealing with our emotions. Addiction is a feeling disease.

Recovery is more than just staying clean. Living by spiritual principles outlined in the Steps, many clean addicts become useful and productive citizens. At meetings we are repeatedly convinced that recovering addicts are among the most sensitive, responsive and loving people in society. Ongoing recovery demands more. We must change radically. If we are to continue abstinence we must be responsible and productive, not necessarily in terms of normal definitions, but in terms of spiritual principles. We must grow. Most of us recover physically, reasonably soon. We feel better, look better and act better. Time required for mental recovery varies. Some of us have done extensive damage to ourselves. Others procrastinate on the Fourth through Ninth Steps which help us change our thinking and personalities. Many have found that our sick mental processes change very slowly through repeated practice of new unfamiliar principles. Some of us seem to return to nearly normal mental activity soon after adopting a Twelve Step program of daily living. Spiritual growth is more difficult for most of us. Just the fact that we of all people strive for it is so radical a change that many call it miraculous. Spirituality as a way of life for an addict seems a total contradiction. Many feel that they have found what they were searching for in drugs through spirituality. By working the Steps we are relieved of our obsession to use and many grateful serve the Fellowship for this reason. Growth means change and we feel we must live on a spiritual basis in order to change. Spiritual maintenance usually means ongoing recovery. Spirituality is to isolation as recovery is to addiction.

From self-centered, angry, frightened isolated people, we become loving, sharing, self-assured spiritual parts of a
greater whole. We changed from hopelessly helpless to hope-
fully helping. From liars, thieves and wards of the state
to responsible productive members of society; these are the
themes of character changes that take place in Narcotics Anony-
mos.

We remain honest to free ourselves from guilt. As we begin
to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort out
priorities and do the most basic things first. Daily practice
of the Twelve Step program enables us to change from what we
were to what our Higher Power would have us become. Gradually,
we learn to trust and depend on our Higher Power, however we
understand it, and get to meetings so that other clean addicts
can give us spiritual guidance. At first, we are overwhelmed
by the miracles around us. We cry easily and find it safe to
cry and express love and share all our emotions in the atmos-
phere of recovery found at N.A. meetings. The steps become
our framework of daily change. Continuous abstinence requires
spiritual growth which leads to emotional recovery in our lives.

Each day we stay clean by practicing the Steps in our
lives, our chances of relapse decrease. Each of us is only one
drug away from a painful active addiction, but living our pro-
gram through regular honest sharing in the Fellowship of Nar-
cotics Anonymous increases our chances for uninterrupted clean
time. Eventually, we become grateful for problems as well as
rewards. Learning to live through changes by practicing the
principles of the program helps insure our ongoing recovery.
Often we find that when the pain of growing is the strongest,
we must give ourselves time and remember that it won't last.

Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean
time. We never fully recover. Guilt, remorse, fear, lust and
pride may all become unbearable if we fail to invest ourselves
totally in the program, no matter how much clean time we have.
Many of us get clean in a protected atmosphere such as a re-
habilitation center or recovery house. When re-entering the
outside world we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to
meetings daily, or more often if possible, will reduce the
shock of change. Meetings provide a safe place to share with others during this time. Many members whose recoveries have blessed them tell us that they continue to attend meetings on a daily basis even after several years of clean time.

Living clean for a period of time provides valuable experience working the program through many life changes. What we do repeatedly we find easier to do in times of stress. We respond and react differently to situations after a period of time in the program. It is suggested to us not to make any unnecessary major decisions in the early part of our recovery.

When we work the program, we are living the Steps daily. This gives us experience in applying spiritual principles. The experience gained with time insures our ongoing recovery. We must use what we learn or we will lose it and probably relapse, no matter how long we have been clean.

We seek solutions rather than dilemmas. Productive means being clean, creative and loving today.

We wanted to be accepted and loved. As a newcomer, some of us traveled the same desperate road of loneliness and lack of recognition, and of hope. We understand newcomers talk about drugs and the things that brought them to the Fellowship, because we have been there. Most addicts are able to accept this type of sharing even in the beginning. In time we have a new sense of strength that will give us the guidance we need in our own recoveries. The group we choose to be our home group will be like a spiritual savings account. The more we can invest in it through our care and sharing, the greater the dividends it will pay.

All of us who find the Fellowship and at least begin to work the Steps develop some kind of relationship with others. As we grow, we learn to overcome our tendency to run and hide our feelings. Learning to be totally honest about our feelings helps other people take us seriously. We find that when we come across honestly it seems to reach others better. Honesty takes practice and none of us profess to be perfect in this area. Whenever we feel trapped or pressured, it takes great
spiritual and emotional strength to be honest. Sharing our lives with others seems to keep us from feeling lonely. The Steps lead to the kind of honesty that can help us let others know and accept us.

We seek creativity through the spirit. The spirit dwells within all of us. We need to understand that the spirit within each individual is the same. The action being that we tap the available resources of the spirit within ourselves. Some have tapped more than others. We need to create more soul searching within one another. This process is the creative action of the spirit. We listen to ourselves and others in order to recover and to stay on that path.

Lack of spiritual quality within our lives leads us down the path to relapse. This part of our recovery is the essence of the program. Spiritual maintenance is indispensable if recovery is what we are after. Diverting from the spirit in ourselves we utilize the negative consciousness that comes from within. Our life is the constant efforts of progressing in our spiritual consciousness. Stagnation or just plain old character defects which we re-cultivate rather than let go of sends us back to where these defects were conceived. The illness began sending us down for the last count. Unless spirituality is reunited with action in our lives, relapse is inevitable. Recovery may not again be possible, as this time we may die, many have. We must continue our spiritual maintenance or die.

In our daily lives, we are subject to emotional, environmental, intellectual, mental and spiritual relapses, causing us to become defenseless against the physical relapse of addiction.

As a disease, addiction is subject to relapse. Reverting to using is a physical relapse. Physical relapse is only a symptom. We are never forced into relapse. We are given a choice. Relapse is never an accident. Our knowledge of addiction is not enough to stop us from using.
When we were told in meetings we were flirting with relapse, we had to make a decision. We had reservations about anything which did not describe us to a tee and built these up until we thought we could use again.

Relapse is a sign we have had reservations in our program. We slighted our program and left loopholes in our daily lives. Aware of the pitfalls ahead, we trod blindly on in the belief we could make it on our own. If we continue to fall back into the illusion that drugs would make life easier, we must not be ready yet. We believed that drugs would change us and forgot the changes would be fatal. Unless the illusion is shattered that we, in any way, can stop using on our own, we will use again.

We took the opportunity to avoid several of our responsibilities, missing meetings, skipping work, neglecting Twelve Step work, and most important, we stopped asking for help. Growth in the program stopped. We could sense a change coming over us. Our ability to remain slightly open-minded was gone. We became angry and resentful toward anyone and everyone. We began to reject those who were close to us. We became genuinely sick of ourselves in a short time.

When a resentment or any other emotional relapse occurs, failure to practice the Steps can result in physical relapse. Many of our newcomers have difficulty coming into the Fellowship because they do not understand we have a disease called "addiction". We are deemed to see our past behavior as part of ourselves and not part of our disease.

As long as we preserve our clean time we enjoy the greatest possible advantage over our disease. For this we are grateful. The first thing to do is get clean. This makes the other stages of recovery possible. Learn that addiction is a disease. Try to forgive past behavior and realize it was caused by our disease. Go to meetings and study the program for your own personal growth.

Obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts we have met or heard of. Our ego tells us we can do it on our own,
then loneliness and paranoia return. We find out we cannot do it on our own and things get worse. We really take the First Step, this time internally. There will be times, however, when we really feel like getting off. We want to run, we feel lousy, we need to be reminded of where we came from and that it will be worse this time. That is when we need the Fellowship most. We must then call our sponsor or make a meeting. Through such support we will find hope. Others have felt the way we do and every drug addict is a prisoner in his or her own mind, condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.

We hate to be wrong. It is hard to believe that now in our recovery somehow self-will leads us to make decisions based on manipulation, ego, lust or false pride but it happens ... often. Remember we don't recover overnight. When we realize that we have made a bad decision or bad judgment, we make an attempt to rationalize it. We become extreme in our self-righteous attempts to cover our tracks. We see all the places others go wrong and think that they caused the problem. As we prolong our admission of being wrong, we feel increasingly guilty. Living with guilt makes us more self-willed. We get sicker progressively. Eventually, we are shown that we must get honest or we will use again. By this time, it is hard to know why we feel bad. We make a list of feelings and people and events--an inventory. Maybe we can see what's gone wrong in our recovery. We share this list with our sponsor or a spiritual advisor or an addict whose recovery we respect. We are counseled through shared experiences. We pray for willingness and humility and finally get honest about our mistaken judgment or bad decision. We tell those who were hurt that we were to blame, ask them to forgive us and make whatever amends necessary. Now we are in the solution again. We are working the program. It comes easier to work the program now. We think that the Tenth Step helps prevent relapse.

There is something in our self-destructive personalities that cries for failure. It permeates our total being--"You do not deserve to succeed." We have all experienced this and
without the knowledge that we finally have earned the right to be responsible, respectable members of society. The manner in which we returned to our addiction is not important. What is essential to each of us is that we have the choice not to continue. In fact the knowledge that we learn in N.A. plagues us as we try to continue in our self-annihilation. God has been gracious to many of us who have relapsed by allowing us to return to the program and the people who truly love us as we are.

Those of us who have relapsed found the true progression of the disease that plagues us. To know and come to understand that there is a Power greater than ourselves desiring to have a relationship with us, in spite of our faults, comforts us all. We all have one common factor, the disease of addiction. When we look at this concept closely, we can see that using was just a symptom of our disease.

In N.A. spiritual principles, along with the Twelve Step blueprint of our program, and sharing with recovering addicts, first check our disease and with practice, develop our virtues. The disease will go with us to our graves, we are never cured.

Some of us reach a point of complacency in recovery. If we stay at this level for long, the recovery process ceases and we begin to backslide. Clean time in the program acts as insurance. If complacency is not acted upon the disease begins to manifest apparent symptoms in us. Denial returns along with obsession and compulsion. Soon we reach a point where we stand on the border line. Denial and the First Step conflict in our minds. If we let the obsession of using overcome us we are doomed to relapse. Only a complete and total acceptance of the First Step can save us.

One of our biggest stumbling blocks seems to be in unrealized expectations of ourselves and others. Relationships are a terribly painful area. We tend to fantasize and project images of what should happen. We pick ourselves apart and decide we are to blame if our fantasies are not fulfilled.
It seems the farthest thing from our minds is that we are powerless over other people. The old thinking and feelings of loneliness, despair, and helplessness and self-pity creep in.

Thoughts of sponsors, meetings, literature and all other positive input then leave the consciousness. We can stay clean by going to a meeting when we feel we do not want one or need one. Meetings are a healing source. Writing about what we want, what we are asking for and what we get and sharing this with our sponsor or another trusted person helps to work through those feelings, and letting others share with us about their experience gives us hope that it does get better. It seems that being powerless is a huge stumbling block. Whenever a situation arises for us to admit our powerlessness, we first look for ways to exert power against it. Exhausting these ways, we begin sharing with others and find hope. Attending meetings daily, living a day at a time, and reading the literature seems to send our mental attitude toward the positive. Willingness to try what has worked for others is vital.

Another stumbling block we should safeguard against is comparing ourselves to others who seem to have gone farther down the road of addiction. For example, one member found himself locked behind the doors of a state mental institution. His earlier comparison to the other addicts was a failure on his part to see the progressive nature of his illness. Forms of this example and countless others support the fact that no matter how long we stay clean, whether it be one month or one year, once we begin to use again our illness picks up exactly as if we had never stopped. We are thrown right back into the old pattern of addiction.

Progression of recovery is a continuous journey uphill with loving effort. Without love or effort we start the downhill run. The progression of the disease is an ongoing process, even during abstinence, no matter how long.

When we forget this or the effort and tenacity it took us to get a period of time in our lives when we experienced freedom from within; ungratefulness sinks in and self-destructive
behavior begins again. Unless recognition and action is taken immediately that fall will encompass our existence and then we are along for the ride. Our life needs an immediate upswing. Spirituality and sharing is the essence of our recovery. Keeping our illusion of reality rather than using the tools of the program and the people in the Fellowship will return us to isolation. This loneliness will kill us inside and the drugs which always come next, may do the job completely. The symptoms and the feelings at the end of our using come back three fold. This impact is sure to drown us if we don't surrender ourselves to the program. Relapse can be the destructive force that kills us or leads us to the realization of who and what we are. The eventual misery of using is not worth the escape it might give us. To live is to use the necessities to attain life. To use is to die, often in more ways than one. We have found this program at the right time or we would not have found it at all. N.A. and its principles are here to help us achieve quality in our lives. If we were worthless we wouldn't be alive.

Failure to accept the N.A. program and the full implications of our powerlessness has proven for many of us to be a fatal stumbling block in our recovery. Left with a shadow of doubt, the mind of a newcomer and even the old timer can prove to be the spark needed to set off the return of insanity and that first pill, fix, drink or toke. To safeguard against this fatal stumbling block we should develop a good understanding of the basic principles set down in the Steps of our recovery and apply them in our daily lives.

A young man picked up a white chip. Eager to learn of this new life, he very quickly became willing to do anything he could. He went to meetings, emptied ashtrays, made coffee, talked to people, all the things that help us to recover.

Afraid, unable to let go of old ideas, still working to "run the show" he found no answer to what he saw as his problem. Blinded by what he saw as important, unwilling to let go of the old familiar ways, he used again. He took with him
some of what he had learned and seen. The seed of recovery had been planted in him.
Although using for the next three years, he continued to stay in touch with a member, though not on a regular basis. This contact was enough to see that the member was leading a happy and contented life. As he looked at the member's life, then his own, he found his own life lacking what the member's had: peace, serenity, joy and love; all of the things that he thought would make a truly happy, enjoyable life.

After seven more years of misery, the young man came back. Six months in the program he leads a happy, enjoyable life. He has some of all the things that, to him, make a good life. Life's flow takes place in this manner: we come here powerless and the power we seek comes to us through other people in the Fellowship if we can only reach out for it. Now in the Fellowship with clean time, we will want to keep ourselves surrounded by Fellow members who know us well and who we can count on in a pinch. N.A. is a fellowship of survival and one of the advantages of the Fellowship is that it places us in intimate regular contact with the very people who can most understand and help us in our quest for recovery. All the good ideas and intentions will not help us at all if we fail to put them into action. Reaching out is the beginning of the struggle that will make us free. It will break down the walls that imprison us. Our disease is one of isolation and honest sharing will free us to recover. Maybe there was a time when our defense mechanisms actually helped us survive, but who needs a raincoat when the sun has come out?

Slow down and live life. A cynic is someone who has been very disappointed. He does not hear until the heart decides to listen, then he can accept help. It is not shameful to relapse. The real shame is in not coming back. Being thus humbled, we must express our need to those who are able to help.
We are grateful to have stayed clean long enough for the message of total abstinence to take hold. We are grateful that we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable going to one meeting a day for ninety days. Without staying clean and coming to all those meetings, we would surely have had a rougher time working the Steps. Just one fix, pill, drink or toke would have interrupted the process of recovery and cut us off from the Fellowship.

When someone returns to the Fellowship after a relapse, we stress the importance of living just for today. The past is past. We can not change what has happened. What is important is to stay clean today. As long as we live today to the best of our ability and pursue adequacy not perfection, we can take pride in ourselves. We are doing the best we can for today and not living in the past. We can begin to live at peace with ourselves. We can stop being so hard on ourselves. This we have found to be the case; that we have been our own worst enemy, and fault for our failures was not in the stars but in ourselves.

We all find that the feeling we get from helping others motivates us to do better in our own lives. If we are hurting, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for help. We find that pain shared is pain lessened. Members of the Fellowship take great pleasure in helping a relapser recover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to offer when asked. Recovery found in Narcotics Anonymous must come from within and no one gets clean for anyone but themselves.
Although "Politics makes strange bedfellows", as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction. Obsession and compulsion. Obsession—that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion—that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill, or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power stronger than ourselves.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be these alternatives: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death; or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today, are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some twenty-six years ago, there was no N.A. I found A.A. and in that Fellowship met addicts who had also found the program to be the answer to their
problem. However, we knew that many were still
going down the road to disillusion, degradation
and death, because they were unable to identify
with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification
was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at
the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where
empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted
people. With several other addicts and some
members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the
program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now
know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now
the addict would find from the start as much
identification as each needed to convince himself
that he could stay clean, by the example of others
who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has
proved itself in these passing years. That word­
less language of recognition, belief and faith,
which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in
which we could feel time, touch reality and recog­
nize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In
our program of recovery we are growing in numbers
and in strength. Never before have so many clean
addicts, of their own choice and in free society,
been able to meet where they please, to maintain
their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it couldn't be done the way
we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled
meetings, no more hiding as other groups had tried
before by those who advocated long withdrawal from
society. We felt that the sooner the addict could
face his problem of everyday living, just that much
faster would he become a real productive citizen.
We eventually have to stand on our own feet and
face life on its own terms, so why not from the
start. Because of this, of course, many stayed and
some came back after their setback. The brighter
part, is the fact that those who are now our
members, many have long terms of complete absti­
nence and are better able to help the newcomer.
Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of
our Steps, and Traditions, is the dynamic force
that is bringing increase and unity to our program.
Now we know that the time has come when the tired
old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict", will
no longer be tolerated by either society or the
addict himself. We do recover.

As long as there have been people, addiction has
existed. Addiction is the obsession and to use compulsion.
Modern technology has made available not only the drugs
themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring out the potential for addiction. In the past, there was no hope for an addict. Clean today, we come to see life in a new light. We confess to an addictive nature and we are no longer set apart by marked obsession, compulsion, and physical discomfort.

In sharing our past with others it seems that we all reached a point when we said to ourselves, "I'm lost, I just don't know what to do". We have all experienced that terrifying overwhelming urge, that need for something outside ourselves. In addiction we share a bond of fear, anxiety, and anger that we are unable to control.

What we have in common is what we have all felt: the loneliness, the self-centeredness, the misery, the despair, the pain within and the empty numbness that sets us apart from others. We all felt that we were unique, different, better than, or worse than, but always separate. We felt alone. Our pain surrounded us. We could not fill the empty place inside.

Earlier patterns are what got us into trouble. However anything that "works" to help us make it through a new day clean is considered a new pattern. Complete abstinence is the foundation for our new way of life. Vigilance, integrity, honesty, open-mindedness and willingness to try, are all associated with strange new patterns to the newcomer and to clean addicts as well.

It all begins with that first surrender and admission. From that point forward, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won, and any failure is only a temporary set-back rather than a link in an unbreakable chain. Every addict is a prisoner in their own mind, condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt. This compels a person to act against their true inner
nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do. We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life, but on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could not deal with success, so failure became a way of life. The fear of loss of control had set in and we were afraid to try anything different.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with recovery than the mysteries of addiction. We seek to change our personalities and our lives for the better. We realize that we are a part of the universe. In recovery, we change our reactions, thoughts, and attitudes. We begin to understand and accept who we are. This gives us a sense of security. We become less compulsive in our thoughts and actions.

The dishonesty in our actions has led to a large amount of guilt inside all of us. This guilt could drive us to use, and the using could keep us from going back and making amends. All these things together would cause misery. Being clean, we are able to take our inventories honestly. We can admit our faults and are able to ask for help.

We realize that an addict is going to resist recovery. Things we have shared with them interfere with their using. We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that they can smoke pot and suffer no ill side effects, there are two ways we can look at it. The first possibility is that they are not an addict. The other is that the disease hasn't become apparent to them.

We always try to be careful because we don't want to say or do anything that might prevent them from seeking help when drugs turn on them.

We have found from our group experience that honesty is essential for the new member to surrender completely
to the program. We have also found that complete surrender is the only way to recover. No addict has ever failed to recover who has surrendered completely to our program. This has proven itself time and time again by the phenomenal growth of Narcotics Anonymous throughout the world.

We have noticed as our program has grown that newcomers seem to come in with a false impression that needs to be corrected. In the instances that we are talking about, they seem to believe that they can barter non-usage for group acceptance. When the group fails to behave in accordance with the newcomer's expectations, they seem to feel it's O.K. to use. The sad thing about this is that it may take them a while to get the real message of our program. If they happen to be addicts, they can die never realizing that recovery is possible.

Some of us had thought of ourselves as outgoing, happy-go-lucky people, but we were wrong, and after years of depending on drugs and other people to make our decisions, we lost almost all ability to socialize and be comfortable with ourselves.

At the end of our using we were consumed with terror and despair. We knew for sure that we were dying and many of our friends were already dead. No one can explain the incredible fact that addicts, hopeless in their addiction, can reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

Over a period of years, old habit patterns become familiar, and many times the comfortable mode of existence. Our egos were blown out of proportion. We became uncomfortable due to the obsessive nature of our disease. The old comfort associated with using was lost. Life was addiction—a lonely, miserable prison.

The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's self for no apparent reason. Compulsion or obsession
drives addicts to the point that there were few things we would not do to obtain our drug. Insanity for us seems to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette. We are forced to play because we have tried and can't stop.

We know that we are powerless over an illness which is chronic, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with the obsession and compulsion that comes with the disease. The only alternative is to stop using. When we are willing to follow this course and take advantage of the help available to us, a whole new life opens up.

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not a religious, program. The spiritual basis of the program is strong enough to support a person with the disease. As we re-enter society, the Twelve Steps are the roadmap to a successful recovery. Every addict who is clean and without a compulsion to use is a miracle. To keep that miracle alive is an ongoing process of awareness. It is important for us to remember that not using is an abnormal state for us. We have to learn to live clean. We need to be honest with ourselves and think of both the negative and positive sides of things. Decision making is a little rough at first. Sticking to and seeing that you have made the decision is the reward. Before we got clean, all our actions were guided by impulse. We seldom thought constructively, and even if we did, we would say, "the hell with it" and carry through with the negative anyway. It is better for us with practice and the help of our sponsors and N.A. friends.

We realize that we are responsible for the way we feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame, and we are aware that we create the world in which we live. We are products of our own thoughts.
We have found it essential to accept reality. Since that time we have not found it necessary to use.

Reality, as it is, is just fine with us. Without drugs we can function like normal human beings, which means accepting ourselves and the world around us, exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of reality and learn to be grateful for them. We learn new ways to resolve conflicts instead of running from them. We begin to simplify them and we actually look upon them with gratitude as opportunities for progress. They are a part of the real world. We learn to handle problems, not to solve them. Everyone has situations; we have tended to make them problems, like making a mountain out of a mole hill. We really don't have any brilliant answers or solutions, but we can honestly say that this program works! We can stay clean and even enjoy life, remembering, "just for today" and not picking up that first fix, pill, drink, or joint.

The rewards of staying clean are endless. We used to think life would be boring without drugs. We were really screwed up in our addictions and our concept of what life was really all about. Now that everything is changing and getting better, we give thanks to God and the N.A. program. One member shares that reality is the biggest trip of all.

We become aware that many of our feelings were immature and based upon pride and ego. As we become more comfortable with ourselves, we appreciate more fully the meaning of living just for today. We get over the guilt of the past and the worries of the future. We enjoy the now: we learn to endure both pain and pleasure. We endure frustration for we know that it will pass. We rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure,
and begin to enjoy doing things for the fun of it, rather than shying away because we are not perfect.

Interpersonal relationships improve and we become less sensitive and suspicious. Understanding the meaning of love, recognizing that we are growing from an immature "need for love" to a mature "giving of love", allows us to care about others.

We are not responsible for our disease. We are responsible for our recovery. We can seek help from others who are enjoying lives free from having to use. In time, we find that more is possible in recovery than we could conceive. Our teachability hinges on our ability to admit our need for help. This surrender is the beginning of the basic learning experience that gives us information on our disease and recovery. Life is a learning experience. As we begin to apply what we have learned, our lives begin to change for the better. No one completely understands this process, but thank God we do not have to understand it for it to work. We learn not to question the ways of God. Instead we look into our actions. Writing down our belief has always helped many of us examine our feelings. If we have trouble expressing our belief or writing it down, it is helpful to make sure we have worked Step One. The ego deflation of Step One generally opens minds. Faith is the key. It takes a firm belief in a loving God before we can possibly begin to turn our wills and lives over to His care.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we have found that a spiritual experience is necessary to arrest our addiction. This occurs as we rely on God as we understand Him. The Twelve Steps chart the course to individual recovery; from the hazy days of initial surrender to the various levels of spiritual awakening.
We get relief through the Twelve Steps, and sharing with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the promise and hope that they offer. Following the Steps, living just for today, we can maintain an attitude that is essential for us to grow. We move forward in the program, and we are comforted by the Steps. They are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essential to the recovery process, simply because they help us to participate in our own recovery. By the grace of God, our actual participation in recovery provides the health we need to respond to life and to arrest the disease of addiction. We are grateful that God provided the steps and that they have been proven as a means to arrest our disease.

If we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery after some time clean, we usually have stopped doing one or more of the things that helped us in the earlier stages of our recovery. This can show up as an unexplainable depression or disorientation. It is really related to a poor spiritual condition and can be remedied by an ongoing application of the Twelve Steps of recovery.

From "day one", the Twelve Steps started becoming a part of our lives. At first, we were filled with negativity, and we only allowed the First Step to take hold. Today, we have less fear of going insane or using, than we once did. We realize that those old feelings and fears were a product of our disease, and that real freedom is possible for us now. In time, we lost most of the fear that had us completely within its grasp and we learned to let go of guilt.

Our old ways were so self-destructive and egocentric, we hurt ourselves and those we loved. Learning a new way
of living is a blessing from our Higher Power, giving us the ability to explore and discover through feelings. We thank our Higher Power for the love that we receive. We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we keep on finding miracles as we go.

The program recommends that we lower the demands on ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. It is also recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp ourselves with a bunch of new responsibilities just because we succeeded in handling a few basics. That way, we experience success at a basic and acceptable level.

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom from the desire to use. We find that everyone we meet has something to offer. We are free to receive as well as to give. Opening these doors and entering them becomes a new adventure in living. Letting go of old ideas and entertaining the new ones brings us to this new way of life. We will know happiness, joy, and freedom. Life is not just a glum lot.

An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With gratitude, clean time is happy and joyous. We remain grateful for all the beautiful things this program has revealed to us.

Our experience revealed that the things we are not grateful for could be taken from us. As long as we didn't have something, it would seem wonderful and we would often think if we just had so and so we would be happy. Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to find the rich feelings of satisfaction and comfort beyond our grasp. We can see today that in reality we were taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously thankful for that which God and life had already provided for us.
There exists no model of the recovered addict. When the drugs go and the addict works the program, wonderful things happen. Lost dreams awaken and new possibilities spring.

How many times have we heard something over and over again, until it finally takes root and blossoms. With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier meetings are watered until we can see them grow to harvest. This harvest is a form of spiritual growth. Through listening to the experiences of others and putting the program into action, life becomes beautiful, pleasant, and very exciting! Laughter is a common part of our day. Smiling doesn't hurt anymore, and we can finally look others in the eye and be grateful who we are.

Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction that keeps us buoyant today. When we take the action indicated in the steps, the result is a healing of our distorted personalities. It is the action that is important, not the result. We leave all results to God. God presents the opportunity that heals our disease spiritually. After clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to continue applying the principles in order to get to the roots of our disorder.
CHAPTER NINE
JUST FOR TODAY

Tell yourself—
JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery,
living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.
JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A.
who believes in me and wants to help me in my
recovery.
JUST FOR TODAY I have a program. I will try to
follow it to the best of my ability.
JUST FOR TODAY through N.A. I will try to get a
better perspective on my life.
JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid, my thoughts
will be on my new associations, people who are
not using and who have found a new way of life.
So long as I follow that way, I have nothing
to fear.

We knew our lives had become unmanageable, but some
of us had a problem admitting the powerlessness over our
addiction. When we came to our first meeting it was as
though a big weight was lifted from our shoulders, guilt
feelings rolled off and a feeling of peace came over us,
as we realized that with our surrender to our Higher
Power, would come the help we so desperately needed. We
also felt the great feeling of warmth and love that came
from the group. For the first time in many months, we
were able to relax when we heard that we couldn't control
our addictions.

The principles of surrender, admission of responsibil-
ities, improving faith, and prayer and meditation, guide
us into a way of life in which all our resources center in
God, become available to us.

A great many addicts have a hard time with acceptance
in recovery. For so long, we have wanted and demanded
that things go our way. When we came into the program of
Narcotics Anonymous we were asked to learn to be patient
and accepting. This is a critical point in our recovery.
Not learning to accept is to continue to manage and con-
trol. We know from our past experiences that our way of
doing things did not work. When we refuse to practice
acceptance we are, in effect, denying our faith in a
Higher Power. This can lead to many problems and fail-
ures.

Any addict clean, without the compulsion to use, is
a miracle. We keep this miracle alive in ongoing recovery
with positive attitudes and awareness involving personal
growth. If after a period of time we find ourselves in
trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing
one or more of the things which helped us in the earlier
stages of recovery.

This lack of daily maintenance can show up in many
ways. As our lives become more comfortable, many of us
lapse into spiritual complacency, and we find ourselves
in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we came.
We forget we are given only a daily reprieve. We must ask
for help each morning and remember to thank God at night.
If we do not maintain our spiritual condition daily, some
of us find the resulting pain and confusion lead to a
return to drugs and our old way of life. Some have made
it back from relapses...many have not.

What are you going to do when you have to face your
first crisis? When the time comes we hope you will be well
equipped with the tools and the principles of the program
of Narcotics Anonymous. The enemy we have to fight is our
own self-destructiveness. When we begin to work the program, we will like ourselves better. Much of the loneliness and fear will have been replaced by the love of the Fellowship and the security of being a part of a new way of life. It is important for us to remember to take it easy.

We have found through experience that you can not be too dumb for this program, but you can be too smart for it—too smart to allow it to work for you in your life. Surrender is brought about by suffering. Having been beaten by drugs we are powerless, not powerful. As powerless people, we should realize that we cannot stay clean on our own resources. Have we not tried before? We need to tap into the group's resources and surrender our way to their way.

As a result of working the Twelve Steps, regularly attending meetings, and practicing these principles in all our affairs, a spiritual awakening happens in our lives. God consciousness fills the empty place inside that nothing ever could before. We know a true peace. Circumstances which used to baffle us no longer do. We come to dwell in the fullness and abundance of life as a direct result of having worked the Steps and maintaining our spiritual condition. We find it necessary to continue to do so on a daily basis.

These are guidelines and suggestions. We have found they work for us. This is how we maintain our spiritual condition. We never have to be lonely again. Our Higher Power is accessible to us at all times. In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we have more friends than we ever believed possible. Finally, we are fulfilled and have come to know a real peace and a true sense of self-worth.

We have stressed that going to meetings, working the Twelve Steps, practicing these principles in all our affairs
and remembering to ask God for help in the morning and to
thank Him at night, only worked for one day. On those
days that we don't continue our daily maintenance we don't
have a good day. Sometimes, after a few days of neglect-
ing spiritual maintenance, things begin to really get out
of hand in our lives. This is, hopefully, when our pain
motivates us to renew our daily spiritual maintenance.

We need to be aware that although the spiritual life
is the answer to all our problems, we live in today's
world. If our spirituality cannot help us today, then we
need to re-evaluate what we term spiritual. We need not
immobilize ourselves with constant concern over our spirit-
ual pride in this manner and it keeps us humble. We be-
lieve that if it's not practical, it's not spiritual.

We believe, that as recovering addicts, we have a lot
to be grateful for. When things don't work for us, it is
a direct result of our own self will.

Our new found way of life may have its problems.
When we ask for help, the road ahead won't be so rocky.
Sometimes, after turning over our will and life to our
Higher Power, we choose to take it back and begin managing
our lives again. The principle of surrender, is admission
of responsibility when we are at fault, and practicing
faith.

Even though, by the grace of God, we have been given
an answer to our problems, we often take things back into
our hands. Again and again, we must ask God to do for us
what we cannot do for ourselves. How many times had we
looked at a job well done, and said, "See what a good job
I've done?"...forgetting where the ability really came
from.

We begin to see how only our Higher Power can restore
us to sanity when the obsession to use surfaces and self
will runs riot. We gradually turn our will and life over
to the care of God as we understand Him. We no longer feel alone; we have found a partner in our Higher Power, who is with us all the time. We cease trying to control, and surrender. Gradually, as we become more and more God-centered than self centered, our despair turns to hope. Self-pity and resentments are replaced by tolerance and faith.

If our surrender to our disease is complete, the rest of our recovery is dependent upon our belief in a loving God of our own understanding. Remember, as recovering addicts, our fellow members love us and will not fail to respond to our sincere desire for help. We believe God works the same way.

We find that we receive guidance when we ask for knowledge of God's will for us. This is the emotional stability we so badly need. We are given the freedom, serenity, and happiness we had so desperately sought. Before going to sleep, we take a few moments out of our routine to thank God for keeping us clean that day and for helping us with our living problems.

With our Higher Power guiding us, we may never again have to deal with using, but we will always have to deal with staying clean.

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive, and if we don't take the time to appreciate both, chances are we will miss something that will help us grow. As we begin to live in the present, burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future slip away. We are granted the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and thus lose our quickness to anger and sensitivity to criticism.

Normal living is possible. The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process established in our normal living. Our recovery is dependent on our belief in a loving God who cares for us, and will
do for us whatever we found impossible to do ourselves.

Resentments are one of the biggest roadblocks to recovery. They deaden our spiritual growth. Resentments are a direct result of our self will acting out its most extreme nature—violence. We must let go, with love, and ask God to relieve us of the burden of self will. Anger and fear will fall by the wayside.

Change involves the unknown, the great source of fear. The same Power that has helped us deal with our obsession will be the guide and source of courage when we ask for it. The wisdom to know the difference involves growth in the program. Regular attendance at meetings is our best barometer in this respect.

The Fellowship, after a meeting, is a good opportunity to share things we didn’t get to discuss at the meeting. It is also a good time to talk one-on-one with our sponsors. When we talk about our questions and answers, many parts of the message surface for the first time and become clearer to us. These initial ventures into the realm of sharing freely are the beginnings of honesty, open mindedness, and willingness as a way of life.

These principles for living will guide us in recovery when we learn how to use them. We succeed in life each time we practice them. We no longer need to make excuses for who we are. New ideas are available to us.

Honesty, the search for the truth, is our most difficult and yet most challenging objective. We may not be able to maintain rigorous honesty, but we must always strive for it. Honesty must start at home. If we are not first honest with ourselves, we can’t be honest with others. The best way to practice honesty is by taking a daily inventory.

Our life is a diary wherein we mean to write one story, and quite often write another. It is when we compare the two that we have our most humble hour.
It is important while doing our daily inventory that we remember to look at our assets as well as our defects. So often, we get caught up in striving for growth and eliminating our defects, that we forget about our assets. We have found when we focus on our assets our defects will also change. Our inventory allows us to realize our daily growth.

Rigorously practicing the few simple guidelines for living in this chapter, we succeed daily. Although daily inventory may have a fair share of red ink, these guidelines, when practiced, give us sufficient black ink to balance the day's ledger.

JUST FOR TODAY, WE WILL LIVE!!!
As our recoveries progressed, we became increasingly more aware of ourselves and our world. Our needs and wants, our assets and liabilities were revealed to us. We came to realize that we had no power to change the outside world; we could only change ourselves. As recovering addicts, we found that without our drugs, we hurt. The program of Narcotics Anonymous provided an opportunity for us to relieve our pain by applying spiritual principles.

The N.A. program provides a healthy environment for growth. As a Fellowship, we love and cherish one another, supporting our new way of life together. We do this because of our common desire to stay clean.

We are encouraged to work the Twelve Steps, practice the Twelve Traditions, go to meetings, get a sponsor, find a home group and ask for help. We place principles before personalities. We work our own program and we do it for ourselves. The Steps are there for us to work and the people are there to help us. We use the tools of the program to shape our inner being. The slogans: Just For Today; An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company; If It Works, Don't Fix It; The Lie Is Dead; Clean and Serene; are simple reminders we use to help keep us on the right track.

While using, we didn't know who we were, or where we were going. We were constantly being deceitful, lying to
others and ourselves, and closing people off. We came in knowing only what we didn't want. By coming to our first meeting, we admitted our ways of dealing with life didn't work. Chemicals always had the last word. In other words, we were unable to deal with life on its own terms. Through working the program, we are rebuilding our disordered and fractured personalities.

Any addict is welcome regardless of their drug of choice. We cannot afford the luxury of arrogance in any form. Within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, there is no caste system relating to drug of choice. We believe that chemical dependency in any form is addiction and we encourage the addict to seek whatever recovery works best for them.

We found that forming sweeping opinions and generalizations with limited insight was dangerous. We found our own place in the world and took it. The ability to accept our place and be grateful for it is very special. Many of us have had great opportunities in our lives but were faced with a baffling inability to accept them or make the most of them. We have found a safe and certain usefulness in our new way of life. The old rules no longer apply and we can live in peace and harmony.

Often it means simply listening to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think would benefit others or ourselves and acting on them spontaneously. We are then able to make decisions based on principles that have real value to ourselves.

In N.A. we begin new lives, and we discovered a need for balance. Where we were excessive, we learned moderation; where we were weak, we grew strong. Balance comes to us gradually in ways we can accept. Sometimes these ways appear to be coincidental and we recognize them as the grace of God only in time. Coincidences are miracles in which God
chooses to remain anonymous.

When we pray for something, we have spiritually prepared ourselves for the realization of our prayers. Knowledge of God's will for us guides us to make wise choices when we pray. If our Higher Power forced his goodness on us, we could never learn to distinguish good from bad, and enjoy the happiness of being a spiritual person.

As we grow, we become more aware of the key to willingness. Willingness lets us relax and do what we can, just for today, to improve our lives in any area. When we are unwilling, we have to fight and constantly deny the need for improvement. This attitude leads to even greater problems. Today we have learned with God's help, to face each problem as it arises. God never gives us too much to handle in any twenty-four period.

We are grateful for open-mindedness. Open-mindedness opens the door for new ideas, from all areas in our lives. Through active listening we can hear things that will stay with us for the future. This ability is God-given and grows with us. Life takes on new meaning when we leave ourselves open to experience this gift. To be able to receive we must give and more importantly we have to receive in order to have something to give. Open-mindedness becomes an admirable quality for which we strive.

In recovery, we strive for an attitude of gratitude. We feel grateful for ongoing God-consciousness. Whenever we confront a difficulty that we do not think we can handle, we have learned to pray that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Remember, we are all in this together. None of us are too good or too bad to improve. We are not here to get good; we are here to recover. Help is there only if we reach for it. We had only to get clean, open our minds and hearts to be free to live. Humility is a fact of ongoing recovery.
Watching others grow in recovery increases our capacity for tolerance towards members who seem to need growth in many areas. We learn that the principle of personality change will transform them from caterpillars to butterflies or allow us to see that they were butterflies all along. We have seen many areas of personal and seemingly permanent difficulties yield to the ongoing practice of doing what we can. When we do what we can, God takes care of the rest.

Surrender to the program of Narcotics Anonymous is an ongoing thing. In a sense the newcomer surrenders to the wisdom of those who have gone before and those with time clean surrender to the spirit and vitality of the new.

The opportunity to witness recovery of a suffering addict is one of the greatest experiences this life has to offer us. We are always willing to help. We are willing to go anywhere at anytime to help the suffering addict. Having been down the road, we understand the problems of a recovering addict. As we look back, we are grateful for the events in our lives that have brought us here.

We want constantly to remind the newcomer and ourselves that there are plenty of people ready and able to help. What recovering addicts want most if to feel good about themselves. If we become self-destructive, we die. Today we have real feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, sadness and friendship—not the old drug induced feelings. We heard a man say, "Everytime he lost faith in another human being, he died a little bit". The program is giving us so much belief that we want to live again. We have to surrender at each stage of recovery in this program. The only way to win a losing battle is to surrender.

For most of us, N.A. was our last hope. We were so afraid of being rejected here that we were reluctant to open up. We were all shocked to hear others speak openly
of things we had done in our own past that were shameful, embarrassing and humiliating. In the beginning, we were all frightened to speak freely about ourselves. There is nothing between us but that first pill, fix, drink or toke. At one time we were not willing to seek help and were so close-minded. Living in a world of insanity is difficult to understand for those who haven't experienced it. The old ideas and our addiction kept us from obtaining a new way of life and kept us deep in our addiction.

In time, we may find ourselves with old ideas on the program. Our roots of recovery are important, but in ongoing recovery we need to constantly review our feelings and thinking if we are to stay fresh and in touch with the growth of N.A. as a whole. This freshness may well be the key to ongoing recovery. We are each others eyes and ears; when we do something wrong, our fellow recovering addicts help us help ourselves by showing us what we cannot see.

When a newcomer admits his powerlessness, he opens himself up to the Fellowship. We are responsible for making him feel loved and supported. We all remember the painful feelings of guilt, remorse, shame and self-loathing. We can share our experience that these feelings were gradually removed by working the program.

We realize that we cannot do it alone. We begin to look at our brothers and sisters and become willing to do whatever is in our power to give them what we have. We have hope for we know that a better day is coming and we have love. Our Fellowship grows and keeps on growing like our belief in our Higher Power, we cherish this experience.

Life has many brick walls for us even though we are clean. If we can see these dead-end paths, we won't feel the need to pursue them. Some of our hopes and dreams made us self-destructive. We fell short of our goals. We figured we were bad people if bad things happened to us.
Other roadblocks in our path included our reluctance to pray, 1 our laxiness, and unworked Steps. There were a lot of people we did not see eye to eye with, especially when our character defects and personality differences got in the way. Some of us used this rationalization to stay away from the Fellowship and use. We were dying and could not stand being around people we thought were full of hypocrisy. The people in the Fellowship were staying clean and had a chance to change and grow. What chance did we have? How could we grow if we couldn't even stay clean? Some of these roadblocks led some of our fellow addicts to relapse. Un- fortunately, some of them never returned. They were destined to die using.

In N.A. we have feelings we never dreamed of having. We are able to entertain ourselves today. We do things beyond our wildest imagining. Some of us take on new hobbies, join sports teams, become adventurous and do things we always wanted to do but couldn't because of drugs. Free from drugs, we can have good clean fun.

When we came into the Fellowship, one of our biggest reservations or fears was the thought of how boring life would be without drugs. Our fears were short-lived. We soon found that living clean was not only fun, but that it was excitingly simple.

Talking and sharing experiences with our fellow addicts was a pleasurable experience. The simple games and pleasures that life offers, which had been lost in our using days were rediscovered. Playing ball, going to parks, hiking, things we just didn't have time for when we were using. Being clean is anything but dull and boring.

By living clean we are giving up using. We are giving up the right to be close-minded, selfish, dishonest, hateful and generally unhappy. And what are we giving up all these precious things for? Simple, unconditional happiness.
Having fun and being happy doesn't have to be searched for; it surrounds us. It is all there. So just do it. Be clean, have fun and be happy.

In N.A. we do not mope around crying because we're addicts. As a matter of fact, it is seldom that we mope because there is always a friend around to lift our spirits. God has restored us to sanity but that does not mean we are boring or prudish. We are a group of life lovers and we used to try too hard to have fun. We exhausted ourselves trying to figure out what to do. Now it's very natural and spontaneous. We used to be afraid of going insane---now we enjoy ourselves. This is a big change from the wild parties we used to attend while we were using and the "fun" we used to have. It is important for us to have fun in our recovery without the dying. Many of us would not have continued in Narcotics Anonymous had we not been able to enjoy it.

Many newcomers are amazed by their first dance or party to find members laughing and dancing like high school kids. It helps break the ice of isolation. Many newcomers have the problem of their faces hurting from the unaccustomed smiling. A sense of renewal pervades conventions and get-togethers which draw together members and old friends from different areas.

Complacency does not go with recovery. The deadly and insidious nature of our disease can disguise itself as boredom or superiority and generate the old "apart from" feelings. Separation from the atmosphere of recovery and the spirit of service to others slows our spiritual growth and can threaten relapse. This book is not the final answer to addiction. The Spirit of our Fellowship is constantly leading us into new awareness. Recovery is a journey, not a goal. This is a life time school; our graduates get loaded. We have attempted to record a way of
life which includes many addicts from many areas. Our program could not encompass so many types of addicts from differing backgrounds if not for the spiritual nature of our groups. The spiritual truths at the heart of our program do not change but the edges are constantly growing. On the practical level, adjustment occurs because what is appropriate to one phase of our growth may not fit another. Vigilance is required to maintain the atmosphere of recovery as a small group grows in size from three members at the weekly meeting to three hundred. Concern and attention on the part of trusted servants is required at every meeting, group and service committee. Spiritual vigilance is required to apply our Twelve Traditions and to bring up at times the ties which bind us together. Complacency has no place in all this; openness, freedom, and spirit are the marks of recovery. It is this spirit which will guide our ongoing process as members and as a Fellowship. Ours is a message of the Spirit, not of words. Words can describe the process but not explain it completely. Experience alone can make it real to us. Surrender to the disease begins our recovery, surrender to the basic mystery of recovery sustains it. No one we know understands the program totally and the program has defied reduction to formula by the most determined efforts of some of the most skilled rationalizers in the world. No sooner we make a breakthrough in terms of personal growth than we realize how much more we need to grow so that we may remain clean.

Our conceptions of fun have changed drastically since we surrendered to N.A. as a whole. We can enjoy simple things in life, like fellowship with other addicts, whereas we once isolated ourselves. This was especially true after we received help through N.A. and fellow addicts.

We enjoy sharing experiences, strength, and hope for we know that we can't keep what we have unless we give it
away. Through N.A. and the Twelve Steps, we are able to
grasp a new understanding of fun. We realize we don't
have to create fun—we just live it. It happens to us
as a result of complete abstinence from all drugs. As
we look back, we are grateful to enjoy life, because
it's so unlike the events in our lives that brought us
here. When we used, we thought we had fun and straight
people were deprived of it. God helps us to live to the
fullest, without forgetting who we are, and what our pur-
pose is. We have learned how to love ourselves and others
and not to be so afraid. We find that God usually grants
us the ability to see the obvious. Since we've been
clean, we have found joy doesn't come from material things
but is within ourselves if sought. We find when we lose
self-will we lead richer, happier and much more fun lives.
When there are no longer conditions put on our lives,
everything that we need is given to us in order to live
today. We do not forget to live each day to its fullest,
as a gift from our Higher Power, and just share, care, love,
and live the N.A. way.

A day at a time we have no way of knowing what will
happen to us. This is why we live in today. However, it
has been very funny how things have worked out for us!
We find that if we would have written a list of things
that we wanted upon entering the program we would have been
cheating ourselves.

It has been our experience that by clean living and
working the Steps, our dreams have come true. We do not
mean we became great leaders, champion race drivers or rock
stars, though some of us may have. What we mean it that
our deep inner dreams come true for us in recovery.

Things that we had given up hope on a long time ago
come true. Like being happy most of the time or seeing our-
selves succeed in some areas where we had failed miserably
In our experience, the Twelve Steps give us a way of life which does more than keep us off drugs. Not only is this way of life superior to the old using life, it is superior to any life that we can conceive. So, when we say that clean in the program is our dreams come true, we can speak from our experience. Before 1953, addicts did not recover except in special cases. They did not dream that recovery was even possible. We died, went insane and were locked up. Unfortunately, too many of us are being locked up still, and being killed by a disease. Our small population today numbers twenty thousand.

We have a much loved member who says to newcomers with a twinkle in his eye, "Just stick around and watch the miracles happen". And they will.

Deepening ties are even now being forged so that no addict need ever die seeking help. To us this is truly exciting. The possibility of being used as an instrument to save lives is exhilarating to us.

When times are hard for us in the Fellowship, we can ask our Higher Power, as we understand Him, to guide us as to what to do. He reveals Himself to us a little at a time.

In our recoveries we have witnessed God's healing powers take a dying addict and turn them into a new person with a new, totally different life.

Things we never dreamed of become true. We find ourselves daring to care and love and with love, all things are possible. We find ourselves advancing as human beings along spiritual lines and doing a great service.

We get the very finest friends. These are some things many of us could not conceive of. Before, we thought in terms of self-centered materialism that could not possibly bring us happiness. Now we live with a new outlook, that of caring and sharing the N.A. way.
We are surrounded by like-minded addicts, who once were at the depths of misery and despair, and now serious about their own recovery and helping the suffering addict.

We are living and enjoying life without drugs. At times we look in the mirror and find it all so hard to believe. The great fact is that it's O.K. It does get better and we never have to be alone again.

We have, in recovery, experienced difficult times when we could not decide our next move. The truth has been revealed to us. In meditation we may concentrate on a dream of service for our fellow man and find that the rest is just willingness and foot work. More will be revealed. It takes work to uncover it but it is, we believe, the one thing worth working for—Twelve Steps of recovery.

Today we are free from the obsession to use compulsively even when we are beaten. We are free to live as we see fit without drugs. The ability to accept God's will and feeling serene inside is freedom for us. Faith has replaced our fear and has given us a freedom from ourselves. Today we have the freedom of choice.

The program of N.A. is truly a program of freedom. N.A. has given us back the freedom that we lost when we turned to drugs in our search for freedom. We had believed that drugs were the answer. When we were under the control of our addictions we had given up all of our freedom to choose—the only choice left to us were jails, institutions or death. At last, with the help of the Fellowship and our Higher Power, we have regained our freedom.

When we first came to the program, many of us felt defeated, beaten and ashamed. As a newcomer it is sometimes hard to see that through our defeat and surrender we had regained some control of our lives once more. Through our freedom we begin taking responsibility for our lives again. In our freedom we have found that our dreams
come true, if we choose to make them happen.

Through the freedom in our new lives we are finally able to see the special qualities that we possess as individuals—qualities that we used to envy in others—never realizing the potential within ourselves.
We have attempted to make this collection of personal stories as representative as possible of the Fellowship as a whole. We hope that each of you can identify, in some way, with this selection.

We have taken the stories from the "White Book" and added several more from the material available to us. Each story was selected by the group consciousness of the story review workshops at WLC-3.

Prior to final editing of the First Edition of our book, we hope to see the stories expanded to include a comprehensive cross-section of "The Addict." We encourage you to submit your story, if you do not find it already here. We are aware that this sampling may not be truly representative. We feel, however, that we have done our best with a difficult task. Every story available was good, meaningful and worthwhile. Regrettably, neither time, space nor money permitted the inclusion of every story in this review copy.

Faithfully,

WLC-III

At Memphis, TN
February 8, 1981
A LITTLE GIRL GROWS UP

I was born the youngest, to a family of eight, on Christmas Eve. I heard all of my life how my coming into this world was a special occasion, as a result of my birth. I too thought it was a celebration, and continued to for the next 26 years. My parents were close to 40 when I came, so naturally I felt like a grandchild. Every day to me was supposed to be special. I demanded and got all the attention I needed and wanted. My conception of myself at this time was that I was to be taken care of the rest of my life, and that all I had to do was be pretty and smile and the rest would be a piece of cake. I put the responsibility of my existence on everyone but me and if I wasn't happy, they weren't doing their job. Of course when things went my way, I took all the credit. To me, no one knew how to make me happy. I was constantly filled with frustration and anxiety because nothing I did seemed to get me to that place called "Happiness."

I was brought up in a religious atmosphere, but I never seemed to be able to grasp what it all meant. I couldn't understand how God could love me one minute but the next strike me down to hell. This understanding of mine caused me to rebel against all that I was taught to be "sinful". I was determined to prove that if I danced, smoked, cut my hair, or wore pants, I would not go to hell. I began to do all these "sins" in Junior High and ended up pregnant at 15. I did not want to get married and be a housewife. My first reaction was to have my baby and raise it myself, but that didn't go off very well, so I got married and had my child at 16. You see, again, I didn't want to take the responsibility of my actions, so I went into the marriage bitter but determined to make it work.
My husband and I were two kids playing house. We began going out to clubs drinking and living it up. My thinking at this time was that I had found it, this was the life! Right before our third wedding anniversary, my husband was shot and killed at one of those live-it-up nightclubs. Well, needless to say, I really had a good excuse now. I now had another reason to cop-out on this big bad world. I honestly felt that mean God up in the clouds was really paying me back for all the sins I had committed. I hated Him! I'd lay awake many a night in agony wondering if God and my husband could see and hear the pain of loneliness I felt. I never got an answer.

After my husband's death, his best friend and I began spending time together crying and laughing at memories of the past. Not too long after this I was introduced to L.S.D. My first trip was spent in the floor with me crying and wishing my old man hadn't died on me. But the bad trip didn't seem to bother me because somewhere in my mind I knew I had found something new--a new world, maybe "happiness". I was constantly in search for relief from the pain and about this time another man came along, except he was different because he had cash. This man saw a scared little girl in agony and wanted to buy the hurt away. Well, I tell you it didn't take me very long at all to grab on to that and hold on till I used him completely up. With the access to so much cash it was just a matter of time before I was burnt out on all the pills I was taking, the high just wasn't the same any more. Again, I began a search for escape from myself and I found it, the needle!

My first shot was ecstasy. The feeling that ran through my body and veins when I got off was one of contentment and exhilaration. I had never dreamed anything could feel so good. During this time of discovering the new highs, I was trying to keep two men happy. Also, my sugar daddy was constantly forking out cash and I was forking out lies. My old
man and I really thought we were something; having all that
cash to buy all the dope we needed or wanted. But there was
something wrong that I couldn't quite grasp and that was
that I was slowly running out of whatever it took for me to
lead a double life. For about a year I shot dope for fun.
My feelings were, "If it feels good do it!" It wasn't very
long before the needle had taken full control of me--no more
was I in command. This dependency led me to be very care-
less and the next thing I knew, I was busted twice in a
period of a few months. I'll never forget the feeling I had
as I was being photographed and fingerprinted. All I wanted
to do was go back and run-up. My mind and body were so
screwed up, I wasn't even aware that I had a daughter at
home waiting for me.

Someone told me that if I went to a hospital and quit
using that I could probably beat the case. So that's exactly
what I went for and that was it! I knew I had been doing too
much dope but I thought I just needed a rest. I ended up
having my friends bring me dope through the windows and in
the meantime proceeded to drive my family crazy. My husband
was sentenced and I got 2 years probation.

Well, that really did it! Again God had taken away my
reason for living. Before my husband left I made promises
that I would be faithful, save money that my sugar daddy gave
me, and only shoot dope occasionally. I was only able to keep
one, and that was be faithful. I literally stayed in my bed-
room and bathroom for two years waiting for the day my hus-
band would come home and make me happy again. But there was
a problem. The needle slowly became my friend, lover, and
my reason for living. I lost every glimpse of self-respect
I had left. I spent hours in the bathroom sticking and cry-
ing because a piece of plastic owned me now and there was
nothing I could do. As a result of getting myself off I began
to "miss" a lot, and those "misses" turned to infection and
sores from my head to my toes. I spent a lot of time tell-
ing my daughter and parents that those sores on me were just
boils--how very sick I had become. I had lost everything. I was a zombie with no feelings for anyone or anything except my rush. I remember thinking that when my husband came home I could quit and everything would be alright. It wasn't. I tried staying clean for a while working in a furniture store my father had started for us, but nothing worked. Before long I was at it again and by this time I was burnt out completely. There were no veins left so that I had to go in about an inch and a half to find one and that nearly took my legs for good. All this time I was trying to be a mother, wife, and girlfriend. I'd dress myself up for maybe a day, put on my mask and perform my duties, but it never did work. I had no motivation to help myself for anyone, not even me.

During the worst time of my addiction my thoughts were never suicide, I just wanted to sleep till it all went away. My old ideas told me it was a "sin" to take my own life. I couldn't really see, but I was slowly doing just that. As deep as I now was into my habit it wasn't long before I was selling everything. I had run out of lies to tell my money man, so next went my house, cars, and jewelry, but I didn't care, I had to have my dope. There were people reaching out to me with all they had but all I could do, when someone tried to get close to this scared little girl was shoot more dope. I didn't have any ideas. I had no strength to get out of it all. It wasn't long till I got busted again. This time it was different. It was the end for me. I had never been one to assist cops in anything but now the running was over. I knew it. I told them exactly what I had done and I didn't really care what the consequences were, I just wanted out. I was picked up at a drugstore and taken to jail. I was so messed up that nothing mattered, nothing! I was unable to walk. Both my legs were bent from infection to where I couldn't straighten them out. I was carried by the nurses before the judge to have my bond set. As foggy headed as I was, I'll never forget the voices of disgust and pity as I was carried into the courtroom. Something inside my sick
1 mind and heart told me it was all over, finally! I suddenly
2 realized how close I was to death or even, prison.
3 Without my knowledge my father had found a lawyer to get me
4 out. The nurses informed me that I was on my way to a hospi-
5 tal, police escort and all. Before I left the jail my lawyer
6 arrived. He came in, introduced himself, and then proceeded
7 to tell me the most frightening words I'd ever heard, "It's
8 time for you to grow up!" He told me the only reason he was
9 taking my case was because he hated to see a grown man cry and
10 my father had sat in his office and cried like a baby, plead-
11 ing with him to please help his little girl this last time.
12 He informed me there would be no more calling my parents,
13 brothers and sisters, and sugar daddy for help. I was to
14 stand on my own two feet for once and take the responsibility
15 for my actions. I had never been so scared in my life. The
16 things he told me scared me more than anything, even my arrest,
17 and losing my daughter again. I didn't know where to begin.
18 I had no idea of how to grow up and no idea of what he really
19 meant, except that it had to be done somehow.
20 When I arrived at the hospital, I was informed that there
21 would be no phone calls in and no phone calls out. I couldn't
22 even talk to my parents. I didn't like to too much but I knew
23 I had better listen for the first time in my life. My lawyer
24 was the only visitor I got for the first few days. He really
25 helped me laugh at myself and the condition I was in. I was
26 lying in bed one day feeling sorry for myself and counting the
27 scars, I had twenty-two. He looked at me real serious, and said,
28 "I know what we'll do, we'll paint you green and play dot to
dot!" I had never imagined, in my serious and condemning mind,
29 that I could ever laugh at myself in a forgiving way. Before
30 if I laughed at myself, I was judging myself for being such a
31 failure at life. Now there seemed to be some relief and hope,
32 nothing was that bad any more.
33 My next trip was to a treatment center, and this time I was
34 determined to make this thing work. I spent a lot of that time
35 preparing myself to go to prison because there just didn't seem
to be a way out of it. My lawyer told me there would have to be a miracle somewhere, because I'd really gone my limit. I knew this, people just didn't get out of three narcotic busts (including fraud) without ratting and without going to jail. The song "Why Me Lord" came into my head, while I was there. I had begun to know what gratitude was. My prayers were limited to just, "Help me". I didn't know what I was really praying to, but I had to for the first time. I couldn't carry the burden alone anymore. These people around me were telling me I had to believe in something bigger and greater than me or I would die. I could look in their eyes and see that they must be telling the truth because something was there and I wanted it. For the first time I was told I would have my own God that could love and understand me. I could have a God that no one else had if I chose to do so. Wow, what a relief this was to me. I no longer had certain rules and regulations to belong somewhere. My God and I could make up our own. Now I was beginning to know what faith was and I had taken the first three big steps of my life. My heart told me now that whatever happened in my life would be God's will and that my worries of wondering what to do could be taken away, if I just prayed and believed. It all seemed so simple to do, but my will just wasn't ready to give up. I kept telling myself, "You've made a decision, stick with it for once and see what happens." The words of the third step, "Made a decision" scared me because I didn't know what "decision" was. I had never decided on anything, I just reacted.

To the best of my ability I stayed with the third step throughout my time at the treatment center. Little did I know my next trip would be to a halfway house in Birmingham. My counselor recommended that I go, so I could get some time behind me and see what it was really like to be clean for more than thirty days. When she told me the name of the place was St. Ann's, I freaked. I thought there would be a bunch of sisters in robes greeting me. I couldn't conceive living with eighteen women under one roof for too long, but
I knew I had to go. To my surprise I was greeted by several lovely women that were not nuns, but alcoholics. I knew I had come to a place of love, acceptance and understanding beyond my comprehension. Those women told me everything was going to be alright and I believed this with all my heart.

My stay there began with mixed emotions. I often wanted to leave, get my little girl and take off somewhere to get away from all the pain of reality. I also read a great deal from the A.A. Big Book and it told me it was time to take the Fourth Step. I spent numerous hours writing about what had happened in my life, the pain I had felt, and the pain I had caused. I wrote about everything! There was a great deal of pain and embarrassment involved, but also an overwhelming feeling of relief, that I was finally able to get out all the pain that had been with me all my life. To look at me on a piece of paper, and realize how responsible I really was, just verified the fact to me that there would be no more running. The old me was finally beginning to die. I began to see that I really didn't deserve all the punishment I had bestowed upon myself and that maybe I was worthy of that thing called "happiness".

I spent several months on the Fourth Step and when it came time to do the Fifth there was no planning done on my part, it was just time to do it. The only way I could have held on to all that garbage would have been for me to start rationalizing my actions again, and the thought of losing the honesty given to me and what it had done for me! To my astonishment, the woman I had done my Fifth with didn't laugh, snicker, or frown any the whole time. She only cared with compassion when I cried, and laughed. Hallelujah! Someone finally knew the crazy thoughts I had and the crazy things I'd done.

I now felt completely forgiven and was truly ready to have God remove the old me and my sick ways. But I soon found out that the key word of Step Six was "ready" and that it would have to be done when God was ready, not me. Step Seven came with the Sixth because as a result of Step Five I now had some
idea of what my defects and shortcomings were and I needed someone or something desperately to take it all away. I now had to understand willingness.

Steps Eight and Nine hit me when I came into the program. I was ready to have everyone accept my apologies instantly, when I wanted them to. I was so relieved that God had forgiven me that I thought everyone else had too! But again it was only to find that I had to wait for God's time, not mine!

As of today, I work Step Ten daily, searching for where and if I had wronged another human being by allowing my defects to overcome God's love. As a result of the Twelve Steps, I'm not able to hold onto old ways of deceiving myself as long as before. God allows me shorter periods of time for rationalization, for He and I know, I'll die if I keep it.

Step Eleven is my way of getting out of myself. My time for prayer can be any time, anywhere, for I now have a friend that listens whenever I pray. Meditation was hard at first for I couldn't hear anything God was saying. As I work the program I find Step Eleven is when I work Step Ten, by listening to God tell me when I've wronged another.

Step Twelve is my reason for living today. To not be able to share what Narcotics Anonymous has done for me would be to not exist. I now have an identity. I know who and what I am, and maybe somewhere someone can relate to the pain my addiction caused me. If this is so, I've achieved a portion of what I feel is my purpose for being alive and happy today.

The program of Narcotics Anonymous gave me an identity. I can now hold my head high and tell people who I am and that "I'm an addict". Before I came to the program and I was asked, who are you, I wouldn't and couldn't answer because I had no idea what it really meant. I love the newfound me. I love getting to know me and other people like me. I now can feel emotions that were buried deep within me for many years.
The program has given me everything non-material. To me "happiness" (I thought) was what and how much I could buy. How little I knew what was missing. I'm beginning to accept pain as growth. I know pain is essential for through pain God can break down that many false personalities little by little, on His time.

There is so much hope for me today. The program was a challenge I needed desperately and was given to me as a gift. Each day I want more of what it has to offer. I want so much to learn. What a long way to go to reach the understanding I'm searching for, but that's okay, I'm at least searching.

To put into words what God and the program of Narcotics Anonymous have done for me is difficult, for there aren't any words to express God's love. I hope that my story can reach someone, somewhere, but if it doesn't, that's okay, it reached me.

Thank you, God, and Narcotics Anonymous for giving me myself.
Like everyone else, I started my life as a baby, and later became a child. And, like everyone else, I grew up one day and discovered that I had an adult body. But, unlike most people, I was still a child when I made this discovery. I am an addict. Drugs, in whatever form, were my primary addiction. Self-destructive behavior, obsessive and compulsive thinking, were symptoms that lived with me, before I ever used chemicals, and stayed with me after I let go of the drugs.

When I was a little girl I started to look for a substitute for Papa. I had a father, but he wasn't the father I wanted. He was a drunk with a compulsive personality. He was highly intellectual, but very bigoted and negative, and above all, violent and unpredictable. His job required that he spend a good deal of time away from home, so there were months out of almost every year that I didn't see him at all. He was my Higher Power. He was big, strong, and frightful. When he did take the time out to play with my older brother and me, he was so much fun! But, even when we were playing together, he could not be trusted. The slightest thing could send him into a rage. Yes, I was a battered child. It was not uncommon for me to go to school with bruises on my face, along with instructions as what lie my parents wanted me to tell the teacher as to how I got that bruise.

Joe was my older brother. He and I were very competitive. Although he was two years older than me, we were always about the same size growing up. He was popular in
school, both with the teachers and with the other kids. All
his life, people told him what a genius he was. I worshipped
him too.

For several years, we were the only kids. Then, when I
was eleven, my brother, Lee, was born. I didn't like that
at all. My status as the "baby" was gone, and he represented
my first responsibility around the house. Before he was
born, we always had maids, so I never had to help my mother.
But with his birth, there was so much more to be done.
And Mama didn't have the time to spend with me that I had
been used to. He was a lovely baby, but deep down inside
I resented him for being born.

Mama worked all my life. We were raised by black
maids. They kept the radio on the rock and roll stations
all the time and kept the atmosphere pretty loose around
the house all day. I liked the way they seemed to live
and think, much better than the way I was being taught to
grow up by my parents. Many of them were very loving with
Joe and me, and they taught us a lot about life.

What I seemed to want most in life was attention. I
usually got it. I was bright, pretty, and wild, with a
tough little spirit to break. I decided early on that I
would grow up to be either a singer, a writer, or an artist.
By the time I was fourteen, I had chosen singing as a career.

In the late sixties in Nashville there was very little
of the "sub-culture" trickling into the community, like
there was in so many of the larger cities earlier. But,
eventually, through the mass media, a little hippie movement
was starting to blossom in our city. I had seen people like
that in movies, and I really thought they were neat. The
men all looked like rock stars. That was what I wanted.
When my brother discovered pot, I was close on his heels.
He found out where all the flower children hung out, and
joined them. To his embarrassment and disgust, so did his
fourteen year old sister. Joe was witty and handsome, so older kids in the street scene liked him right from the start. I didn't feel like I had anything to offer these wonderful people, so I donated my body to the cause. I donated it to anyone that looked the way I wanted him to look, especially if there were drugs available.

I had my first taste of illicit drugs when, at fourteen, I was sent to Atlanta for an illegal abortion, and the doctor gave me morphine. I liked most of the effects; I had been experimenting with alcohol since early childhood and was quickly becoming a partyer. And, any time anyone suggested a new kick, like cough syrup or glue, I tried it.

Once I found the right sources, I began taking all kinds of goodies. I really liked smoke, in all its forms, especially hashish. I had my first hit of acid when I was fifteen, and I dropped it every chance I got from then on. We did speed in pill form mostly, in my little clique, and even though I did experiment with downers, they never did agree with me. Even back then, I can remember a real sense of desperation in trying to find drugs when none were around. The drugs I took gave me the first real freedom I had ever known. I depended on them to expand my mind, to relax me, to mix with my hip buddies.

When I was sixteen, our family moved to Bogota, Colombia. I was four months pregnant (again) and I'd been eating LSD every other day or so for the first three months of the baby's gestation. On December 25, 1969, at 1:00 A.M., I gave birth to a premature baby that died in less than five hours. Its little insides were deformed, and it was blue. For a couple of months after that, I was kept under lock and key. But my parents couldn't hold me for long. And, Colombian pot is strong. It called my name: "dirt cheap". We lived in Bogota for almost a year. After I returned, I was re-enrolled in high school. It had been a long time
since I had been in school, and I didn't adjust to the
discipline well at first, but things got better for a
little while, at least school did. I was still getting
high on whatever I could find, and still promiscuous as
hell, but the atmosphere at the school was liberal, and
when the other kids voted on Senior Superlatives, I was
elected "Most Individualistic". I won a medal in my
Spanish class, and I did well in all my subjects. Unfortu-
nately, I had been working on a correspondence course for
the school year before that, and I never did finish it, so
I skipped Graduation Day, in order to avoid the embarrass-
ment of being the only Senior to walk away with no pilorama.
I lied about that fact for years. During that year, I came
down with hepatitis. It laid me up for a month. I had a
steady boyfriend at that time, and he got it too. We had
great plans for ourselves, after my eighteenth birthday.

My birthday arrived, and I tried to get out of the
house as soon as possible. I hitch-hiked to Indiana to
visit my lover, and his Mom sent me back home after a few
weeks. I tried that same trick again after three months, and
his mother kicked me out again then too. So, I went to live
in the house with my brother's rock and roll band. In just
a little while, my brother kicked me out too, basically be-
cause I had been playing games with three of the band mem-
ers at once. I learned about crashing after that. I did
a lot of it for years.

I did find places to live and people to live with. I
even found a job that wasn't too demanding, minding shop
in a health food store. At that time, I was staying away
from most drugs, because I had to avoid things that might
harm my liver. I was a vegetarian, and I kept up with all
the herbs. I ate all the time, and I probably ate more
merchandise than I sold a lot of days. I looked real serene,
but I was getting as fat as a pig, and I hated myself. It
seemed to me then that something must be terribly wrong with me. Here I was, clean from drugs, and all I could do with myself was eat like a hog, and hole up in my room.

To my great relief, I met up with a piano player who wanted to make music with me. His name was Sylvester. We became the best of pals. We went everywhere together, even the john. Both of us had all kinds of high ideals about spirituality, which we tried out on one another, and found them to be impossible, at least for us at that time.

Right before my nineteenth birthday, I got a ride all the way to Colorado. I didn't have any money. I didn't bother to tell my mother and father that I was leaving town. I didn't even give an hour's notice at my job. I just left. Once I got to Boulder, I got wild. The street scene there reminded me of the one in Bogota. I liked it, and I became a part of it in no time at all. The first people that took me in were the "guru" type. They were pretty interesting, but I got restless. The next group I fell in with was much more down to earth. The STP Family was the royal family on the Hill in Boulder. One of the members took a liking to me, and asked me to come and live with him. I loved him as much as I was ever capable of loving anyone, and I believe that he probably loved me too. But, we sure had funny ways of showing it. We screwed around on each other all the time, and when he wasn't throwing me out, or taking me back, I was running out the door, with my thumb outstretched. I came and went from Boulder to Nashville and back again, and we were lovers for about six months before his death. He was dealing MDA on the Hill, and when the cops searched him, he ate the whole stash. I freaked out completely at his death. I still wear the ring that his mother gave me, taken off his dead finger.

That was the excuse I wanted to just let go of all sense of dignity, and just stay loaded and filthy. Before his
death, I had been living however I could, taking whatever
handouts I could manipulate, crashing wherever I could.
I hadn't really been staying stoned all the time, though.
I had tried to be useful and kind to people, and even cre-
ative, at times. Once he was gone, I was free to let all
of it slide. I went on a drunk, and I just traveled around
the country, hitch-hiking for six months or so. I stayed
drunk and stoned on whatever drugs I could find. I had a
boyfriend, or old man, all the time, although I never kept
the same one for very long. I had to depend on a man to
protect me from rapes and murders and thigs that I might
encounter on the road. In truth, I wasn't very well pro-
tected. Some of the people I chose were pretty violent
themselves. And, there were several times when I had hitch-
hiked during that year that I was raped. I never reported
any of this to the authorities. I was certain that any
judge in a court of law would rule against me, and in favor
of the rapist, because a woman hitch-hiking is easy prey,
and most people know it. Rape was something that my life-
style invited, as a commonly accepted detail that I just
took for granted; something to avoid when I could, but to
expect from time to time. The same went for arrests. I
was arrested five times in the year that I was nineteen,
mostly on petty offenses, but there was one felony too,
that I had a hell of a time getting out of. The last situa-
tion like that was when I had been given a lift from New
Orleans to North Carolina, and we made a stop in Georgia.
The man who had given me a ride had known me for several
days, and he'd seen how loose I was sexually. He waited
until I was really drunk, and I'd just seduced a buddy of
his, and then he tried to force me into having sex with
him too. I didn't like the idea, and he figured that I
didn't have the right to turn anyone down, after the way I
had acted, so he beat me within an inch of my life, raping
and beating me repeatedly, for what seemed like hours. I was lucky to have survived that with my life, and I nearly lost one eye. Of course, my Higher Power, whom I didn't understand, sent people to rescue me. After that, I managed to get into some more trouble and spent a couple of weeks in solitary in the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta with two felonies hanging over my head. I got out of both of them, with the charges dropped, but my drinking pattern had gotten so out of hand that I was in even more trouble than I had been. I couldn't go a day without drinking enough booze or wine to knock me out, and it was becoming obvious that I had no idea what kind of behavior to expect from myself after I had had that first drop of alcohol. I still did as many of the other drugs as I could, but since the addiction to booze had gotten so physical, I couldn't handle uppers or even pot without some alcohol to offset them.

I went back home to Nashville after a year of traveling around, bombed out and flat broke, figuring that all my old buddies would be glad to see me and would put me up. They didn't respond to me the way I had anticipated they would. Frankly, they didn't seem to want to have anything to do with me, and I had to change crowds to hang out in. I finally ended up moving back in with my mother and little brother. I was unemployable. I had to at least try to clean up my act a little bit. A little bit didn't work. During the day, I was so hung-over that even after I finally found a place to work, I couldn't function on the job. I hated the way I felt about myself, and I hated being frightened and sick all the time. When I had been in New Orleans the winter before, I'd gone into delirium tremens, and the doctor in the emergency room had given me some librium to withdraw me. So, when I decided to get off the sauce, I went straight to the hospital clinic, and begged an intern
to prescribe a bottle for me. He did, thank God, and I
stopped drinking sometime in July of 1973. It took me a
much longer time to let go of the downers and the pot, but
I really wanted to get free of all drug dependency. On sheer
intuition, I realized that if I didn't let go of all drugs,
I would just jump from one addiction to another. That was
the only thing that saved me, because I didn't join any
programs, or call on anyone for help, for almost a year.

May 20, 1974, in order to get a certain cowboy out of
my hair, I attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting
at the local A.A. clubhouse. Honestly, I didn't think I
needed any help at all in staying away from booze, but I
had met a songwriter that seemed to think there was some-
thing wrong with an alcoholic that didn't drink, but didn't
go to A.A., and since he was a loyal A.A. member, he proceeded
to nag me about it, until I broke down and went to a meeting
with him. I really liked it. The man who spoke was the
funniest man I had ever heard in my life. He told one story
after another, and I was in tears. I didn't like the refer-
ences to God, or the fact that all the people were so much
older and "straighter" than I was. So I didn't go back.

On September 7, 1974, I joined A.A. as a member. I
had just gone through a three month depression, and I had
no answers for myself. I had tried every tactic I knew of
to avoid going for help, but I just couldn't take any more
of life, as I was seeing it and living it then. During my
first year of chemical abstinence, I had moved into my first
apartment, made a start for myself in the music business,
found and lost the "love of my live" (he was married),
worked at the same job for nine months on end, and developed
a serious new addictive pattern. I became anorexic, suffer-
ing from a disease just as devastating as all of my other
addictions put together. When I wasn't starving myself, I
was compulsively gorging myself and vomiting. I had moved
to Atlanta again, this time for three months, working as a singer in a club. Out of all the experiences I had had, I came to one definite conclusion; I was not equipped to cope with anything alone. I had to have help. The day I joined A.A. it was the only thing I could think of to do, besides use, and using (anything) was all I really wanted to do. I was so frightened and depressed on the day I called the clubhouse, that the people assumed that I was still shaking off a drunk. Even though there wasn't anyone there that I felt old enough to talk to, I really didn't think I had a choice. These people were nice enough to let me cry, to talk to me and to listen to me. And, unlike my other friends, they weren't using. I stayed in A.A. for a year, going to meetings almost every night, reading the "Big Book", and all the other literature. It was home, and all the people were my new parents. Then I went on the road, singing in lounges with different rock and roll bands. I still attended as many meetings as I could, but my hours usually conflicted with meeting times. People were usually pretty nice to me. It was almost impossible for me to stay clean on the road, and I am sure I would've gone back to using many times, if I hadn't been asking God for help in the mornings and thanking Him at night. I made it a point to call A.A. as soon as I hit town, no matter where we went. I stayed on the road for a year, and then I spent another year or more back in Nashville, beating the pavements on Music Row, trying to get singing work, both in studios and in the clubs. I didn't have much success at it, but I did learn one thing. There is absolutely no situation that I can't stay clean in, if I use the tricks I have learned in meetings, and ask God for help.

It took more than four years for me to bottom out on the strange eating behavior, but I finally did on October 13, 1978. I kept the same "dry date" for a long time, but I de-
decided to go back and change it a few months ago. I feel
more honest this way. So, my dry-date changed from Septem-
ber 7, 1974 to October 13, 1978, which was the last time I
did anything compulsive and destructive to myself. I lost
my old-timer status, but I sure feel better about me.

In 1978 and 1979, young people started coming into A.A.
in my area. I had even gotten stoned with a couple of them.
These people, like me, were drug addicts. Like me, they had
later developed alcohol addictions. I no longer make a dis-
tinction between the two. Alcohol is just as much of a drug
as any other.

A songwriter blew into town from West Palm Beach. He
had been going to N.A. in Florida, and he didn't like the
fact that we didn't have it here. So, with the help of God,
and one very dedicated heroin addict, I got the first success-
ful N.A. meeting started in our city. The other N.A. meet-
ing that was started at that time was started by some people
that we haven't seen since, but I still go to it, and so do
many others of us. Now, we've got six meetings listed on
our meeting list, and I hope that they all stay intact, but
attendance fluctuates all the time.

My life is blossoming. I place my N.A. Program above
all of my other interests. The meetings, the friendships,
the principles we discuss, and everything involved with the
N.A. society are the things I love most. The relationship I
have with my Higher Power and with myself are things I have
dreamed of all my life. The tools that help me to cope with
all of life's situations are with me all the time, no matter
where I go.

And, the most important fact in my life is this: I am
powerless over my addiction, not over any substance, but
over an isolating, sickening, frightening illness that is
in me. In the Twelve Steps, I have a way to live clean,
a way to grow up and be comfortable. In the Fellowship of
Narcotics Anonymous, I have no excuse for loneliness. And, in tapping the Cosmic Source, I can create, produce, accomplish, and have anything I will ever need. I thank all of my brothers and sisters in N.A. for making all things possible.
I was born in January, 1957 in Atlanta, Georgia. My early memories of childhood are pleasant ones. I was very honest as a child. I told the truth no matter what. When I started kindergarten and first grade, I began to live in my own world. I was obsessed with plastic soldiers, little men I called them. I loved to set up an elaborate battle, with different strategies and make it unfold. I loved planning outcomes. As I got older, I learned how to manipulate my parents to get what I wanted.

Until the second grade, we moved around a lot. We settled in northern Louisiana at that time, and I was to stay there until my senior year in high school. Until the fifth grade I made straight A's and participated in all the sports I could. In the fifth grade I changed schools, so I could take an accelerated course where I took the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades in two years. This was a little harder than the regular school and I made some B's, which didn't meet the approval of my parents. I was very good in football, basketball and track but I wasn't very good in baseball. Looking back, I can see that not being able to be great at everything I did had an adverse affect on my abilities. It made me feel inferior, and instead of being a fair or good baseball player, I was a bad one.

Sometime that year I took my first drink. I was alone that night and I drank one of my father's beers. I can remember that I thought it tasted awful, and wanted to pour it out. I only drank one and didn't get any effect from it. I don't know why I drank it, and I didn't tell anyone about it. At the end of my fifth grade year we had a weekend field trip
and I took two airplane bottles of liquor. When I told my classmates that I had some liquor, they applauded. One of my close friends drank some of it with me and I threw some of it away. My peers didn't accept it.

I had a cute girlfriend but I was afraid of sex. I was real inhibited about sex but I bragged and lied to my friends about it. I bolstered myself by swearing a lot, and I eventually lost my girl because of it.

My next drink was at the end of my sixth grade year. We went on another weekend field trip and I did the same thing as the year before. I was beginning to feel inadequate and felt that I needed something to make me whole. On the trip I kept the liquor to myself. I was outgoing on the surface, but I was very shy. I was very afraid of not being accepted.

The next year I went into the eighth grade which was the beginning of my exposure to social drinking. I was one year behind the other kids already, and by skipping the seventh grade, I was two years younger than my classmates. That really made me feel inferior. I was not as big as the other kids and I couldn't make the starting team playing football and got cut off the basketball team. I didn't make the track team either, but they let me be the manager. I remember once as the track team manager, the coach paid me a compliment for something I'd done and I started crying. I really felt sorry for myself.

The girls thought I was good looking and I started going steady with one who was part of the "in crowd". I was still afraid of girls and felt really inadequate but I forced myself to learn. I started going to parties where there was drinking, but it did not interest me that much. I was too pre-occupied with my newfound sexual awareness. I kept going to parties and would drink two or three beers, but I only did it because everyone else did.
I started making some C's that year. I was pre-occupied with getting the acceptance of my peers.

The summer of that year was when I first got drunk. From then on, I didn't want to drink unless I could get drunk. We would camp out and drink. After only three months, I was already developing a problem. In the ninth grade, I started going to parties drunk or getting drunk at them. I developed a reputation as a "hell raiser", and it made me feel good about myself. I was finally somebody. I felt really inadequate when I was around people, and I was scared to meet new people. There was some school dances that year, and I went to them all drunk out of my mind. The girls in school started to not like me so much because they never knew what I was going to do. I would save my lunch money and put it together with my allowance and get roaring drunk every weekend. C's became more common and my interest in sports dropped.

The tenth grade was more of the same until I was introduced to pot. At first, I felt really guilty and paranoid about pot and even resolved not to smoke it any more after several times. But it was so easy and convenient. I was able to block out all my feelings with pot and smoked more and more. I got to the point where I was drinking and smoking before school or whenever I had the chance. It was fun; it kept me from feeling, and it made me think that I was cool. My mother started noticing my drunkenness and would wait up for me when I went out. My father thought that I was just going through a phase and would grow out of it. I was only fourteen then. I already had a fake I.D. and bought my own liquor. When I turned fifteen, I made a fake I.D. out of my drivers license and started going to bars. I was always in trouble and it became a common occurrence for the police to bring me home. My parents would punish me but it didn't do any good.

My Junior year was a disaster. I started failing subjects
and lost interest in football completely. I still played, but I didn't care if we won or lost. I stayed stoned and drank whenever I could, not caring if anyone knew about it. I even drank before football games and tests. My mother tried everything she knew to do but nothing helped. My father would try to talk to me, but I wouldn't listen. They even told me that I was a teenaged alcoholic. Man, I thought that was funny. I ended up failing everything the second semester of that year. I really just didn't care anymore. As long as I was cool and accepted by my peer group, nothing mattered to me. Being a pothead gave me an identity and I was able to belong somewhere. I felt guilt and remorse when I messed up, but when I got punished it made me resentful and gave me a reason to get high.

My Dad took a job in South America my senior year in high school, and I was all for the move. I took correspondence courses through L.S.U. because I was afraid to go to the American School in São Paulo. I was afraid of the kids, afraid I wouldn't be accepted. We lived at a paper mill 60 kilometers from a paved road. For a while I felt superior to the Brazilians, but they loved to drink and I quickly became friends with them. I went to work with my father in the morning and studied till noon, then drank and shot pool with my friends the rest of the day. Liquor and beer were cheap, and I could afford to drink as much as I wanted. The whole year of '73 went by and I was in a stupor every day. I passed my correspondence courses by cheating and came back to the U.S. to go to college.

As soon as I got settled in my dormitory, I started looking for connections. I was scared to death and needed some pot. I got a connection and started dealing pot. I got turned on to T.H.C. and started selling it too. I had always looked up to cool people and now I was one. I went crazy with my new-found identity. People thought I was cool. I tried
mushrooms and I loved them; I thought it was a spiritual experience. Six weeks after I got to school, I got arrested for possession. I didn't know what to do, so I called on my family. They got me out of trouble, and decided they wanted me nearby, so I went back to Brazil.

Things were sticky for a while, but within two weeks I was drinking every day. My Dad got tired of me doing nothing and decided that I needed to go to school. I was fluent in Portuguese so I went to a Brazilian Prep School. I made an honest effort for about a month, then I lost interest. I was living in a cheap hotel where my Dad had an expense account, and I was in hog heaven. I saw my parents about once a month which for me was too much. I made some connections and started smoking pot again. I quit going to school and just drank and smoked pot all day. That was in the fall of '74, and in Brazil, they still sold biphetamine and methaqualone over the counter and when I found that out, I went crazy with joy. I started shooting pervintine, which is a liquid amphetamine, and by the end of the year I was in sad shape. My friends went crazy and ended up in jail, and only after I freaked out on hallucinogens for three days did I realize that I had a problem with drugs. I stayed drunk for the next seven months and one night started throwing up blood. I tried to quit drinking and started having the D.T.'s. I had to start drinking again. The only feelings I was capable of having were intense fear and paranoia. I didn't know what to do, so I kept drinking. I reached a point where I knew I had to do something, so I tapered off and quit drinking in the morning.

I came back to the U.S. and enrolled at L.S.U. I was tired of my lifestyle and decided that I needed a college education. I really tried hard for a change and made B's. I felt good about myself and started drinking heavily. I lost interest in school and got into drugs heavily. I was dealing and shooting cocaine and morphine. The money I made dealing...
didn't support my habit, so I started running a bank fraud scheme.

When I saw my parents at Christmas, I conned them out of $3,500.00. I had made up my mind that I was going to clear up my debts and go straight. But when I got back to the U.S., it was a different story. I blew the money on dope, got arrested in New Orleans for accessory on a rape charge, and had to go back to bank fraud to support my habit. The Baton Rouge police got onto my scheme, and I ended up working out a deal with them and turning myself in. I was so out of it that I was holding when I walked in the police station.

I can honestly say that I had no feelings at this time. I had ceased to be a member of the human race. I had to get $1,000 from my parents to get me out of jail, and again, I made a resolution to clean up my act. After I got the drugs out of my system, I felt all the guilt, remorse and fear that I had been trying to cover up. I realized how much I loved and cared for my family and decided to quit doing drugs. I just drank and smoked pot - a case of beer and a quart of liquor every day. I finally got a D.W.I. and my dad asked if I would like to come to Brazil and try to get a new start.

I went back down in December of '75, determined to do good by my father. It went well for about two months, until I met an old connection. I was back on the roller coaster again. I started selling pot and was making a lot of money, and then I started shooting cocaine again. I started dealing to support my habit again. I was very paranoid and afraid of getting arrested because of the methods of torture that the Brazilian police use on drug dealers, but it didn't stop me. I ran across a New Yorker and he and I organized a drug ring. We were known as "o gringo mafia". For me this was the realization of a dream. We would sell enough drugs to keep us in money and dope and head out to the jungle to camp out. I degenerated into an animal. I had to alternate periods of
shooting up and snorting because my nose had become hemor-
aged and my arms were abscessed all the time. On top of the
dope, I drank all the time. I no longer had any feelings at
all, only needs. The only escape that I had was our camping
trips. We would get away from the city, and I could feel
safe. We would live like animals, eat with our hands, drink,
and do dope by the campfire until we passed out. Finally,
the inevitable happened, and the police came down on us. I
was given two weeks to get out of the country or go to jail.
My dad gave me a plane ticket and told me that he didn't
care if he ever saw me again. In the States, my mother
didn't want to have anything to do with me.

It was the first of '77 and I knew I didn't belong to the
human race. I wanted to use every conscious moment. I
couldn't identify with anyone who didn't want to use twenty-
four hours a day. I managed to hold down a job and made a
resolution not to shoot any more dope. I did plenty, I just
didn't shoot any. In a drunken stupor I ran into a man, his
wife and three little girls going fifty miles per hour. By
the grace of God I didn't kill any of them, but I still went
to jail. I liked it there; I didn't have to worry about any-
thing. I played cards and ate barbs all day long. If they
had let me have a woman twice a week, I would have stayed
forever. I couldn't face the outside world. I was afraid
of getting out. My life was a horror to think about and I
resolved again to quit getting "so" loaded.

The first thing I did when I got out was get high. I
had come to the conclusion that I could not handle liquor and
decided not to drink anymore. Two days later I was drunk. I
tried smoking pot to quit and it didn't work. I could not go
through the day without drinking, so I decided to just drink
beer. I would do O.K. for a week or so, but then I'd get
drunk again. I never remembered what I did when I got drunk
anymore, but without fail it was at best, obscene.
This merry-go-round lasted for about a year and a half and finally the inevitable happened: I had a needle in my arm. I went on a super bender and overdosed on M.D.A., mandrex and gin. I stayed loaded for about a week and the pain nearly killed me. The dope and liquor turned on me and would not relieve my agony. No matter how much I used, I couldn't get any relief. Out of desperation, I hospitalized myself.

I resolved never to use anything again, except maybe a little pot. I had been in the alcohol and drug unit for two days when I smoked my last joint. When I made up my mind to get clean, I really felt free. I resolved to make up, somehow, with all my family that I had hurt. But when I smoked that joint all the pain of eight years came down on my shoulders. In the controlled environment of the hospital I was able to stay clean for five days until they took a van load of us to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I had no idea what it was, but since it was required, I went. I don't remember what was talked about, but at the end of the meeting they asked if anyone had the desire to stop using. I said, "I do", and they made me get up and gave me a white chip and a hug. I was kind of freaked out, all those people hugging each other. They told me not to use and go to meetings. They asked me to come back and welcomed me when I did, and let me say that I had not been welcome anywhere for a number of years.

I grasped the "one day at a time" method of not using and soon began to follow directions and pray to a God of my understanding to keep me clean for that day. I kept expecting them to finally tell me what the catch was, but they didn't, because there wasn't one. They gave me a Program to live by, and I saw hope. They didn't tell me what to do, but shared with me what they did. I have since come to know, love and respect many in the Fellowship. I owe my life to Narcotics
Anonymous and have learned that in order to keep my recovery,
I have to give it away. Today I have been clean for a year
and a half and it is through N.A. that I am clean today.
I will do anything I can to help someone stay clean today
except use for them.
ALWAYS LOOKING

I'm a grateful drug addict. I have never been a controlled or social user. From day one, I pushed it to the limit. There were never enough drugs to satisfy me. Whenever I found a drug that I thought would work, I soon found that I had to use more and more of it. Eventually it would stop working altogether.

Growing up was very emotional and painful for me. My parents put an enormous amount of pressure on me to excel in everything I did. I was emotionally high strung, always on the edge of freaking out. When I brought home a bad grade from school, I usually received a beating or mental scolding that would last for hours. I remember having bruises, being dragged from room to room by my hair, and having things thrown at me.

My parents had knock down, drag out fights that would last all night and continue the next morning. I began to ask myself why I should obey these people who obviously didn't have their own life together.

I began to rebel at about the age of twelve. I grew my hair out, wore ragged clothes, and anything else I could do to get back at my parents. Thus began my first efforts to handle resentment through revenge.

I began playing drums in the school band, and in the eighth grade I met two fellow drummers who smoked pot. They introduced me to rock and roll, planting the seed that was to begin growing two years later.

I began to believe in the ideas that I heard in the music. Drugs, free sex, and revolution all sounded good to me. I bought a drum set and began playing in local bands.
I dreamed of being a star.

I didn't use until about two years later, simply because I was still afraid of my parents. They had stopped beating me as often and began punishing me by not letting me leave the house. I took my anger out on my drums, practicing for hours at a time.

Then I started high school, and that's where it all began. I got stoned on pot the first day and loved it. My only question was "Where can I get more?"

Within two weeks I was using LSD and mescaline. Mescaline was first. It seemed to be the cure for all my ills. I laughed until I cried. I began questioning the meaning of life and wondered why I had to put up with the things I did. It gave me a taste of freedom that I had never felt. The people who were tripping with me were beautiful, and the straight people were dull. They just didn't know. I decided that drugs were definitely for me.

LSD was next. It was more powerful and exhilarating than mescaline. I had more "realizations" about life and its meaning.

A problem began to present itself. All the freedom and ecstasy left me as the dope wore off. I had to come down off the throne. I figured the only way to remedy this was to do more dope.

The feeling slowly stopped being beautiful. While tripping I became confused and paranoid. I began seeing demons in the faces of my using friends.

This scared me into a period of smoking pot and drinking beer only. I figured if I used these and nothing else, I would be okay. As it turned out, they didn't quench my thirst for meaning and adventure that I sought through drugs.

During this period I got thrown out of my parents house. This happened one night when I freaked out, thinking demons were about to take control of me. My father gave me an
ultimatum; stop using dope or get out. So I got out.

I was fifteen years old, and got an apartment with a friend who was old enough to sign the lease. I quit school and began working landscaping, and using as much dope as I could get my hands on. Living away from home gave me a new sense of freedom I had never experienced before. I was happy and content, my troubles were over, and life had just begun. Little did I know.

All through high school my using buddies had told me what a great high MDA was. It was the ultimate, and the best way to do it was to shoot it up. I wanted to try it but was a little afraid of sticking a needle in my arm. I soon got my chance. I figured I might as well fire it up; everyone else was.

I began feeling this tingle at the tip of my brain, then my head exploded before the needle left my arm. I loved it. Everything and everybody was beautiful; my problems disappeared. I decided this was definitely the drug for me.

It was the drug for me for two solid years. I became obsessed with the rush and the feeling of cold metal entering my arm. I preached the glories of MDA to my friends and fellow workers. Most of them thought I was crazy. I was. I lost my job, fifty pounds, and had nowhere to stay. I roamed the streets dealing and stealing. My relationship with my girlfriend, also a junkie, began to fall apart.

I decided that I had to quit. I had to boot up three or four grams to get off, so why bother? Since I couldn't get any pleasure out of all the other drugs, I figured I might as well quit everything. In doing this, I began to feel strange and alienated from my using buddies. I began to search for the answer to my problems by reading books on eastern mysticism. I tried to practice meditation and yoga. My addiction had programmed my mind to accept instant
sense gratification only, so my efforts to experience spirit-
uality without drugs was in vain.

I decided that I had to get away. I joined a religious
cult and moved out of state, much to the dismay of my parents
and girlfriend. Shaving my head and doning a robe, I ex-
perienced total culture shock. As the dope washed out of
my system I began to feel better. After a year I grew tired
of the rules and decided that it was time to move on.

I returned to my hometown and looked up my old using
buddies. They acted as if they were glad to see me. The
first night back I shot up so much MDA I nearly died. I
heard dogs howling and sirens screaming, and felt as though
I was falling through a long black tunnel. I was on my way
to hell in my mind. I begged God to let me live, surely I
couldn't live a life that would end up that way. I slowly
drifted back to reality, thanking God for every breath I
took.

The next day I jumped on a 707 for Florida. I figured
hard work and sunshine was what I needed. This lasted two
weeks and I was back home again shooting dope.

Back at home I ran with different crowds trying to
find one that I could relate to. I hung out with gays,
musicians, hippies and rednecks. I used everything from
crystal speed and quaaludes to morphine and alcohol.

After a near fatal binge on crystal speed, I decided
that all I could handle were barbituates. Thus began a two
year binge of quaaludes and alcohol. I began a new fantasy,
giving up one of being a rock star to one of being a big-time
dope dealer.

I began some small-time dealing and my using rapidly
increased. All my profits went down my throat. I began
shaking and sweating when I didn't have any 'ludes to even
me out.

One night I caught one of my girlfriends at a friend's
house. I was drunk and barbed out as usual, and tore the place up from one end to another. Within an hour I was sitting in the county jail.

Once again I decided that I had gone too far, I had to clean up my act or else. I straightened up for a short time, ran with a new crowd – jocks this time.

Within a couple of weeks I was loaded again. I totaled out my car, banged up my head, and ended up in the hospital. I knew I had to have help if I was to stop using drugs. I stayed on the psychiatric unit for nine days and detoxed. The best thing they did for me was to give me a list of all the local meetings of Narcotics Anonymous.

I left the hospital, started attending N.A., and found a love and acceptance that I'd never known. I refused, however, to work the twelve steps or to give up my old running mates. One of my old connections made me an offer I didn't refuse, and I began turning Quaaludes and speed by the thousands. I stayed clean for a short while, but eventually began a nine month relapse. I could no longer use successfully, the seed of N.A. had been planted.

I checked into a state mental hospital for detox. In the institution I was shocked by the old-time alcoholics and drug addicts. I strongly believed this was my last chance for recovery.

I left the hospital knowing I had to dive into N.A. head first in order to live. I gave up dealing and my old using buddies and began attending N.A. full steam ahead. I asked my Higher Power to keep me clean a day at a time and to please restore me to sanity. Life is more beautiful with each passing day and some of my dreams are coming true. I feel a love for life that I can't describe. I now look forward to a beautiful life in recovery. I look forward to helping save lives, and have found many of the meanings and answers that I have been seeking for so long and in so many ways.
"I'VE COME A LONG WAY"

This program works. Believe me, I've come a long way.
I am a miracle. When I came through the doors, I was so
burned out on dilaudid (those little yellow devils), I didn't
know which end was up. I had a $200.00 a day habit and that
wasn't even getting me high. It just took that "sick" feeling
away. But "I wasn't really that bad", so I thought.
My arms and legs were a mess from the needles I'd used and
they ached terribly. I hated myself and I considered myself
a helpless, hopeless junkie. Today I know better, there is
hope and there is help for people like me. I couldn't do
anything without drugs and I'd do anything to get them. I
begged, borrowed, and stole to get what I needed.

I started out smoking a joint now and then. I liked the
high, and I'd laugh and laugh. I worked in a bar so I natur-
ally drank with the customers, but I could never stand the
taste no matter what I mixed together. I started taking
speed and oh how I loved that feeling. I could talk, and
dance, and drink like a sailor. I'd go for days like that
of course I couldn't take time to eat so I'd keep losing
weight and getting meaner and meaner. And when I'd crash,
look out. I wanted to kill. I went on like that for a couple
of years. Then I took some acid. I hated it. I was so para-
noid, but I'd keep on taking it because everybody else was.
I can remember taking my blanket, and my alarm clock and
going into my closet and just wishing the trip was over.
Then a friend of mine "turned me on" to some qualudes. I
remember I got sick and puked all over the place. Of course
I had done three of them on top of a fifth of C.C. and I
don't remember a couple of days after that. It was then that
I decided that I would just stick to my speed, pot and whiskey.  
Again, I couldn't take time to eat and I got sick, a real 
bad kidney infection. I went to the emergency room and 
you gave me morphine. I loved it. Then I started looking 
forward to my kidney infections, which came frequently. 
By the time I was twenty-five years old, I'd been married 
and divorced three times and I had two children. I took 
many geographical cures, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, 
Maryland, and always losing jobs because of my addiction. 
No one understood me. I dragged my kids with me everywhere 
I went. I did a lot of things I'm not proud of and some 
that are nobody's business, but I know I can't change the 
past, I can only change my life now, one day at a time. I 
decided to stop drinking so I did. I just tripled my drugs. 
I just kept getting lower and lower. I'd speed all day and 
do qualudes after the sun went down. I loved the night life, 
I loved the bars, and the music and the excitement. That 
was my life. I didn't know any better. This went on for 
years. I finally did what I said I'd never do, I used a 
needle, and I fell in love. I loved that instant rush, and 
I couldn't get enough of it. I went down real fast. I 
couldn't think of anything but sticking that needle in my 
arm, and then where was I gonna get the next one. Then one 
day after trying to find a vein to hit, I decided I had a 
problem. I decided to quit, but I couldn't. The longest 
I could go was two or three days and I'd be just nuts until 
I got another fix. I finally went to my family doctor. I 
didn't know what else to do. I told him I needed help. He 
put me into the hospital for detox. I never want to forget 
that withdrawal. I was climbing the walls, I couldn't eat, 
I couldn't sleep. They had intravenous tubes in both my 
arms for forty-eight hours. My liver was swollen, I had a 
real bad kidney infection, and they found a growth on my 
ovary the size of a softball. You see, I didn't know any 
of these things were wrong with me because whenever I hurt,
I thought I needed a fix so I'd just get one. I can remember
the nurses changing my bed three or four times a day because
I sweat so bad and I just knew I had the crabs because I
could feel them crawling all over me, only it was with-
drawal and I didn't know it. I remember I asked for my
Bible and someone brought it to me. I started reading page
one. I was afraid; I've never felt so alone. A couple of
people from the program came to visit me. When I got
out of the hospital after sixteen days, I went to a meeting.
I started meeting other addicts, happy addicts. I got
strength and hope. I didn't think I was an alcoholic though.
I thought if I could just stop using drugs, I could still
drink. Well, five months later, I went out and sat down
at a bar and started drinking. Within four hours, I was
copping morphine and had a needle in my arm. Alcohol is
a drug. Once I picked up that first drink, I couldn't stop.
The next day I woke up and didn't know where I was. Oh,
the guilt! I entered a twenty-eight day re-hab that day
and I surrendered. People told me--"One day at a time",
"easy does it", pick yourself up, brush yourself off and
keep on going. I go to meetings, a lot of discussions, I
read all the literature I can get my hands on, I have a
phone book for program people and I use it. I pray every
morning and every night. I ask God to help me stay sober
through the day and I thank him at night. I have a sponsor
I use all the time. I talk to new people. I work the
steps to the best of my ability. I love my new friends,
and I love my God. Thanks to all of you for helping me
to help myself.
I was the happy little housewife, living in a happy little house--sticking a needle in my arm.

I was twenty-six years old with two children and working on my second marriage (with my Knight in shining armor) when I started to use drugs as entertainment. After all, most people drank on weekends to have fun, why not a little dope to liven things up a bit? My weekend heroin using went on for a few years until, inevitably, heroin began using me. Soon it was all I wanted and it didn't matter what day of the week it was.

My "Knight" began to feel our Camelot left something to be desired and started going to institutions and drug programs, although he wasn't having any success.

I started looking for some help, so I went to Alanon because it was obvious that he had a problem with drugs and alcohol. I was 5'9" tall and weighed 114 pounds when I came to this Program and thought I was "looking fine"! The miracle of this Program worked even in Alanon, for I had to get honest. They told me to "Keep coming back" and I did again and again. I finally went to my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting and knew I was home and safe at last! I was still saying things like "I don't know what I'm doing here, it's my husband who has the problem". Naturally, they understood, and again I got the "keep coming back" and I did.

I got some phone numbers, a meeting directory and was doing fine as long as I wasn't home or stayed in my car to avoid my Knight-turned-drug addict.

One night on arriving home after a meeting, he was waiting for me with some dope, saying there was still some left. At that moment the "left overs" sounded good and I
used. The minute the chemical was in my arm I went insane.

It was cocaine and I never did like coke, for there was never
enough. I threw some money at him and demanded he score
some more. The next thing I knew we were fighting over the
coke cotton. I knew there was nothing in the cotton and so
did he, but we fought over it viciously as if our lives
depended upon it.

That night in 1975 was the last time I used drugs, even
though there were many nights when my husband bought dope and
offered it to me. He continued to slip on and off this
Program, but I stayed clean. I had to leave my house, my
car--all my material possessions. I had to go through a
divorce, get a sponsor, go to women's stag meetings, share
an inventory, and do many things I really didn't want to do
or that didn't make any sense to me, but I did them all--and
I didn't use.

I'm still 5'9" tall, although I now weigh a 160 pounds
and other people tell me I'm "looking fine". Through this
Program, I have acquired faith that if I stay clean, it will
get better. I know if I use, it can ONLY get worse.

I was given a second chance at living and I took it. I
have a job and function well there. I am not doing at all
bad as a wife and mother. By the Grace of God, this time
the happy housewife living in a happy house isn't hiding
anything any worse.
NOWHERE TO TURN

I am an addict and a member of Narcotics Anonymous. Today I am able to live clean and sober because of the Fellowship of N.A.

I am now thirty years old and began using drugs about twelve years ago.

As I was growing up, I remember the feeling I had of wanting to belong or be part of other groups of people. I was a longer and did not know how to do this. Fear and inferior feelings were a part of me since childhood. I was unable to participate in sports and other activities because of the feeling that I could not do it. I had a fear of people, especially in groups, so I lived in a fantasy world where I was somebody. I had few close friends as a child and tried to control and isolate the friends I did have. I wanted to keep them to myself for fear that others would only take them away.

I was an only child and my father died at age three. I was raised by my mother and grandparents. I was very sensitive and did not want others to see this, so I tried to hide it. I didn't like myself and always tried to be somebody other than the person I really was. At an early age I would escape the reality of the here and now by fantasizing about the future. I thought somehow if I could change me or find the right situation that I could be happy someday. My need to control and dominate people only drove them away and I felt rejected.

As I got older I began to rebel at the society that I was blaming for my inability to be happy. At the same time, on a deeper level, I blamed myself. I started to get into
trouble at home and at school for attention. Inside I was hurting and was very confused but solutions were not at my disposal and I felt as though I must do whatever it took to be accepted by any crowd. I chose other kids who were getting into trouble and breaking all the rules. But even in that crowd I felt different.

Somehow I made it through high school and went on to college to please my family. I was not ready for the responsibility of college and I wasn't motivated to learn. I felt out of place there and did poorly. At the end of my first semester, I left school and got a job. I thought that hard work and low pay were what I needed to prove my manhood. This got old quick. I would develop problems with people wherever I went and would run from one situation to another, blaming others for the problems that would arise.

I began to identify with the peace and love movement that was catching on around the country. I thought the musicians of this era really had the answer and part of that answer was to escape to enlightenment, with drugs. I felt that I could be accepted by the "long-hairs" because they talked of unconditional love and other spiritual principles. I started smoking pot and then came that first acid trip, followed by speed and barbiturates. My first experience with each drug was wonderful to me and I wanted to keep doing it. I especially liked the speed and acid in those days and smoked pot to keep that stoned outlook on life. I thought the drugs went along with the philosophies we all talked about and that it was all spiritual and mystical.

One by one I tried all of the drugs that I said I'd never do. My relationships with women were few and none were successful. This drove me deeper into escaping with drugs. I felt fear and excitement with this new, destructive way of life. Sometimes I had doubts about drugs, but when I was high I felt reassured and confident. I left the world behind
in those moments until I came down confused and afraid. Fear of death became an obsession with me when I wasn't high. The effects of the speed and acid helped nurture the fear. I went back to school and continued to use more and more. At one point, I cut my hair and started to drink a lot. I thought a change of lifestyle was the answer but I still managed to find reasons to take pills.

I felt that life was empty and meaningless. I became more and more isolated at school and my consumption of speed increased until I was using daily and my health began to deteriorate. I became paranoid and fearful of people which made it harder to function. I would hang out with users on the weekends back in my hometown. It seemed that their solution to the dilemma of using was to use more until you reached the point of not caring at all. I finally quit trying to control my using and decided to quit fighting it. If I was going to be a dope-fiend and self-destruct, I was going to do a good job of it. It seemed that it was becoming more and more accepted that dopers were losers and we might as well stay loaded completely. "Take as much dope as you can" became my new philosophy for survival.

The speed runs left me burnt out, I had sores in my mouth, my skin was turning yellow and much of the time I couldn't go out at night because I couldn't focus my vision and I would hallucinate. I came home from school in the summer of 1971 totally wasted. It was then I was introduced to the cure for the burn out, heroin. Shooting morphine and heroin was becoming more and more a part of the local dope culture, and I had a few friends who were well into it. I tried it and thought it was good for me because I could relax and eat and sleep. I learned to use a needle and by mid-summer, I was shooting dope two or three times a day. Jails, doing time, violence were the new topics of conversation, no more peace and love. Now it was conning, ripping
people off and doing whatever was necessary to get narcotics. I did not like any of this new talk but the dope made it more and more acceptable. Finally I got involved with breaking into houses and forging checks. I stole from my family, lied, sold my musical instruments for money to get drugs. At the end of the summer I was arrested for check forgery and put in jail where I went into withdrawal.

It was a nightmare to realize how far down I had fallen and was going to have to answer to the law for my actions. My mother bailed me out and the local drug council sent me to a psychologist for therapy, which did no good because I was still using. So my lawyer suggested that I go to Lexington to the Federal drug hospital. I stayed long enough to detox and came home with the idea that I would go to school and everything would be okay.

I also thought one shot wouldn't hurt anything. Back into active using again, I sought help again at the local drug council, because I knew they were sending addicts to a doctor who was writing "scripts" for methadone and barbiturates for them. So my addiction took a new direction. I began to get my supply legally from doctors. Things were going well, so I thought, for about a year until the doctor said he could not give me any more methadone. I panicked and bought some speed on the street, and while I was in withdrawal from the methadone, I started speeding. After a few days I got crazy and started shooting a shotgun in my back yard at imaginary foes. I ended up in jail for two miserable weeks of insanity and withdrawals. The court sent me to the State mental hospital where they put me on two Quaaludes a night for sleep. All of the dope fiends on the unit were requesting them for insomnia and bringing in other drugs from visits. After thirty days, I was released and I went straight for the doctor's office with another drug to add to my requests. I continued to pop pills and drink
codeine cough syrup and booze. I started dating a girl who
used and my dependence on her was a means to get more drugs.
Her dependence on me was emotional. I feel that she kept
me alive through those times when my using was so insane
that I would have died without someone to keep me from
harming myself more than I did.

I had become a garbage can for drugs: street drugs,
revision drugs, paragoric, cough syrup with codeine,
whatever I could get. I had been put on probation for the
check forgeries and I kept getting arrested for drunk driv-
ing or brandishing weapons. Needless to say, I was always
in trouble with the probation officer and they would lock me
up for awhile and then send me off to another rehabilitation
program or hospital.

In 1974, I was sent to a long term therapeutic community
after spending about four months in the County jail. I was
very sick emotionally when I got there and stayed withdrawn
for the first couple of months. I went through many in-
tense changes in the time that I was there, most of which
were positive. I learned to function with other people and
start to become responsible again. They gave me a place to
belong and something to believe in. What they couldn't
give me was a way to live without drugs outside of the
confines of the therapeutic community.

I finally was graduated from their program in 1977,
and as a graduate and also an employee, I was allowed to
drink. I decided that I wanted to return to West Virginia
because the lifestyle of New York was not for me. Really
I wanted to get away from them so I could try to use
successfully. I got a job in my old home town and started
to see my old girlfriend who was still using, and it wasn't
long until I was taking a pill or two. At some point, I
just let go and started shooting, speeding and eating
codeine pills and Quaaludes. I hit the depths of despair
because the dope had me again after all that time away from it and nothing changed.

After all that therapy, I still couldn't control my dope; it controlled me. I felt hopeless and worthless like a total failure; I couldn't go back to the rehab house because I felt like such a bad person, like a traitor. I lost my job and continued to use, getting most of my drugs legally from doctors. One doctor had become a friend of mine and felt sorry for my dilemma, and I used his compassion as a means to con him out of more and more drugs. I was using amphetamines, sedatives and various synthetic opiates at the same time. I was miserable; my highs were like lows. I couldn't live with drugs, but it was worse without them. I just tried to stay numb or seek oblivion. No longer could I blame my using on others like before; although I tried. I really knew the truth. I was off probation so that was no longer a threat, but still I was a prisoner to my addiction.

Between my sprees of using, I started to try church; I began to feel as though God was my only hope, but I wasn't sure if God really existed. Maybe I felt as though God might just be a philosophical idea to comfort man and make sense out of life. I needed something real and could not find it. I began to drive away loved ones, and the people I used to maintain my drug supply were cutting me off. I went to live at a monastery for a couple of months and I found some faith there that God was real. I still had a faint glimmer in my mind that I could mix my newfound faith with drugs. It did not work and I hit another bottom and found myself alone and sick. It seemed as though being alone and sick were a way of life for me.

I was ready to ask for help in a sincere way. I don't believe in coincidences anymore and it was a miracle that I stumbled upon the phone number of an N.A. member in the
Atlanta, Georgia area. I spilled my guts to him over the telephone and asked him what he thought. He said it sounded as though I needed to learn how to live without drugs. That was so simple, but it said it all. With God's help, I caught a bus to Atlanta in withdrawal, praying and crying, but I made the journey. I feel that the willingness and courage to make such a move came from a power greater than myself.

God, as I understand Him, has worked many miracles in my life in the past two years of my recovery. In those first meetings I heard people share honestly. They sat and talked with me and they understood. They really cared because they were like me. They had been there. There was no condemnation or lecture. They gave me hope by their example. It really was possible to get a new way of life filled with happiness and usefulness to other people. I didn't have to be alone ever again. I could use my past to help others and pass this new way of life on to others who were in despair and misery. It was okay to let people know when I hurt. I didn't have to pretend to be cool and have all the answers or hide my true feelings. They loved me back to health; people were patient when I needed to talk; they listened and shared what had worked for them. I was a part of their lives. They taught me that the steps were the foundation of recovery.

The Program has freed me from my prison and shown me how to be myself and live life on its terms. I owe my life to Narcotics Anonymous. God works through the people in this Fellowship. It works if you want it. Surrender has been the key for me. If I work this Program, my life gets better. Today I have friendship, love, a family of brothers and sisters from all over the world from all walks of life. We are united in a way that was once impossible for the addict. We have been delivered from a living hell to happiness, peace, joy and a fulfillment that escaped my wildest dreams in the
All this has been freely given to me out of love. The program is simple. It requires only sharing, working the Twelve Steps, attending meetings and practicing the principles of the Program. First and foremost I must remember that I suffer from a disease called addiction and that using is insanity and death, so I cannot take that first fix, pill or drink. Drugs in any form are poison to me and will kill me emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically. God has revealed His love for me through the Fellowship of N.A. I am grateful to be able to write my story and share it with whomever may read it. I pray that it may be of some help and bring hope to someone like me who once had no hope. May God be with you in the spirit of this Fellowship and I pray that this new way of life will bring all the joy and love it has brought me.
I am a happy, grateful drug addict, clean by the grace of God and the Twelve Steps. Life today is fulfilling and there is a joy in my heart.

It wasn't always this way. I drank and used other drugs for twelve years; on a daily basis for ten of them. I was an addict of the hopeless variety. It seems to me that I was born that way.

I was brought up in a loving middle class family. My mother and father were very affectionate towards each other; my sister and I were wanted and loved children, and we were shown that in every way. To this day, I have never seen my parents or my sister loaded in any way, at any time. Yet I was to follow a different path. As far back as I can remember, I had felt separated from this family and all of life, never feeling a part of, always feeling different. Of course, I am talking of an intense fear of life. I don't recall ever feeling the simplicity of being a child.

Growing up in southern California, I seemed to get into all the normal things. I went to the beach a lot and I was involved in all the sports, yet always the fear was with me. I always felt inadequate and could never live up to my potential. Today I see how fear does stop us from living life to its fullest.

I had the addict's personality, self-will run riot, throughout my childhood. I always wanted my own way, and if things didn't go my way, I sure let people know about it.

I seemed to be an average student throughout elementary and junior high school. More or less withdrawn, I did have friends. I guess I was fifteen when I found my first
drug, alcohol. Was it a welcome friend! From the first
drink it was oblivion, and that's what I was looking for.
Finally I had found freedom from fear; booze unlocked a whole
new world for me, a world where I fit in. I remember from
the beginning: I identified with the winos, the ones who slept
on the beach and lived under the pier.
As I look back over those twelve years, I see how I
loved each new drug I tried, and pursued it, whether it was
glue, speed, downs, alcohol, psychedelics or whatever. I
always seemed to bounce from one to the other, going up and
down and all around. With each new drug came its own little
world, a new corner to crawl into and hide. My first few
highs did bring me a sense of freedom, yet in a very short
time the drugs stop working like that and I found myself
even more afraid of life than ever. Now it was worse for I
was not only withdrawn from life, I was caught in a whole
other world and didn't even know it.
I quit high school in the twelfth grade. Surfing had
been part of my life for the past few years, so it was off to
the Hawaiian Islands. My parents were very confused concern-
ing the son who didn't do a very poor job of hiding his
desperation. To all who were sane and living life, I appear-
ed very lost and unhappy.
That first trip to Hawaii was in 1962. The whole time I
was there I was loaded. Needless to say, I was very scared of
life. I returned to Southern California after only a month to
continue my addiction.
I had my first real love affair at this time. My girl-
friend became pregnant and a few months later I was back in
Hawaii, with more of the same drugs and booze. Then it was
back to Southern California. I seemed to find a sense of
relief for an instant in the trips I made. Yet soon after
arriving at my destination, the glamour wore off and I was
left with myself and that intense fear and desperation. I
knew of no other way except to get loaded.

In the summer of 1963, I went back to Hawaii, at my parent's expense. I had been living on the mainland, sleeping in parked cars and wandering the streets. I ended up broke, and sleeping in cars once again, and begging money on the streets in order to get loaded.

I was nineteen years old at this time and was a full blown addict and didn't even know it. I only knew I had to drink and use drugs and that there was no other way.

The end of the summer, someone gave me their surfboard to sell for a ticket back. Arriving back in Los Angeles, I was at a point where I felt I couldn't go on.

I felt totally burned out. Other people my age were going to school or working. I didn't even know how to look for a job, let alone work. A friend had just joined the Navy. To me it seemed a way out, all I had to do was sign my name. I had never thought about the service, never heard of dodging the draft. Viet-Nam hadn't started yet. So I joined. When I got off the bus at boot camp I knew I had made a mistake.

To this point I had only been to jail three times, twice for drinking and once for suspicion of possession. Now in boot camp, I found myself locked up for three months. I managed to drink cough syrup and Andre tea bags, thinking I could get loaded. I got one joint in boot camp once.

After basic training, I was put aboard a brand new ship. It was very gung-ho. For the next year and a half I stayed loaded, being the only way I could handle it.

I stayed pretty much out of trouble; stayed high and did nothing. Once, coming back after being at sea a couple of weeks, I had been taking a lot of speed. I began pulling back in and feeling very spaced out. I headed home where I had left some grass in a drawer. Mom and dad had found it and thrown it away. This triggered me and I went away for a
1 month. I stayed loaded and slept at different friends' houses.  
2 I met a girl at this time whom I later married. While AWOL  
3 one month, I grew my beard back out and pierced my ear. I  
4 finally went back to the ship. They were just getting ready  
5 to pull out of San Diego harbor and they wanted to put a  
6 uniform back on me, so I jumped overboard and started swimming.  
7 The sirens all went off; "Man overboard; man overboard; this  
8 is not a drill". They lowered the boats and got me. I  
9 spent four months in the brig.  
10 I finally got out of the Navy. The psychiatrist said my  
11 mind was becoming disordered from the use of marijuana and  
12 LSD. I remember being in the brig and looking out at the  
13 stars, knowing that if I ever got out I was going to grow my  
14 hari out and do what I wanted. I would be happy. When I got  
15 out of the service, I was as lost and miserable as I was  
16 before, if not worse.  
17 I was to meet a new friend in life and find a new world,  
18 the world of fixing. The first time I shot speed, I fell in  
19 love with the rush. This started something that lasted for  
20 six more years, off and on - using and fixing all kinds of  
21 drugs. I fell in love with the whole thing of getting off;  
22 it wasn't so much what was in the needle, it was the needle  
23 itself.  
24 Shortly after getting out of the service, the girl I had  
25 met and I went back to Hawaii. We lived in the country and I  
26 was again shooting a lot of speed and downers. I found myself  
27 doing a lot of dealing to stay loaded. The woman I lived with  
28 was not an addict; she went to work and I got high.  
29 She became pregnant and we were married. She said some-  
30 thing about me being her husband on our wedding night and I  
31 said, "I am no one's husband", and went to shoot dope and slept  
32 on Venice Beach with my dogs. As I look back at these kind of  
33 things, I can't believe the selfishness that was so much a  
34 part of this addict.
During this period, I did a lot of dealing. My house was being watched and things were getting really weird. My parents were fully aware of all that was going on. They were at a complete loss as to what to do. We had no money. My wife was working and I was using. I was totally incapable of work. I had no skills. I had attempted a few job training classes, yet always dropped out because I felt inferior and inadequate. So my parents got us out of Venice and we moved to Hawaii again.

Somewhere in the months previous, I had gotten hold of some books on yoga and meditation. They talked about love and a light within, freedom and that God was love. I knew I was lost and I wanted that "thing" inside. Up to this point the only thing I knew about God was that I was always going to hell in Jesus' name.

Back in Hawaii; my wife, four months pregnant, and I were living in the country again. She knew I was using hard drugs. Everyone was using grass, hash and LSD and an ex-Harvard professor was the everybody's guru. We were all taking our drugs for spiritual reasons and sitting around meditating looking for the light inside. However, I wasn't finding any magic place inside like the books and gurus were talking about. I was becoming more afraid and withdrawn. The drugs, gurus, and meditation were not working. It seems I was always reading things like "when the student is ready, the teacher will appear". Little did I know that I was getting ready through the use of drugs and that the teacher would be the Twelve steps of the Program.

My wife had our first child, a beautiful baby girl. We were on welfare and life consisted of going to the beach and taking drugs.

There was a four bedroom house on the beach next door that was for rent. One day a very strange lady appeared. She was about fifty, had long, graying hair to her waist and
wore a bikini. She said her God led her to this house and she was supposed to live in it, although at the time she had no money. She moved in anyway. When the landlord came to show the house, she asked him to have the electricity turned on and that she was supposed to live there. Through various miracles, she did live there for the next six months.

This woman seemed to radiate a feeling of love and joy that I had never felt from anyone before. Immediately upon meeting her I felt as though I had known her forever. Something in me was drawn to her. Little did I know that she would become my sponsor and play such a big part in my life for the next ten years. This was the beginning of a journey that even today amazes me. It is a way of life, a way of learning complete trust in a Higher Power. I have found a love that purifies, a way of life where the constant care for others becomes automatic.

It seems the student had become ready and the teacher appeared. Needless to say, the house became a "Program" house. The woman was an addict with eight years clean time. She started a meeting at the house. I remember my first meeting so well. I remember that for the first time I identified with another human being, not so much because they used drugs, but because of what went on inside. Fear was discussed, that intense nameless fear of living, feeling separated from everyone. I guess that I had always thought it was just me who felt that way. I was finally able to feel like I belonged. Psychiatrists had labeled me all kinds of medical terms like paranoid and schizophrenic. No one had ever said I was a drug addict and that I had a disease. I finally felt hope. As I look back, it seems I was finally ready for the program. I was beaten, lost in life, searching for a God with drugs and here was a way of life that was a spiritual life. I was able to see other people who were like me finding a happy, clean
way of life. Yet I was not really ready because for three more years I bounced in and out of the program, never being able to grasp the concept of complete abstinence.

During that three year period, I would stay clean for two weeks here and there, but I would end up using again. I watched others around me come into the program and remain clean. Looking back I can see that I had not yet hit my bottom. I always rationalized that it was O.K. to smoke just one joint if I stayed away from the "hard drugs". I always ended up strung out.

My sponsor was a woman who followed her heart to wherever God said go, carrying the message of the program, working with young addicts. The young seemed drawn to her. In 1970 her inner voice said "head for Europe", so off she went with a few other clean members. They left financially broke as usual, but spiritually rich. I was alone again.

It was Christmas of 1970. I had three months clean and sober; the most I had ever had. Yet the feeling returned and I picked up a joint. A few days later I took some reds and within a week I was shooting dope again. This started a ten month period of using, day and night - drinking, shooting dope and taking pills. I got to a point where I knew I would never get clean again. I had completely surrendered my life to drugs. My wife left me. We had two children. Our little girl was three and we had a little boy almost two. For some unknown reason she left our little boy with me. Today I know that God was working in my life. For the next three or four months my son was the only thing that kept me alive. I identified with the mother who uses and tries to raise children at the same time. I found myself in many blackouts, not even knowing where my son was. Yet knowing he was there must have kept me somewhat aware of living.

On the morning of October 20, 1971 I woke up. There was dope in the house but for some reason I didn't get loaded.
right then. I took my son and went across the street to the beach. It was a gray morning. I remember sitting on the beach, crying, just wanting to die. I just couldn't go on. A feeling went through me that I had never experienced before. It was as though someone put a blanket around me. I felt warm and peaceful within. A voice within said, "It's over, you don't have to use again". I felt a peace I had never before felt. I picked up my son and went home. One of my clean friends had moved to another island, I flew over and found him. When I walked in the door I told him I was ready to do anything to stay clean. As I sit here and write this it's October 19. Tomorrow I will have eight years clean and sober and that's a miracle. I am still willing to do anything to stay clean.

Staying clean and sober today goes so much beyond staying away from the first pill, fix or toke. It is a way of life, a life that I call an adventure today. I have an outline for living; it's the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymour. I either practice and live these steps or I die. I've known more joy than I ever thought possible. I have also known pain as I had never known before. They call it the pain of spiritual growth. I came here selfish and self-centered to the extreme. That self had to die and as that process took place, it hurt. Yet by the grace of God and the Fellowship of N.A., we walk through these periods and stay clean.

We have found a way up and out, to fly free. I have learned to share what is going on inside. It is a give-away program, no matter what it is, love, joy, or tears and fears—we have to give it away.

Today I am clean and sober by the grace of a loving God and the Fellowship and for this I am grateful. God is loving me now.
JUNKIE MOTHER

When I got to this program I knew I was dying - mentally, spiritually and physically. I had been using drugs and alcohol for the past twelve or thirteen years with brief periods of what I thought were control and never a thought of complete abstinence. Since being clean and sober, I've been able to look back at my addictive behavior and realize that my ability to cope had never been up to par. I remember even at age nine, the need to avoid pain-taking fifteen to twenty aspirin a day because that's what I knew made me feel better if anything hurt. What I didn't know at the time, and didn't learn until coming to N.A. was that my pain was not physical, but emotional and spiritual. For the next thirteen years I attempted to fill that hole in my gut with anything I could, beginning with LSD in the hippie days, I tried to find a Higher Power that I could control.

Eventually I got involved with black magic and witchcraft. There is a long period of confusion after that; my memory of dates and sequence of events is poor. I was taking a lot of downers, uppers, weed, alcohol and drugstore dope. I was arrested once, spent a short period of time in a juvenile detention center, and saw a probation officer three times afterwards. There were many times later in my drug career that I thought of looking up that P.O. and asking her, "Didn't you know, couldn't you see, why didn't you lock me away then?" But that ability to put up a good front, along with many other things, is what drove me to the gates of insanity. I know today that there is no one person, place or thing that is responsible for my actions.

I never again came into contact with the law, but I
know the feelings of the person who has done time, because
I was locked in a prison of my own making. I continued to
take chemicals of all sorts, eventually shooting heroin with
the rest of the gang. I believe that part of my early using
was due to my need to be accepted. As it progressed I
became more and more self-centered. By the time I got my
first fix, I knew I was doing it because I had to, for me
to be able to survive in this lonely, frightening world.
For the next seven years, my life was a series of runs and
clean-ups. I think one of the reasons that I stayed out as
long as I did, was because I believed that I had a certain
amount of control. Somehow I held jobs most of the time.
I got married (to another hype) and had a son. I was
never fired, but I didn't take into consideration the fact
that I had to quit jobs before they fired me for stealing
their money.
I was so strung out that when I got pregnant and had my
baby, I left the hospital fifteen hours after giving birth
because I was sick and had to fix.
I kept trying to prove to myself that it wasn't as bad
as it seemed, that I could get it together one way or the
other. I moved to different towns, got different jobs and
saw psychiatrists and doctors. I read self-help/awareness
books, switched from drug to drug and tried methadone on and
off the streets, but the obsessive, compulsive insanity got
worse and worse.
My little family and I ended up, a year after my son
was born, back at my parents' house. There I spent the last
six months of my using. My husband left, got arrested and
went into a recovery house. At this point, I was completely
incapable of caring for my son or myself. My mother took
over my son. I was lucky to be able to get out of bed in the
morning to try to hustle for the day. I was dying and I
knew it. I was praying to God for death.
Somehow, for some reason, I visited my husband three times in that recovery house and I saw and heard things I had never thought possible. The message was; *Addicts Do Recover*, and I knew it was my only hope, a last chance, and I went for it. Within a week I got myself checked into a recovery house and started recuperating from the disease they told me I had. There was no medication (I already knew that didn't work). They told me this program of complete abstinence and that by not putting any chemicals in my body I could get better. They took me to N.A. meetings every night --sometimes twice a day--and I listened carefully because I thought for sure there must be some catch to the whole thing. I haven't found one yet. What I have found is freedom - freedom from that immobilizing fear that kept me enslaved for so long.

I spent nine months in that house, building a foundation for myself, making new friends and finding out all I could about my disease and about this Twelve Step program. I found a Higher Power I accept and allow to help me. I believe I had a rebirth - a spiritual awakening - the day I walked in. I have not had an obsession to use or drink since that day and I know that I am not the same person who sat in a blood-splattered bathroom, trying to find a vein to fix that dime bag in, knowing that wouldn't even get me well.

Today I work full-time, drive my own car and spend my own money. I go to a lot of meetings, stay active in the service of N.A. and try to give as much as I was given when I got here.

My son is living with me again and with the help of the Fellowship and the Twelve Steps, we are both growing up together.
"I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPIER"

1 When I was fourteen years old I was insecure and naive. My parents never told me very much about drugs or alcohol. I guess they figured I was too young to want to try anything.

2 I was very lonely at this age and I felt I needed a crowd to join. I started going to parties where there was a lot of booze and pot. Beer was always my favorite and I thought nothing of mixing it with pot. It didn't matter to me if I drank and got high. I felt at that time that pot gave me security and confidence to make friends.

3 I stayed at home a lot, even more than I went to parties. My parents went out a lot and being as young as I was, they never gave it a second thought to leave me home alone. They never thought I'd touch anything, but one night I did. I decided to try every bottle in the liquor cabinet. Then I decided to take an aspirin. During that year, my dad had had an operation on his leg and he had some downers for the pain. I didn't know what downers were at the time, and by mistake, I took one. Later on that evening my mom called to see if I was okay. When she heard how I sounded on the phone, she came home. I just told her that I wanted an aspirin and I had picked up the wrong bottle.

4 That summer I went to camp in Maine. I had a very hard time getting along with the girls there. I hated them and I never enjoyed myself there. My parents would not let me come home, so I had to stay and make the best of what I had. This led me to more dislike of myself and more and more desperation to make friends.

5 In my fifteenth and sixteenth years I started going to more beer and pot parties. I liked drinking out of quart
bottles. One day some friends and I went to the park to have a picnic. I got wasted. I was cooking a hamburger on a hibachi and it started to rain. I took the hibachi and put it in the car. I was lucky that my friends realized what I was doing. They ran towards me and took the small grill out. Some coals burned the seats and they also burned my feet.

A lot of times we would party at motels with our current boyfriends. We would tell our mothers not to call each other by telling them that the others were sick. Then we would call our mothers in the morning. We never got caught.

We used to skip school a lot to get high or drunk. I used to con my way out of everything. I had at least two or three men teachers. I was more developed than most girls my age. So, all I had to do was wear low cut shirts and the teacher would let me get away with anything.

My friendships usually lasted six months, maybe less. They all started calling me lush.

In my seventeenth year I went to Colorado with a friend of mine from Sarasota. We got drunk and high every night. Later on that year, I went out of town again, and every night there I was drinking screw drivers. I was drunk or stoned all the time. I guess that time I was fighting my loneliness and depression.

It was then time for me to go to college. I found it easy to get what I needed there. I decided to get high all the time and try to cut down on my drinking. I kept a bottle of booze in my room just in case I ran out of pot and couldn't get any. My friend's boyfriend and I would sit out in the hall and drink a couple of six packs of beer. To me, at that time, beer wasn't the same as hard liquor. My social life was going very well. I felt that with pot, it was easier for me to make friends. One night I went with some friends to a cocktail lounge. I drank thirteen or fourteen vodka martinis.
My friend gave me three pills which I immediately took. We went to a pizza parlor after the lounge. It turns out that I passed out in the pizza parlor with my face in the pizza. When my friend sitting next to me picked my face up out of the pizza, I fell on the floor. The police came, but luckily we didn't get arrested and I didn't O.D.

The next night we went out to a bar and my friend's rich boyfriend treated us to drinks. I drank fourteen double vodka and tonics. I got very sick that night. This guy drove me home in his new white mustang and I threw up all over the side of it.

I didn't do very well grade-wise in college. I figured at that time I would make it up in the summer.

I started doing cocaine in the morning during the summer. I was mixing drugs all the time. I managed to get at least one good grade during the summer. Now I had three weeks until the semester started. My parents went out of town so I had the whole house to myself. Every night we had parties. We had six or seven grams of coke a night besides anything else we could get our hands on. I managed to get a few nicknames at this time. They were: Promiscuous Paula, Boom Boom, and Space Cadet.

The summer finally ended and my parents were coming home. I left the house and went over to a friend's to help her wash her car. I decided to take some downers. I went into the house to get a light for the joint I had. I was walking back outside through the kitchen when I slipped and fell. I had a blackout and hit eight bottles of soda with my wrist.

After leaving the hospital, I went home for a week before going back to school. I had a lot of guilt and blame hanging on my shoulders. I decided to call a psychologist that my parents and I knew. I figured that if anyone could help me, he could. I couldn't stand walking around with all the guilt and shame I was feeling. I went out the following night and...
drank sixteen rum and cokes, but all that did for me was make me sick.

I kept seeing this psychologist even though my drug and drinking problems kept getting worse. I was at a point that I felt I could out-smoke or out-drink anyone. I felt important. I tried acid once and didn't like it at all because I had a bad trip. One time a friend and I tried some mushrooms. We didn't remember what we had done that day. We were cleaning the house and I noticed some neatly folded laundry. Apparently we had gone to a laundromat and done our laundry, we just didn't remember.

One of the main things that led me to drugs was fear of rejection. I feel this happens to many of us whether we want to admit it or not. To me it was all the time. Drugs seemed to take a lot of that fear away.

I started to get hooked on speed and diet pills. I lost twenty-three pounds in five weeks. My friend convinced me that the diet pills were no good and I threw them away. But I still kept losing weight. I didn't realize that it was the cocaine that was doing it. I started getting black and blue marks on my arms and legs from vitamin deficiencies. I ignored that and continued to get the drugs I needed. I was failing almost every subject in school. I was always depressed and I didn't want to live. I couldn't keep a decent conversation because I would lose my train of thought. The most important thing to me in my life at that time was drugs. One night I got so wasted, I attempted suicide. Luckily a friend of mine caught me and stopped me in time.

I finally decided that it was time for me to do something about my problem. My psychologist and I both agreed that I should go into a therapeutic community. This was a week before school ended. Since I knew that I would not be doing anymore drugs, I decided to go for it. I did some LSD, three grams of coke, and smoked a lot of pot.
I told my parents the night before that I would be going into an institution. My psychologist was there to ease the pressure. My mom drove me to the place the next day. I was absolutely terrified and wanted to turn back. My experience of getting straight at this place was beautiful. I owe my life to a lot of people. It had been five years of continual drinking and drugging and I was glad that it was over.

I stayed in the institute for eight weeks. I had many flashbacks and a lot of tears. I had a seizure on the seventh week I was there. The doctor said it was a drug delayed reaction from all the garbage I managed to dump into my system. I learned a lot from that.

After leaving the institute, I went to California to work for my aunt. When I got there, I found that my cousins were well on their way to becoming drug addicts. I had a slip there and decided to return home. Someone once told me that if I ever started using again, it would be just as if I never stopped. I found this to be very true.

I've been going to Narcotics Anonymous meetings for four months. I've been clean for a month. Without N.A. I don't know where I'd be. It's been one day at a time for me and I've never been happier. Things are beginning to work out much better than before. I don't ever want to go through the hell I did, ever again. My security is in N.A., not in drugs.
All my life I have felt like the square peg in a round
hole. My earliest recollections are of anger, frustration
and resentment because I felt misunderstood. As a small
child, I was extremely emotional and highly sensitive. I
cried easily. My feelings were constantly being hurt.

As I grew older, I learned to internalize most of my
feelings. I thought that if people--family, friends, peers--
didn't know they had "gotten to me," they wouldn't be able
to hurt me as often, at least, not intentionally.

I grew up in a large family, in a small town. Coming
from old Southern, pioneer stock, I had dozens and dozens of
peripheral relations because we had lived in the area for
generations. In addition, everybody knew everybody else, as
in any small town. But I was very lonely. I never fit in
wherever I was. I just knew, somehow, that I was "different".

As a young child, I was overweight, bookish and a sissy.
I was teased a lot by my peers, as well as the immediate
family. Early, I began running away. I simply could not
handle "reality" as I perceived it, and retreated into an
inner world of fantasy. If I didn't like a particular situ-
ation I merely pretended it did not exist. Because I read a
great deal, I spent most of my time being whatever hero I was
enamored of that week.

My behavior took on some rather bizarre aspects while still
in grammar school. One entire summer, I spent much of the day-
light hours literally in the closet. At night I came out
after the family had gone to sleep to replenish the flashlight
batteries, hoard up on sandwiches and gather a new book.

I was despondent much of the time. I was constantly in
depression. I became a loner. Yet, much of what I really
felt I covered up with "rousing good fellowship," when I
could not avoid social or familial contacts. I began think-
ing about dying, and plotted my suicide as early as age
eight or nine. By age ten, I had just quit crying, completely.
And I never cried again, under any circumstances, for more
than 20 years. Sadly, when I stopped crying, I also stopped
laughing. Eventually, I even stopped smiling except by a
rather half-hearted pretense.
By age twelve, I had discovered alcohol. I had stolen
some of my step-father's whiskey, and managed to get a few
swallows to stay down. I felt like I had discovered the elixir
of the gods. I believe I was alcoholic from the start. That
first drink made me feel on the inside like everybody else had
always looked on the outside. From that day forth, I drank.
Never successfully, and not constantly for a number of years,
but I drank--every chance I got.
By age 15, I knew two things about myself. I knew I
was an alcoholic and I knew I was homosexual.
I didn't know what an alcoholic was, but I knew I was
one. All I knew about alcoholism was that my paternal grand-
mother had recovered from alcoholism in Alcoholics Anonymous.
She had been a skid row denizen for a number of years and
suddenly was clean, serene and sober. I figured I would just
have to get as bad as she, and then maybe I could recover too.
I think at that point I semi-consciously set out to drink
myself into real alcoholism, whatever that is.
I didn't know for sure what homosexuality was either, but
I knew I was not like other boys. All I knew was that being
"queer" was the most horrible sort of social depravity around,
and the only two known "queers" in town were not very good
role models. I literally lived in terror of being found out!
I drank more and more, and I drank more often. I did
not establish a single lasting relationship with anyone dur-
ing my teen years. Every time somebody got too close, I ran.
I was in constant terror of gym class, and was always very
conscious to sit, walk, talk and act in a "masculine" manner.
I don't think I looked at anyone below the neck until I was over thirty. (Only "queers" are crotch watchers, remember.)

After high school, I managed to get in college, but it was a men's school and I couldn't handle the accumulated pressures. I was from a really poor background and most of the students (and my God they were all boys) were well-to-do. It was a religious school and rather strict, so I had problems adjusting as I had not had any real discipline for years. Too, my drinking had suddenly become chronic and that kept me in constant trouble with the dean, especially after I started "bootlegging" to other students.

Another student and I quit at the same time and literally dropped out of sight. We wound up in New Orleans and for months my family had no idea where I was, if I was alive, nothing.

I picked New Orleans for two reasons: you could buy whiskey legally at age 18 and the liquor stores and bars are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I hit New Orleans with a bank account, new clothes, a nice apartment; I got a job and just knew I was going to make my mark in the world.

Within a matter of days, I had discovered, in order, pot, LSD, speed, downers, hash, inhalers, poppers, cough syrup, belladonna and several other varieties of "trash" drugs. Belladonna was one of my favorite drugs of choice, and I overdosed, intentionally, on more than one occasion. Of course, I mixed the drugs liberally with all available varieties of alcohol, but mostly wine, beer, bourbon and scotch.

Within four months, I had hit skid row, and didn't recognize it. I hung around the French Quarter and Irish Channel mostly. I lost all motivation except to stay high. I spent the bank account, I got kicked out of the apartment (leaving the clothes behind), and I lost the job. I became unemployed and unemployable. Most of the time I had no place to live, and slept many nights on the levee under some azalea bushes.
I learned to panhandle and practiced my shoplifting skills.

If I got really hungry and was too shaky to boost at the French Market, I could always eat at the "Sally".

I had no hygiene (azalea bushes don't come with hot and cold running anything). I got to the point that I was thrown out of a "hash house" because I SMELLED bad!

And I did not recognize that this was really skid row.

Too, I never knew I was a drug addict. I couldn't be a junkie because I never knowingly took any Class A narcotics and I never put a needle in my vein.

In a moment of clarity after an arrest for vagrancy, a really bad acid trip and my worst belladonna overdose, I knew I was in serious trouble. I was 19 years old and about to die. I had been suicidal for years, but suddenly I didn't want to die. Also, I had to get out of New Orleans. The sexual problems had become more difficult to deal with. There was a very large and visible gay community in New Orleans, and for where I was coming from, I was disgusted. I only saw the drag queens and other bizarre members of the community and I knew I would kill myself before I became like "them".

I did the only thing that looked practical, from my warped perspective; I got some responsibility. In order, I joined the Navy, got married and had a family.

I had "dated" to avoid suspicion and I had even gotten "engaged" once, but I never really had a meaningful relationship with a girl. My wife was no exception. I never let her get close. Out of fear, I avoided any kind of "drug" for the next few years, but I began drinking more and more. I was by now a daily drinker. I had to. I couldn't function without help. I had no sex life without a drink, I could not work without a little help from time to time, and every social situation was so fraught with stress I needed a drink or two or three just to make an appearance.

The marriage did not last long. We fought constantly. I was a genuine brute, both to her and the children. We were heavily in debt because most of my income went for booze.
She worked literally to buy food.

When the marriage really began breaking up, I started hanging around dopers and chipping with uppers, downers and pot. I moved in with a girl whose problem appeared even worse than the one I had begun to suspect I had.

That relationship didn't last long. Most of the time, I just stayed home alone and drank and drank and drank.

I recognized in a second moment of clarity that I was headed back to the same scene I had left behind in New Orleans five years before.

Again I did the only thing that appeared practical. I got married again and started another family. I got another job, moved to another town, and later to another state.

My new job interfered with my drinking, because I worked irregular hours at various locations throughout the deep South states. Because I wasn't drinking as much, I managed to make a fairly decent employee, although I am sure that I was a miserable husband and lousy father. I secured a promotion at work that sent us to the Southwest.

We moved in December, just after Christmas, and in mid-January I developed several frightening physical symptoms. A general practice physician sent me to a diagnostician. The diagnosis was that at the age of 26, I was dying from "old age". I was literally worn out. I was drinking nearly a quart of whiskey a day. I was more than fifty pounds underweight, as I had practically stopped eating altogether. I had some severe organ damage and I was in the initial stages of heart disease.

Amazingly my drinking was never discussed, other than I casually mentioned that I drank a little 'occasionally'.

The marriage began to fall apart. We were in serious financial difficulty. I was more and more depressed and more and more suicidal. But, superficially, it looked okay. We had a nice house and car, I had a good (high-paying) job, we attended church... And I just knew I was losing it! I could feel reality slipping further and further out of reach. I
have never been more scared, frightened and confused.

Counseling with a priest finally sent me to A.A. I was in such a state of mental deterioration that I don't know for sure in which month I attended my first meeting. I just know it was during the summer. I will probably never know what happened, for sure, after that. I started stopping drinking. I had only tried to stop one time before in the past several years. That was after the lengthy session with the diagnostician. That 36-hour period showed me what compulsion, addiction, and obsession really were. I could not quit. I just knew it was during the summer.

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I did not come into A.A. with enthusiasm. I did not get "sober" at my first meeting. I had a bad attitude. I was angry, intolerant, smug, and just too damn smart! I continued to drink off and on and go to meetings. Slowly, I began to hear the people when they said "come back, glad to see you, we are here to help." I made thirty days on sheer will power. I discovered the true nature of the disease then, because I did not replace the "power" of addiction with the "Power of the Program".

After thirty days of "dryness" I found it necessary to "commit" suicide. There was a trip to a psychiatric ward, visits with the shrink, antabuse, guilt, remorse, shame... But I kept going to those damn meetings and hating every single minute of it. I got five weeks of sobriety and had one more "slip". Something happened during that last slip that I will never understand. I received the gift of hope, out of nowhere. God knows I had not put forth even the least bit of willingness. I didn't even have "the want to, to want to". But I knew I could really get sober and stay sober.

I was lucky. I had a sponsor and people around me in A.A. who believed in a program of TOTAL abstinence--absolutely no mood-changing, mind-altering chemicals in any form. I did go to some N.A. meetings, but I couldn't get anything there.
All they did was talk about "being back on the streets" and "remember when".

A.A. did not fulfill all the needs of my recovery program, maybe because of my own shortcomings, but I was never comfortable talking about the "drugging" and I was in the program and sober nearly four years before I got comfortable enough to really open up and talk about ME. I was still character acting much of the time.

A.A. tended to be an older crowd in that area. Most of the "old-timers" were old timers, and straight. There was talk about "dual addiction," but that didn't feel right. Somehow I knew that addiction was addiction was addiction. I did learn, by this time, to open up more freely, but there was little spontaneity.

Finally, I moved a third time to another state. I got involved with a "meeting" whose members who were from different 12-step groups (A.A., N.A., O.A., Al-Anon). The N.A.'s kept inviting me to N.A. meetings, but I wouldn't go. The N.A.'s I had met earlier didn't have very good recovery records, and the few meetings I had attended were disappointing and unfulfilling.

Seemingly by accident, I was on campus of a local university shortly after moving to the city where I now live. I was attending a seminar in another area of the campus and "stumbled" unintentionally in to a service conference of N.A. I sat in on one meeting and was hooked. It was a week-long conference and I called work and laid off, I stayed at the conference nearly round the clock. I went home only to shower and change and slept and ate at the conference.

I was overwhelmed with love and something spiritual that I couldn't identify. Although I could, if I had to, talk openly about myself to just about anyone, it was never a really comfortable situation. Usually I felt rather apologetic and had an intense need to explain myself. I guess I was still seeking approval at all costs.
I had come into A.A. with an absolute, unequivocal "hands off" policy—you do not touch me, ever...physically or emotionally. The N.A. conference changed that. I seemed paralyzed every time somebody got too close and I couldn't run. I literally got hugged into happiness, on a 'round-the-clock basis. The intense spiritual feelings were electric—love literally pervaded the atmosphere in a tangible manner.

I had, because of the kind of sponsorship I had received, always been active in A.A. service work. I chaired, answered the Central Office tape at night, made twelve-step calls, emptied ashtrays—whatever seemed needed. It was genuinely satisfactory, and I received many blessings as a result of trying to live the program to the best of my ability. However, there had always been some secret inner feeling of "I have got to do this in order to stay sober." I am grateful for A.A. and the A.A. program. I attained degrees of serenity, peace, compassion, love and many other wondrous joys beyond my wildest imaginings during the five years of sobriety preceding that N.A. conference.

But, everything I received from N.A. is geometrically more wonderful. I am still, at times, in awe of this experience. Today, I no longer am involved in the program because I need to be; today I am involved because I want to be.

I still have many of the same problems today that I brought with me to the fellowship. I am still, I think, a square peg in a round hole. Now I understand though, that I am where I am because of my own actions.

I am still gay, and still married. That means I don't fit "properly" in either society. I still have financial problems from time to time, because I still let my will take charge. I have learned that God's way is better, but am not yet ego-free.

One of the greatest benefits I have received from N.A. is that today, I do not need to explain who or what I am. All that matters is that I am a fellow addict, suffering from an incurable disease. I feel truly a part of the whole.
My past is only important in that it got me here. My today is all that really matters.
THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

My father warned me, the day I was caught taking "over the counter" ups, when I was 14, "This is the way it starts," he said. "First these, and someday you'll end on heroin!"

I laughed at him...

I was an addict from the day I look my first mind-changing chemical, beginning innocently enough, with that handful of "over the counter" ups. This launched a career of addiction spanning every drug I could find, a downhill road taking me through institutions, jail, attempted suicide and insanity. I did not know there was a way to live without drugs until I found the program at age 25. It is still a miracle to me after six years of clean time and sanity.

The roots of my unmanageability reach far back into childhood, long before I took my first drug. I had a psychological make-up ripe for addiction: I was overly sensitive, easily frustrated, had trouble accepting life the way it was, and always wanted to be someone else. I lived in a fantasy world of books and movies; when reality was not colorful or happy enough to suit me, I withdrew to this private world where I could become anyone I chose. I do not remember being very happy. There was conflict in my home over my father's alcoholism and my mother's emotional problems, but my unhappiness stemmed from my inability to accept people and circumstances the way they were and myself the way I was. I was also plagued with constant fear and anxiety--fear that I wouldn't get taken care of, that something would happen, that I wasn't good enough. Fear in one form or another has haunted me all my life and is only now beginning to fade.

When I was 11, I was taken out of school for being "too nervous." This intensified my feelings of being inadequate
and different. I started believing there was "something wrong with me." I also learned to hide, to avoid things that were painful.

These feelings fed my addiction later; I decided I would belong at any cost and that I would no longer suffer emotional pain. I soon discovered that mind-changing chemicals had this magic about them; they would kill the pain (any pain), help me feel "comfortable" anywhere, and take the rough edges off the world. I began drinking at age 14, and for the next three years that was the only drug I used; however, I used it the same way I later used speed, acid and heroin—to change the way I felt and to blot out unhappiness. To me there is little difference between the two, and I thank N.A. for helping me see this with its program of total abstinence. I stay away from the first fix the same way I stay away from the first drink, for any mind-changing chemical interferes with my clean time.

But I did not know this at age 17. I only knew that alcohol was the greatest friend I had ever had, and when I became paralyzed with depression and hospitalized that year, I had no idea how much it had to do with addiction. I rationalized that it was just the strain of being away at college and overlooked the fact that I had been drinking daily for that whole year. Then I was introduced to other drugs by a well-meaning psychiatrist, and it was just like Christmas to me! They shot me up with chemicals to make me talk, speed to make me happy, and tranquilizers to relax me. From the first injection all I knew was that this was the most wonderful stuff in the world! It was five times better than alcohol because I wasn't sick at my stomach and I flew much, much higher. And I knew that when I was high on that stuff, I felt OKAY! I was psychologically addicted from the beginning—I loved the feeling and wanted it always.

I don't remember much of that time; I drifted in and out of reality, which was the pattern of most of my addiction. I totally flipped out and began hallucinating and was given
shock treatments. The doctors called it a "psychotic break"
but today I wonder how much of it was due to my drinking and
the "anti-psychotic" medication I was taking.
After the shock treatments, I spent almost a year in a
hospital recuperating. It was a year marked by crippling
depression, my first suicide attempt and isolation in seclusion rooms. Thus began a pattern that lasted for the next
seven years. I bought the theory that I was crazy and played
that role to the hilt. I never spent a clean day in an institution because there were always plenty of pills and I usually
could sneak out to drink. For a long time I remained bitter
toward psychiatrists and therapists, claiming they had never
helped me, but how could they help someone who was always
stoned and rarely honest?
Although the hospitals were private and very good, as soon
as I emerged from my fog I began to rebel. After all, I never
asked to be there, to get screwed up or to "be born!" Playing victim was one of my star roles and I gave it one hundred percent, blaming my parents, doctors, and fate for my "misfortune" and never once guessing where the real responsibility lay. To this day that feeling persists and it's difficult
not to blame "God" when things don't work out the way I want them to. The doctors at that hospital finally threw up their hands and said they'd done "all they could do." I was to hear that phrase often in the next seven years. They told me not to use any drugs or the psychosis might recur. Naturally, the first thing I did upon release was to get drunk and score some pills.
It didn't take long to find some cooperative psychiatrists
to keep me supplied with amphetamines and tranquilizers. Iecame obsessed with staying high; I lived in a synthetic
world where there was a pill to deal with every emotion. I attempted college again, but soon school interfered with my
drinking and drugging. Also, I had discovered the wonderful
world of psychedelics! And there was plenty of marijuana,
plenty of parties, and plenty of friends at last. I had some
good times at first: drugs bridged the social gap I had always felt and gave me something in common with others. Although I always drank to get drunk and did dope to get loaded, in those days the consequences weren't too severe. I could still get by in the world.

Then I heard about San Francisco and Haight-Ashbury. It sounded like a paradise to me and I split for the West Coast. It was far out at first, all love and sunshine and flowers. I felt I had found my home at last! I moved right into the middle of the Haight, threw away my dresses and let my hair grow longer. It was pure fantasy, full of strange sights and people, just like my dreams. There I never had to be anyone I didn't want to be; I simply donned another costume and changed names for the night. Nothing was permanent, everything was possible. I thought I had found true freedom. I didn't realize it had chains. It soon became apparent, though. My first summer in California was spent searching for a way to stay permanently high on psychedelics. I alternated acid, mescaline, psilocybin and STP, and almost succeeded in staying permanently crazy. I discovered many other mind-changing substances along the way. Soon the only objective was to get as high and far away from reality as possible, however possible. I used everything I could get my hands on, although my drug of choice was speed. The streets were a virtual supermarket of drugs, and I found lots of support for staying loaded. There were uppers and downers, acid and peyote, speed and cocaine, smack, THC and always marijuana. I surrounded myself with people who were at least as stoned as I was, for that way there was no guilt. Drugs were first and foremost in my life, before any person, place, or thing.

One by one my values began slipping away. I began doing all the things I said I never would do: trading my body for drugs, stealing from friends, ripping off places, and getting farther and farther from myself. I lost track of time; I was unable to hold a job, so I got on welfare and started
dealing. Nothing mattered but staying loaded. Then I started hitting the hospitals again, several times waking up in a locked ward without knowing how I got there. The fantasy rapidly turned into a nightmare. Soon I could not come down from speed any longer, so I started fixing smack. However, I couldn't even be a good junkie because I was getting too crazy and erratic. My behavior was totally unpredictable. And one drug by itself was never enough for me.

I wanted to get absolutely wasted. But no matter how high I got, I always had to come down, and that was when the agony hit. I never felt uncomfortable except when I was so loaded I couldn't move. I never seemed to fit anywhere. I changed drugs to change that feeling, "Maybe if I become a speed freak," I thought, "I'll belong," and when that didn't work, "Maybe if I'm a junkie...". I changed groups of people I hung out with, from straight to gay people, from acid-heads to characters, but nothing worked. I could never run away from myself, and that was the person I hated most.

Days and nights faded into each other in a blur; I woke up in strange places with strange people, not knowing how I got there; I would go to the store for groceries and end up freaking out and running home; I started making skin flicks for easy money and found myself in L.A. in a porno studio one day and wandering the streets in a daze that same night. People slipped in and out of my life like shadows on a movie screen. I could not maintain a relationship with a man and moved in with anyone who would take me. I holed up for days at a time, too afraid to go out on the street. There were times when I literally could not function and would lie in bed staring at the ceiling. And there were always drugs. I could not get up in the morning without something in my system.

I used to wander down the street and wait for someone to take me home! I felt like a leaf in the wind. I started cutting my arms with razor blades, not knowing it was anger and self-destructiveness.
In desperation I went home to my parents in Texas, thinking that a change of scenery would help. I was finding it hard to take care of myself. Little did I know that geographic cures never work. My illness simply progressed. I can remember that time only in bits and pieces. There are chunks of my life that are totally blotted out; to this day I do not remember them, and the things I do remember I have many times wished I could forget. Except today I know that with the program those same painful things can become valuable tools. I have found that even the most humiliating and hurtful memories are valuable in sharing with another addict who may feel that he is the only one who ever experienced that.

I went downhill fast after I got to Texas, and today I consider that a blessing. It got me to the program that much faster. I spent six months in a psychiatric ward and barely remembered it. I could feel the walls closing in and pray desperately for some kind of sanity; then I would hear myself screaming, black out and wake up in restraints. I stopped believing in "God" altogether then. I overdosed several times. I became pregnant, had a miscarriage and found out when they put me in the hospital that I had a malignancy. After my initial shock, I realized that this was what I had been waiting for all my life, a socially acceptable way to die. This really appealed to me and I went home to my parents' house to die. I languished in vain for six weeks but kept getting healthier. And the healthier I got, the angrier I got. I can laugh about this today but then it was tragic. I felt like the butt of some huge cosmic joke, and hit the streets determined either to kill myself or become a vegetable so I wouldn't be aware of anything anymore.

I very nearly succeeded. I hit another mental ward and finally ended up on a methadone program, thinking that at last I had found the answer. This drug would certainly kill the pain, the anxiety and torment I felt most of the time. But I ended up more strung out on methadone than I had been.
on junk, and I didn't even think it made me high until I
kicked it! My life was falling apart rapidly and I knew I
was out of control. I couldn't even hold a job as a top-
less dancer because I was too stoned. I had the sense that
time was running out. I was living over a warehouse in a
ghetto with the rats and the roaches and a psychopath who
stole my methadone while I was asleep, who once tried to
strangle me. After a year on methadone and all the speed,
coke, downers, and alcohol I could consume, I reached my
bottom. I got beaten up at the methadone center one day and
refused to fight back because I was afraid I would get kicked
out of the program. I felt as though something broke inside
at that moment. I knew I would do anything for dope and
wasn't even human anymore. I couldn't seem to die and was
afraid to live. I was desperate. I decided to "kick" one
more time.

I had to go "cold turkey" since the hospital didn't have
a methadone license, and while it was painful, it is some-
thing I hope I never forget. Many times in the beginning
I stayed clean only because I didn't want to end up like
that again. I was too sick to take care of myself for weeks.
My faithful parents let me stay with them one more time, and
often I would sit in the same chair for hours, unable to move.
Everything was too bright, too loud, too close. I really
believed I was going crazy, that I had burned out my brain
for good. When I found out that I had written some bad
checks several months before, I didn't know how I was going
to cover them. I couldn't work and couldn't even hustle.
I wrestled with the fear of going to the joint and the grim
relief it might bring. If I were locked up, at least some-
one else would manage my life. I knew at that point that I
was unable to manage my own life. Despair and hopelessness
engulfed me and I prayed to die. Instead, I ended up at an
A.A. oriented women's halfway house and learned how to live
again.
Some months before I had been dragged to some A.A. meetings but remember nothing about them. However, in my despair I decided to try it as a last resort. Today I know that it was my Higher Power working in my life. There was no N.A. to support me in staying off all mind-changing chemicals, but the A.A. program gave me hope in the beginning. As far as I'm concerned, the Twelve Steps can work regardless of where you learn them.

I had no trouble admitting my life was unmanageable, but it took me almost a year to admit I was powerless over all mind-changing chemicals. I thought if I stayed off hard drugs I'd be straight. I thought it didn't hurt to drink, smoke grass or take muscle relaxants to sleep! After all, I had too many "emotional problems" not to take something. I was "sicker than everyone else!"

I lived this lie for months, although I did stay clean most of the time I was in the women's house. I was in that house just long enough to give me a taste of something better, something beautiful. Small miracles began happening. When I called about the bad checks (which were 4 months old and should have been turned over for prosecution) I was told that they had been "lost" and yes, they would be glad to make arrangements! Also, I began to get a sense of a Power greater than myself. Every day I stayed clean convinced me that there was a God. After all, I had never even lasted one day before. Doing any kind of mind-changing chemicals was never quite the same after that. Although I was only using what I considered "minor" drugs, I couldn't deceive myself anymore; I knew it was slow suicide. I finally snapped one day--why kill myself slowly and painfully again? Why not just get it over with? And that is when I realized that I didn't want to die; I just didn't know how to live.

I went back to meetings and started praying constantly. "Even if I end up in the nuthouse, God," I'd pray, "just let me go cold stone straight." I met some other people who had been strung out and we decided to start an N.A. meeting. We
talked to people from other cities who were in the program and finally started a little group. It was for our benefit more than anyone else's. We had very few members in the beginning but it didn't matter. We learned how to open up, share, and love each other. It was the first meeting I was ever able to talk in. I felt accepted and understood there. I learned the value of service, too. Since there were so few of us then, we all had to pitch in and help, and that's when I got my first feeling of self-worth. I felt at last that I might have something to contribute after all.

That was six years ago. Since then, the group has grown to six groups in the city. Most of the original members are still clean. Through the grace of my Higher Power and the help of this Program I have stayed clean, also. My life which was once so dark is filled with light and beauty today. The miracle was gradual but complete. Once I got involved with the Program, going to meetings, sharing with others and working the Steps, my life cleared up. I am happier today than I ever dreamed of being. More than that, I belong and my life is of value. I want to live today. And I, who was so afraid of closeness, now have a wonderful (clean) husband with whom to share my life. I can face things I once ran from and am slowly conquering the fear that controlled me. I have more peace, self-acceptance and sanity than I ever had.

And most important, I have a Higher Power who loves me and from Whom all these gifts come. Without that, I am nothing. But with God and the Program, my life has purpose and direction, beauty and meaning at last. If I continue to give freely of the blessings I have received, they can only multiply and grow stronger.

The Program is more than a way to stay clean, it is a transformation, like that of a caterpillar unfolding into a butterfly. It is a way to become what you would like to be. It is an awakening to the realization of a tremendous Power within you that can overcome anything in your life. You will not necessarily be free from problems but you will be able to
handle them. We who have survived have that rarest of chances a new life to live and freedom in choosing how to live it. What greater gift is there?
CLEANED UP AND SOBERED UP, WITHOUT BEING LOCKED UP

I grew up in what I call a nice area of Florida, with two good parents, two brothers and one sister. The first time I ever remember getting stoned was on alcohol at age thirteen. This was also my first drink without supervision. I felt very free; I loved getting loaded, but I remember feeling very sick for two days and staying in bed. I hated being sick, but I loved the attention I received for having a "virus." I started running around with some guys who drank regularly. We stole most of our booze from grocery stores. We would drink mostly on weekends before going to dances. I had this brilliant idea once, "If only the scientists of this country would invent this liquid in a pill form it would be a miracle." Little did I know...

Before I found pills, a friend turned our group onto the fact that airplane glue would do a job on us! I sniffed quite a bit, despite being aware that I was killing brain cells, lungs and liver. One time I bought an entire case of glue. I told the store owner I was building my own surf board. I had never surfed in my life. Later, during the beginning of the "love and peace" movement, in the mid-sixties, pot, pills, acid and speed replaced the booze and glue.

Four of us traveled by van from Florida to Mexico to surf. To this day I have not yet surfed. I felt a need to get away and besides I could get high in Mexico legally and be myself. I ended up in jail there. I felt like this was no big deal, because by this time, age seventeen, I had been locked up a dozen times or more. I had done sixty days for driving while intoxicated.

I went back to Florida, ended up in Los Angeles, back to Mexico, then back to Florida. I was in and out of jail. The
police were starting to take me a little more seriously and began filing felony charges against me, all drug related--from possession to theft.

I began shooting a lot of dope (heroin) and could not stop. I went to a methadone clinic with lots of hope that all would be well, after the twenty-one day detox. Three or four years later, still on methadone, still shooting whatever I could find, that hope had completely gone. That was the longest twenty-one days this addict ever spent.

I went to Lexington, trying to get an angry probation officer off my back. Finally I was placed in a religious, drug-free rehab where I was kept for fifteen months. I stayed clean and sober and became very sanctimonious. During the stay in rehab, I stayed clean and sober about seven months.

In between the drinking and drugging, I had married and become the father of two wonderful sons. Later, after the rehab, I was reunited with my wife and sons. Now I was clean, a family man again and back to business. We bought a nice home and a new car. My wife was graduated from nursing school. I joined Kiwanis and was a successful business man. My life was looking real good to me and everybody else, all except for a few beers here and there. I mean, what the hell; I had quit shooting dope. Now I felt like I was a hero or something. People congratulated me and told me how proud they were to know me. I knew I had an alcohol problem and knew sooner or later I would probably start drinking alcoholicly. Little did I know; I already was. I felt as though I would be able to drink about fifteen years before I would be in trouble. I didn't know I had a disease, a progressive disease. Within five years there was no wife, no kids, no home, no business, no car, no money, no hope.

I got really paranoid. I could not stop drinking! The compulsion was as strong and uncontrollable as heroin, cocaine or methadone. I couldn't go on. I feared total insanity. I feared being locked up again. Loneliness had set in. I was in a bad way. I hated myself, God, you and everything.
Today I am a happy grateful addict who loves life. (I used to hate to hear anyone say this, I felt like throwing up.) I went to N.A. or A.A. meetings every day, sometimes three or four per day. I didn't drink or take anything else to get high on. From day one, the Twelve Steps became part of my life. At first, I allowed only Step One to take hold.

Today I have no fear whatsoever of going insane or getting high. I am constantly turning my will over to the care of God. Why not? I sure screwed it up when I took charge of myself!

Through listening to the experience of others and learning how to apply this to me, life has become pleasant, beautiful and sometimes very exciting. Laughter is a common part of my day. Smiling doesn't hurt at all and I am able to look anyone in the eye. At times when the going gets rough, I can turn to my sponsor, group, God or literature--not necessarily in that order either. On different days it works different ways.

Recently I was fortunate enough to experience the ninth N.A. World Convention. Words cannot describe the unity felt there in Atlanta. I brought back so much more than I took, just as it is in the meetings.

I really don't have any brilliant answers or solutions but I can honestly say this program works. I had never cleaned up or sobered up without being locked up before N.A. Each day, one day at a time, is another record of success for this addict. So long as I listen to what I'm told it keeps getting better and better! What they tell me is, "Keep coming back, it works!"
WHY GOD?

I hope I never forget how I felt that day. I was under a porch, sobbing. I could hear the police sirens as they raced by heading to the scene I kept trying to blot out of my mind. "Why, God? Why?"

This day started out like all the rest. And once again, I was terrified, my chest was pounding and my head was throbbing. Over and over I kept asking the same question, "Why, God? Why?"

Why?

I stayed in that position for hours, wanting to be a little boy again, held in my mother's arms with her telling me, "Everything is going to be alright."

I remember once, when I was a tall and skinny little boy, walking onto the schoolyard where the neighborhood boys were choosing sides for a baseball game. I stood and watched each captain pick players for his team. There were three of us left, and one of us was not going to be able to play.

I stood on the side lines watching everybody else play. I felt so alone. I left, wandering through alleys, alone. When I came to the railroad tracks, I just sat and let the train block out the morning, and the noise cover up that misery.

I didn't want to be alone, so I began running with a crowd of street toughs with destructive habits. We were into breaking street lights and car headlamps and windshields. As we got older, we became more bizarre. All the time I felt lonelier and more scared. All the time, I was quietly asking, "Why?"

By the time I was fifteen, I gave up hope of ever being like other people. I started running with a street gang in
Chicago. On weekends we went to dances, but mostly we just stood around on street corners or cruised around in cars. I was looking, I guess, for something or someone to make me feel alright.

I remember the day I thought I found the solution. I was in a basement on the West Side of Chicago. Someone fixed me with my first shot of heroin. For the first time in my life, I felt like a whole person. The fears and loneliness were gone. Thus began a love affair that was to last for twenty-two years. Heroin saw me through a marriage, two children, a divorce, county jails, penitentiaries, and many geographic "cures."

There were to be many days in the fetal position--feeling so utterly alone and so terribly afraid. And all the time I kept asking, "Why, God? Why?"

I was thirty-seven and living in California with the same sick relationship--Heroin. By this time, I had lost the ability to survive. I wanted out; it was impossible to keep up any fronts. I had tried everything and failed.

I reached the point that I did not want to live, yet did not want to die. It is the saddest place in the world, and totally isolated. By now all self-respect and sense of dignity had gone. I knew the situation was hopeless.

I had no place left to go. My prayer turned from, "Why, God?" to "God help."

Jim (not his real name) came into my life. I know now that God put him there in response to my prayer. Jim invited me to my first N.A. meeting. It was the first place I had been invited to in years; I would have gone anywhere with anybody at this time. Thank God it was an N.A. meeting.

I knew I had arrived at a place where I just might find some happiness, right after I said, "My name is N_____ and I'm a drug addict," and everybody said, "Hi, N______!"

Before my first year clean, Jim died of an overdose, and for the first time, I cried for someone else. In one month, I will have ten years clean time, and God has put many Jims in my life; God has given me many miracles.
I no longer have these feelings of hopelessness, fear and loneliness. My life has meaning; I feel fulfilled. Many wonderful people have touched my life and for that I am grateful. I pray in turn that I have touched the lives of others.

Today, I ask why and God says, "Why not?"
Being a young man just out of high school I was ready to conquer the world and give lessons on how a real man could live and lust forever. That was the only goal I had at the time, and it turned out to be short-lived. Within one year I had gotten married in the name of lust only, and ended up divorced that same year.

I had joined the fire department to honor my parents' wishes and as a means to support my wife, so I was now a single man making good money with a lot of free time on my hands. All of my friends were older and well-learned in the art of drinking. They ran the ballrooms at night and the pressure cooker bars during the day and I was a willing pupil.

I was like a dying man in the desert, the deeper I went into it, the more lost and insane I became, with no purpose but to experience and conquer everything. There was a fire inside me which I could not seem to satisfy or put out and it constantly demanded more fuel.

To be the best fire fighter was another great challenge to me and I soon became obsessed with it. Early in my probationary period I discovered the adrenalin flow, compounded with blind fear of the unknown put me on a high that no drug-taking experience has ever come close to reproducing.

It wasn't very long before I was known as a top fire fighter in Houston and had lots of pats on the back for jobs well done. I received each award like a well-trained dog.

Speed way my drug of choice, and I was soon hooked on it as if it were my life-support system. Many times my ego overrode my common sense and the results were disastrous. I went to work so high that I didn't need ladders to get to the tops of the building and I continually put myself into
dangerous situations that give me nightmares even now. I was told by a few "old hand" fire fighters that I was a suicide jockey and that I was running with a death wish.

I had been on speed and downers so long that I began to lose touch with reality. I honestly believed that smoking pot was socially acceptable in all circles except in the older groups. Blowing a few joints, or even a lid every day was not harmful and surely pot was not a drug, so I enjoyed my smoking habits. I became a connoisseur of exotic weed, traveling all the way to Alaska just to try some better stuff.

Women seemed to come with the drug addiction and I started at the beginning. I wanted to let all the ladies in Houston know that I was available, and had a pocket full of pills and a bag full of goodies to take care of all their fantasies. My ego was constantly being dropped and shattered by these demons in lace. I was a puppet with my strings just waiting to be pulled.

Once more I was married, to a master puppeteer. Disaster was upon me once again. I did not know how to cope with this woman who put her drug addiction before my selfish male ego. The rent money was being spent on drugs and sexy clothes for her, while I was wearing my uniforms on and off the job, and even to my second job.

I was working two full-time jobs, putting in one hundred to one hundred thirty hours per week, and still I was always broke. I was consistently going into fits of rage over her addictions and bad money managements. It was impossible to think of my addiction as a contribution factor to our financial problem because I could rationalize my need for speed or cocaine, just to go to work and my need for downers in order to sleep.

The Houston police narcotics division came to visit my home rather abruptly and uninvited one evening while I was having a quiet party with a few friends with the same interests as my wife and myself. These party crashers were not
very polite but did invite us to join them in a ride downtown
to visit the facilities at the main lockup. As I sat behind
those bars, I came to the conclusion that this also was my
wife's fault and all I had to do was get rid of her and all
my problems would be solved.

Being a city employee the courts were very lenient with
me, but assured me they would be watching my activities in
the future so I had to walk on egg shells for a year. Cutting
my wife loose was another mistake. I had no connection for
my addiction problem; she knew all the street people that had
what I needed and also every known "script" doctor on that
side of town. I again started searching for a new lady to
supply my needs physically and egotistically once more. This
time I was smart; I figured a very naive and non-addictive
type woman would serve me better. I found her in a very nice
bar downtown. I was drinking there and she was serving me
in a short skirt with a nice smile and told me how much money
she brought home every night. I was in love once more and
moved in that night.

Everything was on the upswing, in my favor once more.
This lady made me feel like her hero, praising and pushing
my ego to greater heights. She thought my drug problem was
a little out of hand and rather expensive. I could not take
her out because I was always broke or too loaded to go out
in public.

My job was in danger now as the other fire fighters were
complaining of my being loaded on the job. I was caught
several times going to the backyard of the fire station to
cop a high just to get through one more hour or to get some
sleep. I remember one freezing winter night we responded
to a fire alarm at a popular disco; the whole back end of
the building was on fire. I ran into the back door right
in the middle of the burning room, shooting water on the
blaze and cussing and screaming at the fire like it was a
person. Today I realize how insane that action was and how
uncontrolled I was over my actions. After that "battle", I crawled to the front of the disco and found the beer tap coming out of the wall. I was just going to have one quick cold beer to settle my nerves, but it did not end up that way. I was found laid out on the floor so drunk I couldn't stand up. My captain thought I had been overcome by smoke and heat and sent me back to the station to recuperate.

From then on every fire my company responded to was an open invitation to a quick high. Every night club and restaurant had booze of some kind and every house or apartment had cold beer in their refrigerators and usually some kind of drugs or pot in the medicine cabinets, or some hiding place in the bedrooms, and I was acting like a Saint Bernard on a rescue mission. It didn't matter where you hid your stash I could find it and I ribbed myself that I was doing these people a great service by stealing it before one of my redneck officers came across it and turned it over to the man.

At a major apartment fire one evening in November 1976 my partner was electrocuted when the ladder he was on swung into a high voltage power line. I had this terrible feeling of hopelessness. This man was more than just a friend to me; he had saved my life several times and I knew that any time I got into trouble or dangerous situations, this guy was always there to pull me out.

Here he lay dying in my arms and I couldn't do a damn thing to help him. I wanted to run away and hide, to just get away, because I just could not stand to see him suffer like this. He was hauled away to the hospital finally, and I didn't know if I would see him alive ever again. I was hurting in my guts so bad I got sick.

I got off my knees and went back into the fire ground feeling loss and shame. I needed a drink or anything that would get me over this situation. A friend walked over and handed me a joint. That wasn't enough, so I started opening every refrigerator in this burned-out apartment complex. I
got wiped out in less than an hour on everything I could put
my hands on. I don't remember anything after that for three
days. By the grace of God, I watched my partner recover even
after the doctors said there was no hope.

Even then, as sick as I was, I knew there was a God work-
ing in my life. I honestly believe today that this Higher
Power was trying to tell me to stop the insane behavior. I
could and would die if this game of destruction I was playing
did not stop. Out of thirteen men at my station, nine of
them were hurt on duty and had to be hospitalized in an eight-
month period.

I did not think I could be the next one to fall, but it
did happen. The night of February 9, our company responded
to an apartment complex fire. I made my approach through the
second story balcony and ran right into the main body of the
fire. After knocking the fire down, I started back out the
sliding glass door leading onto the balcony. The heat inside
and the cool weather had caused the glass in the sliding door
to become brittle. As I tried to open this door the glass
shattered and the top sheet fell out towards me. I put my
hands out to keep the glass away from my face. When it hit
me it felt like a sledge hammer. I fell backwards into the
middle of the room; I couldn't feel my right hand; I thought
it was gone. I had been cut at the wrist and my hand was
pulled back and blood was shooting everywhere. I remember
very well this scene, as it brought nightmares for two years
after the accident. I did not want to die in that dark and
dirty place and I was scared right then more that I ever had
been, in the ten years of fire fighting.

After leaving the hospital, all I did was hide from
everyone and feel sorry for myself. I thought I was a mis-
fit and cripple and didn't want people to see me like this.
The doctors were a big help. Everytime I asked for pills for
the pain or my nerves, they gave me a prescription.

As an addict, this was my escape from reality. I stayed
fixed and doped up for two years before a gentleman that
"read my mail" offered me a chance to live. He introduced me to a group of people that had similar problems. The only difference was they were facing and doing something about their problems. These people seemed to be happy and this was something I had never been. They accepted me with open and loving arms; they really cared about me. They shared with me their experiences and gave me guidance on how to handle my problems.

Today I am happy, joyous, and a free man. I no longer hide in drugs or any kind of chemical high. I still have problems in my life today, but the action I chose to take by turning them over to a power greater than myself and not hiding from them makes all of them easier to cope with.

I have three beautiful things in my life now. I have a God that is loving and easy to understand. He will help me overcome all obstacles in my life if only I ask for His help. The second is this group of beautiful people that I love and claim as my family. The third is I have found the person inside myself that I always wanted to be.
My marriage was on the rocks. My wife had sworn out a warrant on assault charges and had confronted me about my addiction. Although I admitted the addiction to her, I was not ready to accept it myself. She told the other family members about my addiction and asked me to accept help. I was not ready for help, but during the court hearing, she told the judge she would drop charges if I would agree to go into a treatment program. Needless to say, I was more willing to go to treatment than to jail, so I did--for all the wrong reasons.

While in treatment, I decided to listen to what they had to say. I was soon admitting my addiction, but had difficulty embracing the concepts of a Higher Power. Because of a series of spiritual experiences, I finally began to accept the idea of God. This enabled me to become very involved in my treatment effort and I tried to put aside all outside problems, investing myself totally in my recovery.

Treatment went by quickly and I really believed I was equipped to go back into society and pick up where I left off. It only took three days for my security and confidence to be shaken. Three days after my discharge, my wife entered treatment. In the beginning, I was happy she was admitting her addiction. Soon, she was requesting that we have no contact and I resented that. I became jealous when she told me she had been advised to get rid of her problem and that I was it. The feelings of rejection were a deep kind of pain and I was resentful over not having been given my second chance to put my family back together. The pain was unbearable and the only way I knew to relieve it was to return to my immediate reliever—drugs.
In much less time than I thought possible, the reality of the progression of the disease, as I had been taught in treatment, came true. In a period of five months, I lost a family, all my material possessions except the clothes on my back, my job and all my friends, and most certainly, any control over my drug usage. I had married again, was heavily in debt and resorted to one thing I had never done before—stealing. The bottom I had hit before treatment was "Ned in the First Reader" stuff compared to this. I felt alone and desperate. I realized that I was no longer comfortable with the drug life.

I isolated myself in my apartment and withdrew myself to be rid of the drugs in the physical-self. The mental craving was still there after withdrawal. I finally decided I couldn't make it by myself. I began to pray again and to try and make conscious contact with the Higher Power. For the first time I got honest about my powerlessness and reached out for help. I called old acquaintances in the Fellowship and asked for help in getting transportation to meetings.

In the beginning of my return to the Fellowship, only the body was present, but at least I had the willingness to get the body there. I felt so hopeless and helpless I considered going into treatment again. After a lengthy conversation with a member of the Fellowship, she told me that I knew what to do; my mind finally caught up with my body and I began to work the Steps.

I went to every meeting available each week and soon I began to feel differently. I was aware of a sense of peace, some of the fear left and for the most part, I was relieved of the craving. Although my material world was still non-existent, I began to distinguish my needs from my wants and got comfortable with what I didn't have. The Higher Power seemed to be taking care of business for me and many of my problems disappeared or resolved themselves.

I became involved in the Fellowship, spending all my time with recovering addicts. I knew I was getting clean
and that I wanted to be clean. I became aware of how people care about me and that if I listened to them, God would speak to me through them. Without any effort on my part, my world began to fall into place. I was soon employed again, reconciled with my parents and sister and was able to cope with the outside world just as it was.

My feelings of gratitude spilled over. I finally felt I had something to share with other recovering addicts and I couldn't wait to give it away. I became heavily involved in Twelve Step work and returned to the treatment center where it all began, to offer myself as a volunteer for anything they needed me for. I drove van-loads of patients to meetings, shared with the patients my experience, strength and hope and became willing to become God's instrument to speak to others in any way He chose.

My life has taken on new meaning and I am able today, with the help of the Higher Power, to feel feelings I never allowed myself to feel before. I am more confident, but I know it is God-confidence. I am more reliant, but I know it is God-reliance; I am more independent, but I know it is God-dependency. I am free today to be exactly who I am because I know who I am.

Recognizing my dependency on God as I understand Him, continuing to work the Steps of the program and my sincere desire to give away what I have, I can truthfully say, I am a Happy Drug Addict!
THEY CALLED ME "HOPELESS"

No one in my family ever used drugs, except as prescribed by a doctor. In fact, no one in my family even drank, and I was taught that people who were drunks and addicts, or couldn't solve their own personal and emotional problems were really bad-degenerates.

In high school, I started to use drugs, because they helped me feel good about myself. I was so self-conscious and embarrassed about my looks that sometimes I just felt sub-human. As a result, I started to get high and became an over-achiever.

College was a bore, until I discovered pot. I became a "hippie", and met a girl who liked to party and we were married. After school, I started using "speed" while traveling in my work. Soon, the constant traveling and using caused my first wife to divorce me. This gave me a good excuse to go wild. I had always wanted to try all the different drugs I could get my hands on. I soon came up with a combination of narcotics, sedatives and hallucinogens that became my favorite.

I started to lose the small business I had built up and felt guilty about what I had become--a business and social failure. I had to use something every day to obliterate my feelings of self-hatred, shame and guilt. I decided to get rich and go "big time" dealing between Chicago and New York.

In order to finance the trip East, I set up my fifteen-year-old lover and had her selling acid to her schoomates. I began buying other drugs at Midwest wholesale and re-selling to students at a major eastern university. Traveling loaded and peddling dope gave real meaning to the words "fear" and "paranoia".
Then I met a woman I thought I could change for. I thought everything would be O.K. She helped me control my use and I set out to impress her. My legitimate business revived for a while, but then I began to use heavily again; things got worse. My second wife left me. My business failed.

I felt hopeless. All I could think about was drugs. I tried to stay high and began drinking heavily and daily again. I just did not want to feel anything. I didn't like me. I just wanted to escape from myself. I overdosed on Demerol and wound up in the hospital. While still in the hospital, I began to feel better and publicly declared my intention to stop using. I was going to enter the mental health out-patient clinic, solve all the problems drugs had caused and never have to use again. Of course, I continued to smoke pot and drink beer, because after all, everybody did.

My business gradually fell back together and I had money in my pocket again. That was my downfall—I could now afford that most glamorous, "non-addictive" substance—cocaine.

How wonderful was my new chemical lover. She made me feel so, so good again and again. I began to cheat, lie and steal to get the money for my new habit. I went to several doctors, feigning symptoms appropriate to prescriptions for large quantities of sleeping pills and sedative hypnotics. I used some of the prescribed drugs, but mostly sold them to get coke. Often I used too much coke, and was always in fear of a heart attack, but I could shoot some downs to knock me out. Eventually, I overdosed this way.

Again I wound up in the hospital. Once again I started to feel better after a few clean days in the hospital. I resolved to stop using again, this time I would get help from a psychiatrist. I tried. I told him how bad I was, how I felt about myself, and sometimes how good I felt being clean. I stayed away from the old crowd for a while. The psychiatrist seemed to want to help me. He suggested I take some mood-balancing pills, so I bought some and tried them.
that risk, I can now attend N.A. meetings every day of the week in my area.

I want to keep what has been given to me, so I actively share through loving service to N.A. wherever and however I am asked. The Spirit of this Fellowship is in me today. I have come to know unconditional love.
INSTITUTIONAL STORY

1 I am a junkie. I am also an inmate who has gotten clean through Narcotics Anonymous in an institution.
2 I came into the program because I was hurting and I knew I needed help. At first, I didn't really know what it felt like to be clean. I came to my first two meetings high. I listened a lot and did very little talking. After my third and fourth meetings, I began to understand the people who were sharing their troubles with dope. Funny thing, I knew where they were coming from.
3 I started smoking pot at the age of eleven. I really started before then, but it was at eleven that I started regularly. After about a year, I couldn't get as high on pot as I used to, so I started chemicals. I used THC, crystal meth and acid for a couple of years. I know now I was really hurting myself and the people around me. I got thrown out of the house at the age of fourteen. I lived off other people's parents by telling them my folks died and I didn't want to live in an orphanage. By then, I was really strung out on meth. I lived from place to place, stealing whenever I needed some dope.
4 Finally, I ran out of places to stay and schools to go to. I called my parents and conned them into letting me come back home. I was eighteen at this time. I started my fourth high school in four years, and was introduced to MDA.
5 I thought this drug was the answer to all my problems. When I fired a half-gram, all my problems would go away and the whole world was beautiful. I got strung out on this drug, but really didn't care. A couple months after I turned nineteen, I was up to doing two to three grams a day. I lived for and needed this dope. I ripped off a large amount of money
and decided to throw a party. I bought a couple of ounces of MDA and a pound of pot. With these drugs and a few friends, we headed for the lake. We got to partying real heavy and found three more friends of mine. They asked me if I had some drugs. I told them I did and they were welcome to party with us. They got high and two of them overdosed and died. Now I'm in prison doing time for their deaths. It really scared me to realize it could have been me instead of them. I needed people like N.A. to help me.

I have been in the program nearly nine months, clean and sober. I really have begun to understand and relate. I thank my Higher Power and the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous for my recovery. I haven't been on the streets yet, but I know when I get out I am really going to need the program. May God bless all my brothers and sisters in Narcotics Anonymous who have shown me the way to stay clean and sober one day at a time.
Drinking had always appealed to me. I remember my dad and his every-present bottle. Throughout childhood, I was carried off again and again by his many geographical changes. When he died as a direct result of alcohol, I became withdrawn, silent and morbid. I lived in daydreams of my father. The first opportunity to drink was afforded me at age twelve. I blacked out after one beer. Upon coming to, I promptly secured another one. Drinking and pill-taking were my source of amusement for the next two years. I became enamoured of an older man, and together we explored the realms of marijuana, hashish, hallucinogens and cocaine. I achieved an amazing sense of power when I began reaping the material benefits of drug dealing. I lived in a world of defiance; tolerable only when there were enough chemicals in my body to deceive me into seeing life on my own terms. My attention was attracted by heroin, and I toyed with the drug for a while. Second preceding my first fix, a woman said, "You'll never feel this good again." Those words have resounded in my head ever since.

Several years after my initial orientation to drugs, I received an urgent phone call from my lover. He asked me to come to his house concerning a matter of great importance. The car radio played, "Lonely, wanna die, if I ain't dead already, girl you know the reason why...". Upon entering his room, I found him serenely lying in bed, needle in arm. When we reached the hospital, he was D.O.A.

It was my turn to make a geographical change. I flew to a Middle Eastern country, where I married and had two children. During the following eight years, I became a responsible wife, mother, lover, cook, maid and farmer. I chopped wood, picked...
cotton and hand-washed diapers in a basin in extreme heat and
in snow. The children and I were subjected to physical and
emotional battering. I used alcohol to relieve my feelings
of inadequacy, rejection, loneliness and despair. I was con-
vinced that I was to live a life of martyrdom, and consciously
set out to become an alcoholic and an addict. I abused mood
altering pills and cultivated an opium habit.

One day my husband informed me that we were to leave the
Mid-East for America. I had become so passive and submissive
on the outside that it was easy to control my inner joy. I
knew that if I appeared to be overjoyed to go home, I would be
forbidden to do so. At that moment, a spark of life rekindled
itself within, and I waited.

I thought that our return to America would terminate my
lust for drugs and alcohol. For some insane reason, I thought
my husband would change his abusive ways. This was not to be.
I delved even deeper into the madness of American alcohol and
continued to consume large quantities of opium.

One morning I made a decision not to be beaten again. My
children, our backpack and I traveled many miles to an obscure
city. Here the battering ceased, but the unfathomable terror
of being found, coupled with the effects of drugs and in-
creased alcohol, drove me toward insanity and death. After
an unsuccessful suicide attempt, I was introduced to a
chemical-free program of recovery.

For the first time since childhood, I was offered un-
conditional love. This genuine caring gave me enough hope
to try life once again. I was introduced to Narcotics Anony-
mous, where I was welcomed and accepted for myself. I was
shown kindness at a point when I was bitter and filled with
self-loathing. I went to a meeting every night for months and
didn't use. The concept of "one day at a time" became mean-
ful. I began to use the power of prayer. Today, God, as I
understand Him, is in my life. Since I began consciously to
apply the Twelve Steps of the program of Narcotics Anonymous
to my life, I have experienced spiritual growth. I maintain
that through working the Steps, we may be freed from the
bondage of self. Here and now, I am overcome with immeasur-
able gratitude for N.A. and the people of the Fellowship who
loved me when I could not love myself.

Today I have that occasional inner peace that comes with
spiritual well-being. For the first time, there is a commu-
ication between myself and my children. I have friends whom
I love and respect. My life-long dream of being a student in
a field that I admire, has been realized. Today there is
laughter in my life.

"I was willing to change when the pain of not changing
became worse."

I have learned that "the way to enlightenment is to
lighten up," because as the song says, "I haven't got time
for the pain."
Even as a child I can remember feeling on the "outside." It seems as though I was always searching for something, searching and wanting to be "special" in some undefinable way. When I was a young girl I tried to be "special" by being a good girl and helping around the house and doing what my parents asked. When I was in grade school I was able to get some feelings of being "special" by being popular.

But being "good" and being popular were hard work and there was a lot of insecurity because it all depended on how other people would react to me. When I was twelve I was able to find the feeling of specialness that I was searching for. We lived near a boy's home and one of the guys there had a "still." My first taste of moonshine was not pleasant, but the feelings that went with the unpleasant taste were more than worth it. I felt good and warm and pretty and secure and special. I had found it. I began drinking about every other week and began running with people who were quite a bit older than me.

The second time that I ever drank was at a party where I only knew a couple of people. It's not real clear what happened, but somehow I wound up at this party all alone with only one other guy. He raped me that night and I remember feeling that somehow I had asked for this and that if I ever told anyone about it they would blame me. But it didn't matter cause I was already blaming myself.

After this incident I began drinking a little more often. We would go out almost every weekend and get drunk. I had begun to have blackouts. Part of the insanity of my disease, I think, is that I believed that the blackouts were normal.
and that everyone drank to blackout.
I began to feel restless and began feeling less and less special, so I began to look for other highs. I started smoking pot and doing speed. When I finally entered high school my drug usage was already out of hand. I was always in trouble at school. I felt very insecure there. That need to be special had intensified and there was a lot more competition in high school than there had been at any other point in my life. I was skipping morning classes a lot and going out to smoke pot and drink wine. I was coming to school loaded almost every day and was having a lot of problems with my peers and teachers. The people that I was running with at school were confronting me on my behavior and usage so I found a new, older, group of friends and began attending school less and less. At one point during my "career" as a student I got in a fist fight with a priest and I quit school at that time.

A few weeks later I was out getting drunk and decided it was time for "the kid" to be on her own. I talked a guy into stealing his girlfriend's car and we left for Denver that night. I had a hundred dollars in my pocket and no place to go. I tried to go into a bar, but they carded me and I was only fifteen. I walked next door to an acoustic shop where three guys were working, and asked them if the knew of a place where I could stay. They offered to put me up at their place so I left with them. Up 'til this point my experiences with drugs had been minimal. These guys were coke freaks and I was soon doing coke on a regular basis. I got a fake I.D. while I was there and I used to sell blood twice a week, for cash. I also did a lot of panhandling. It never entered my mind that I should go to work to support myself.

While in Denver I was arrested for public drunkenness and taken to jail. I tried to escape and was handcuffed behind my back, beat up and taken to Juvenile Hall. I think that's when I was forced to do some growing up. There were a lot of folks in the hall who were much more street-wise and tough
than I was. I had a smart mouth and wound up getting myself beat up a couple of times there. Finally a Mexican girl there took pity on me and taught me how to fight and defend myself. I also wound up in isolation for fighting with one of the matrons there. I did a lot of fighting and talking tough in the hall. What was really going on was that I was scared to death but I was afraid to let anyone there see this, for fear that they would take advantage of me. This soon became a pattern for me, acting tough.

After a few months they finally let me out of Juvenile Hall and flew me back home. I'd only been home for a few weeks when I started back to school, at my parents' insistence. I was enrolled in school for 90 days and only attended three days of class during this time. When I began school I also began dealing pot. It was also during this time that I fell in love. I quit school and left home again to move in with him. He was also an addict. He was strung out on narcotics and was into shooting up. He was also into robbing drug stores for a living. I had a lot of drugs available to me at this point and I was hungry to try them all. I was too scared of needles at that point to shoot up. He and I lived together for about a year and decided to get married.

About this time when he started talking about quitting drugs, this was really threatening to me, so I did my best to discourage him. I was getting pretty burnt out at this point. I could do a lot of drugs and they would affect me little, so I began drinking even more.

One night after I had just finished a pint he decided to quit drugs for good. He took an overdose. By the time the ambulance got there he was already dead and I was taken to jail. In jail I had some time to do some thinking. I decided that I would never do drugs again. I was feeling scared and guilty. I felt that it was my fault that he was dead. I was laying guilt trips on myself like, "If you hadn't been so drunk maybe you could have helped him," and, "If I'd only quit drugs with him when he wanted to." My resolution
lasted for three days. His brother came to pick me up for
the funeral, and we were both really wasted by the time we
got there. I was so drunk that later, when I went up to put
flowers on the grave, I couldn't remember where they had
buried him. After that I made another resolution to myself.
That I would never experience another straight day.

I took a job as a bartender and was going to a trade
school in the evenings. I was also selling pot and speed.
Around this time I had invested quite a lot of money in getting
some pot from Arizona, but the pot connection got busted and
my friends wound up bringing back heroin. Well, I had to try
it to sell it, I reasoned. I watched a couple of other people
shoot up before I did. I was really scared but didn't want
anyone to know. The guy that hit up before me convinced me
that heroin was the escape I was looking for. He booted it
up, broke out in a cold sweat, stood up, wet his pants, and
passed out on the floor. I thought, "This is for me".

It didn't take me long to develop a pretty expensive habit,
but it did take me a long time to realize it. We would make
a run to Arizona about every three weeks and bring back more
heroin.

Again, I began having problems in school. I was having
to shoot up before I even got out of bed in the morning and
again after I got to school. My school counselor knew some-
thing was wrong but I wasn't admitting to anything. A couple
of girls that I ran with at school became concerned about me
after they walked in the bathroom at school one morning and
cought me fixing. They were threatening to turn me in "for
my own good" but I talked them out of it. A few days later
I went to school all beat up. I had gone to a party the night
before and had gotten beat up and raped by some guys there.
Needless to say my self-worth was pretty low at this point.
My school counselor requested that I see a doctor of their
choosing before I could attend any more classes so I went.
I was really scared and something didn't seem quite right to
me. When I got to the doctor's office, he asked me to roll
up my sleeves (it was the middle of summer and I was into wearing long sleeve shirts then). He took one look at the holes in my arm and he asked me to hold out my hand. I did and he slapped it saying, "You've been a bad girl." He then asked my school counselor to come in and told my counselor that I was an addict and that I needed to go into treatment.

A few days later I went into treatment to get the pressure off. I truly believed that they were going to teach me how to use drugs socially. I should have stopped to think that I had never heard of a social shooter before. I stayed in treatment for a total of eleven days and decided that this was definitely not what I needed. I left that night. By that time I had decided that I would never allow myself to go through heroin withdrawal again so I decided to switch my drugs of choice to other narcotics. Obviously, my thinking was somewhat impaired at this point.

I soon had built my tolerance level back up to what it had been before treatment. Only this time, I was shooting Demerol, dilaudid and morphine instead of heroin. I also began overdosing a lot during this time, and occasionally thinking about suicide. For a long time I had wondered what the purpose of my former lover's death had been, and it was during this time that I found out. I truly believed that had I not experienced the pain and guilt of his suicide I would have taken my own life.

Instead of becoming suicidal, I became homicidal. Whenever I shot narcotics, I would become increasingly more mean and violent. A lot of the anger was about not being able to achieve the escape and peace that I used to find in drugs. I was beginning to feel trapped but did not know where to turn. Sometimes I thought I was going insane. Then I would remember some of the things I had heard during my brief stint in treatment and I would question my usage. These thoughts were fleeting; I always thought of myself as strong and tough. Being dependent meant weakness so I would not allow those thoughts to continue for long.
In the year that followed treatment, I overdosed four times and wrecked my car an equal number of times. Almost a year after leaving treatment, I went back in. This time I was able to grasp the first step, though not totally. After I got out of treatment, I was sent to a halfway house where I stayed clean and dry for about a month and a half. My behavior did not change though, and I was still unhappy. I continued to frequent bars and run with people who were using. One night, in a bar, I met another heroin addict and began using again. The difference this time was that every time I shot up I knew I was an addict who was choosing to do nothing about my addiction. My feeling of self-worth went even lower. My behavior became even more bizarre. My life became more hopeless. After about six months of using I decided to try N.A. again. I began going to meetings, but I still continued my old behavior. Something was wrong and I knew it, but I didn't know what it was or how to change it. During the following year my longest period of sobriety was three months.

I began bartending again. Thinking I could stay sober as I had not yet admitted my alcohol addiction, I was able to stay clean for two months while bartending, but finally I became so miserable I began drinking again. This time I was determined not to begin shooting drugs. That lasted about two weeks and I was back to shooting again. This time was different than my other relapses.

My old using friends knew that I had been clean and were reluctant to help me to continue my addiction, so it became increasingly harder for me to copy my drugs of choice. I began feeling afraid. People in the program were no longer trusting me because I had told them after my other relapses that this was the last one. I had used the people in N.A. and had taken them for granted. I always knew that they would be there for me when I came back and I used them for shoulders to cry on. Now I was afraid that they would no longer accept me. A few of the members had told me that they
could only maintain their cleanness by hanging around with "winners". I was a loser and they could no longer jeopardize their clean time for me if I was not willing to work the pro-
gram. My using friends were telling me that my behavior was too bizarre and that I should get straight again. I was look-
ing ahead at my entire life and saying that there was no way I could stay sober for forty years so why start only to fail again.

One night I found myself again searching for narcotics. I was unable to get any and wound up with a bottle of valium in a rented motel room with just me and my syringe. I was sitting there shooting valium crying and looking back at the insanity and hopelessness of my life. For the last two months I had been living in a condemned house with a guy who was also dependent and into bizarre behavior. I felt as though it was never going to get better and it was going to continue to get worse. My feelings of self-worth were at an all time low.

I called an N.A. member and began going back to meetings.

At first I was afraid of rejection. I had used the people in the Program so often that I was afraid they would not give me another chance to use them again. But once again they accepted me back with open arms. They took me to meetings every day for ninety days and sat up and talked with me until all hours of the morning. I was finally able to tell someone of my loneliness, fears, insecurities, and self-hate. No one laughed or told me I shouldn't feel that way, as I had feared they would. No one looked at me strangely or told me I was nuts. They shared that they had felt the same feelings and shared what had helped them to feel better.

They shared their hearts, souls, homes, time, and love with me—all unconditionally. They loved me so much that I began to believe that there must be something there that was worthwhile. I had not believed that for many years, but I was finally able to believe it again.

Looking back, I am able to see that the key to my clean time has been taking risks and allowing people to get to know
me. In my previous experiences with the Program, I had only
gone to meetings and nothing more. I did not share; I did
not develop any kind of spiritual program; I changed none of
my old behavior. Without the willingness to do these things
it was impossible for me to have a happy clean time. I have
now been into recovery for more than three years. I have
finally found that specialness for which I searched so long.
The specialness does not come from other people or outside
things; it is in me. I am special. The program and the
Fellowship have helped me to find this.
You have given me life, hope and a sense of belonging.
You have given me a chance to be somebody and to grow spiritually.
You have given me hope. I am grateful.
I FOUND THE ONLY N.A. MEETING IN THE WORLD

Getting to the subject of people, places and things, my story is not much different from the executive--just the opposite end of the stick.

I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks; poor, deprived, during the Depression, from a broken home. The words of love were never spoken in my household. There were a lot of kids at my house.

Most of the things I remember about my life are in retrospect. While they were happening, I didn't know anything about it. I just remember going through life feeling different, feeling deprived. I never felt quite comfortable whenever I was with whatever I had at any given time. I grew up in a fantasy world. Things on the other side of the fence always looked better. My grass was never green enough. My head was always out to lunch. I learned all the short cuts in order to make it through school.

I always had a dream of leaving home. It was not the place to be. My great fantasy was that there was going to be good out there somewhere.

I started using drugs fairly late in life. I say late in comparison with what they are doing today.

My mother ruled her house with a big stick. That was her method. The constant way I gained attention was getting my ass whipped on a daily basis. I found another way of getting attention was to get sick. When I "got sick," I got the things I felt were necessary: love and attention.

I blamed my mother because she didn't make a better choice in choosing the people to take care of me. I carried that long after I left home.

I went into the military because that was a place to run
to. I stayed in the military a long time because they offered me the same opportunities I had at home: three hots and a cot and no responsibility. I can say I was a responsible person because I had rank and did this or that, but it was only because they gave me advance directions of what to do and when to do it and how much.

This was one of my first bouts as far as drugs were concerned. My first drug, at the time, was alcohol. I found there were two personalities when on alcohol, and later when on narcotics. There was a personality change.

I found out later, however, that this personality change went back even further. I was two people before I ever started using. I had learned how to steal early; I had learned how to lie early; I had learned how to cheat early. I used these processes "successfully." I was addicted to stealing long before I was addicted to drugs, because it made me feel good. If I had some of your "goodies" to spread around, I felt good. I had a thing about stealing. I couldn't go into a place unless I took something.

I started using drugs late in life, but still fairly early. I say "late in life," because when you get to be eighteen years old today, they figure you've already done all these things.

Talk about being naive, I knew nothing about drugs. Drugs were not something that was talked about in the 1930's, and 40's. It is not that drugs have changed, they just didn't talk about them. They didn't talk about sex or drugs or religion, at least as far as discussing them. It just wasn't one of those things that was talked about.

I first experienced my drug of choice, heroin, in the Far East. I heard about opium and tried that. I found you could cook up heroin and put it in a spike. There was a great variety of drugs in other countries that you could get just by walking into a drug store and asking for them. So I stayed out of the country nine years. That way, I wasn't
confronted with the attitudes here in the United States.

I knew nothing about the progression of my disease. I knew nothing about addiction. I ran around in the "ignorance of addiction" for a lot of years--not knowing. Just not knowing. Nobody explained to me that when you use drugs over a year's time, you can get hooked. Nobody told me about withdrawal from drugs. The only thing anyone told me was don't get sick, and the way you do that is keep drugs.

One of the problems I found being in the military was that they give you orders and ship you, and they don't take the connection with you. You get sick. You try to back that up the next time by trying to get a big enough supply, and your month's supply lasts a week, or two or three days.

I knew nothing about progression or the disease nor the consequences of my actions. The progression of my disease caught up with me as far as the military was concerned when I started transporting and smuggling. Also, when you use drugs to the extent that you can't be there for duty, they frown on it. The next best thing they do is lock you up and take you away. Then the military did a cruel thing; they put me out on the street.

I was ill-equipped to take care of me. I had gone from mama to another mother. They had taken care of me, and then I found myself on the street with no equipment to be taking care of me. I knew nothing about paying rent, working, being responsible. So I had to give that responsibility to whomever I could give it to. I rant through a lot of "mothers." I had to learn about how to hustle on the street. You have to realize that military has a lot of equipment they can sell, and I used to sell it, because I like to steal. You see, I have that habit of taking things that aren't nailed down. I had to learn other processes like running through stores swinging steaks and cigarettes under my arm, jumping from second story windows, and running from policemen.

I think there is a certain excitement that goes along with drug addiction. It was a lot like childhood games of "cops
and robbers." I found out they have more policemen than drug
addicts, it seems. They were standing around watching you.
I could never understand how they could go into a crowd of
people and pick me out, and say, "Let's get in the car; let's
go." Nine times out of ten they had me dirty.
During the process of me finding mothers, one mother
found me. I thought I should hem this one up and get papers
on her. Then she couldn't run away.
I chose correctly in that you choose someone who's not
using. I knew about the ones that are using. They were never
there when I got locked up. They never had bail money. They
could never visit, because they were too busy taking care of
their habits.
So, I found one of those unsuspecting ones. She was in
school, working, had a place to stay. She had one shortcoming.
She didn't know that he needed somebody to take care of. I
was a prime candidate. I wanted to be taken care of. She
was going to help me get my shit together, and I always
wanted somebody to help me get my shit together. She proposed
to me in jail, and I said, "Yes, I do. Just go down and pay
the bail." And for the next three years, I ran her crazy
trying to keep up with me. Then she went out and found the
only Narcotics Anonymous meeting in the world. How she did
that, I don't know. At that time, there was one meeting in
the world, and she went out and found it, and I sent her off
to the meeting. I had her go check it out.
You have to realize that in those days, drug addicts were
very unpopular. To just intimate that two drug addicts were
going to congregate anywhere would constitute a police stake
out. That's the way they treated drug addicts at that time.
There was very little understanding about addiction. I was
very leery about anything to do with helping drug addicts.
I knew what they did with drug addicts; they locked them up.
Period. There were no programs to go to, except Ft. Worth
and Lexington.
I always had a sad story to justify my using. One day after one of those six-month trips to go get a loaf of bread at the corner grocery, I came home and my bags were sitting by the door. She had told me fifty times or a thousand times, "You got to go." This time was different. There was something in her voice this time.

So I took my bags and went to the only place there was to go: the streets. I had become accustomed to living in the streets. I knew how to live in the back of old cars, old laundry rooms, any old empty building, your house, my house. Of course, I never had "my house." I couldn't pay rent. I never knew how to pay rent. If I had $3.00 in my pocket, $3.00 was going for drugs, before a place to stay. It was that simple. I think I paid rent one time while I was using drugs and living on the streets, and that was just to move in. It was called "catch me if you can" from then on. It usually didn't make any difference, because I was a ward of the state much of the time anyway. I just ran out there fast in the streets until they locked me up. Then I had a place to stay. I could rest up and get my health back together in order to come back out and do it again.

I came to Narcotics Anonymous nearly twenty-one years ago. But I didn't come for me. I came just to keep her mouth shut. I went to meetings loaded. They talked all that funny stuff out of them books like "rarely have we seen a person fail," and "this is how it works," and I just couldn't understand how that applied to my problem of addiction.

I didn't have a driver's license. I was unemployable. I had no place to stay. I was the wrong color. I had no money. I didn't have a car. I didn't have an old lady, or I needed a new one. I took all these problems and they would tell me, "Keep coming back." And they said, "Work the steps." I used to read the steps and thought that was working them. I found out years later that I even read the steps and didn't even know what I read. I did not understand what I read.
They had told me in many places that I was an addict. I had been labeled: Addict! From the military to the jails right on down the line, I had been labeled. I accepted that, but I didn't understand. I had to go out and do some experimenting before I got back to the program.

One of the things I had to learn to do was understand what the program was all about. I had to be made willing to find out what the program was about. Only after standing at the Gates of Death did I want to understand. I think Death is Counsel Permanent. I had OD'ed a number of times, but that was kind of like the place where I always wanted to be. It was just before going over the brink and everything seemingly O.K. Coming out of it, I could say, "Wow, give me some more." That's insanity.

The final case for me was that I was about to be shut off of a fence, and not by my own doing. That I didn't like. Playing cops and robbers is dangerous "out there." They got the gunds, and I don't like being used for target practice. There were more and more cases of policemen sticking guns in my mouth and upside my head and telling me to lay up side a wall.

My last day of use of narcotics, drugs of any type, I had just fixed and two policemen got me spread-eagled on a chain link fence I was trying to get over. I became immediately sober, clean. Everything became very clear, and I didn't want to die that way. Something clicked on in my head; it doesn't have to be this way.

After that last "rest and recuperation," I found out I could work these steps and that the sum total of my life has changed as a direct result. I got involved in working the steps, trying to understand what they were talking about, to really understand what they were talking about. I found there is a certain amount of action that goes with every step. I had to get into action about how the steps applied to ME. I always thought the steps applied to you, not me.
When it got down to talking about God and spirituality, I had shit-canned that a long time before. I put that in church, and I didn't have anything to do with churching. I found out that God and spirituality have nothing to do with church.

I had to learn to get involved. It has been one hell of an adventure. My life has changed to such an extent that it is almost unbelievable that I was ever there. However, I know from where I came. I have constant reminders. I need that constant reminder of newcomers and talking with others.

This program has become a part of me. It has become a part of life and living for me. I understand more clearly the things that are happening in my life today. I no longer fight the process.

I come to meetings of Narcotics Anonymous in order to take care of the responsibilities that have been given to me. N.A. gives me the tools to take care of the responsibilities.

Today, I crave, I am addicted to the love and caring and sharing that goes on in N.A. I look forward to more of these things in my life.

My problem is addiction; it has nothing to do with drugs. It has something to do with that within, that compulsion and that obsession within. I now have the tools to do something about it, the Twelve Steps of Recovery.
SLOW LEARNER

I'm the kind of person that never learns. If I touch a stove and it burns me, I will go back and touch it later to see if it is still hot. If someone touches the stove first, then tells me it is hot, I don't take their word for it; I got to check it out for myself. That's the story of my life. I don't learn from my mistakes, nor from the mistakes of others.

I was reared a military brat. My father was an officer in the Marine Corps and my family would travel with him. My mother died when I was young and I was taken care of by housekeepers until after my father left the service. My father drank heavily all of my life, but after he left the service, he went downhill. At the age of eight, he beat me so badly that he broke my nose and left arm and cracked two ribs. He would get drunk, come home and take everything out on me. Both of my brothers took up for me, but they soon had enough of him, and left home. When I was twelve, my father shot me and I figured it was also time for me to cut a trail.

I spent that summer living in the woods near a friend's house. I found a way to pass the time by huffing lighter fluid. I was later turned on to reefers by a girl I had a crush on. I didn't want to smoke it ("That's what those 'drug addicts' use"), but love conquers all and I was soon introduced to the world of drugs. By the end of that year, I had done acid, barbs, coke and speed. But my big thrill came two years later when a buddy of mine and I ripped off a wholesale drug warehouse and I met my true love, morphine.

With all the dope we had, I thought I would try my hand at selling some. I soon got busted and had to serve some time, but, like I said, I don't learn from my mistakes. When I got
out, we hit the same warehouse, some doctors' offices and a drug store.

I got a girl pregnant and we were married, but she dumped me when she found out what I was really like. That night, I got really messed up and had my first blackout. I did some crazy things that night and was committed by the court for psychiatric evaluation. I was found sane and released to my brother's custody and charges were dropped.

I made it through most of the year with my "friend," morphine, for I had found out early that I was hooked. My warehouse stash was running low, and I didn't know where to cop any of my particular drug. I went back to my old hometown to see my buddy and talk him into hitting the same warehouse. He copped me some smack to hold me over until we did the job.

The day we were to do the job, I was waiting to cop and while cleaning my buddy's gun, shot myself. A few minutes later, I was paralyzed and being carried out on a stretcher. Six months later I was out of the hospital, off junk and had a prescription in my pocket for some really powerful downers. I was soon out selling again.

I found some backers to front me money, and I did well dealing. I prayed that I would make it big. Pretty soon, I looked around and all of my friends were dying! I couldn't figure out why the police were pulling me over, hassling me and holding me for questioning, or why I was always getting beat up or shot at. My backers decided that it was time for me to lie low. All I did for six months was have parties and live on booze and reds. I was finally booked on some charges, and being in a wheelchair, they didn't know what to do with me. They finally decided to drop charges on the condition that I leave the state. I put myself in a psychiatric hospital for drugs, and after that, a drug treatment center, where I attended my first N.A. meeting.

By that time, I was sure that drugs were causing my problems and I was ready to quit. When I went to N.A., I
knew that I was in the right place. The people there cared and understood. It blew my mind! I had met good people on the street, and I found out that the good people either died or cleaned up. I had found the ones that were still alive. I have it rough at times. I know what it is to crave my drugs. With the help of my sponsor and friends, I am learning to handle my emotions, and to live one day at a time. I have found the friends and happiness for which I had been searching seven years. Now I am back in college, and my life is falling back into place. It's still hard at times, but with the help of my Higher Power and N.A., I am clean today. My life is now centered in N.A., but, hell, anyone who subscribed to a medical journal to keep up with the new drugs has to do something to fill the void.

At age of twenty-four, I have been shot five times, stabbed twice and spent a year and a half in institutions. I am a slow learner, but I have learned that N.A. has saved my life.
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IN MELBOURNE

When I got to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1974 I knew instinctively that staying sober meant staying off all mood changing drugs as well. As A.A. was for booze I didn't talk about my drug taking very much. I only occasionally mentioned my midnight drives to the paddy fields outside Saigon when I was stoned or drunk, and the paranoia I felt the last time I smoked hashish in Algeciras, Spain. My taking of Stelazine, a major tranquilizer, I put out of my mind altogether. When I got involved in A.A. I came across the name of Hazelden, and wrote to them for their catalogue. While I was reading it, I found there was a fellowship called Narcotics Anonymous, and also one called Families Anonymous. So among a pile of other stuff I ordered the White Book "Narcotics Anonymous" and "A Guide For the Family of the Drug User".

In 1975 and early 1976 I was getting more and more tired, and consequently more depressed and irritable. The doctors thought my tiredness was caused by depression; I thought my depression was caused by my tiredness. Eventually, after coughing up blood for six months it was discovered I had tuberculosis, so into hospital I went. Shortly after I went into hospital my wife left me for good. So I had nothing to do but concentrate on getting well. During the latter period of my stay in the hospital, I decided to become a counselor for alcoholics and drug addicts. I then contacted a foundation on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, and was taken on for training. It was during this time that I found out just how little there was in Melbourne for the addict who wanted to get clean and stay clean. There were only methadone programs for heroin users, and very little for anyone else. Some
months before, I had given the White Book to a friend of mine in A.A. whom I knew to be interested in getting N.A. going in Melbourne. Tom was an addict as well as an alcoholic. I contacted Tom again and we discussed the possibility of starting Narcotics Anonymous. By this time I had some literature from W.S.O. and a contact in Sydney. I had been given the address in Melbourne of two ex-Sydney members of N.A. Tom and I decided that if they would support an N.A. Group, the we would start one.

One Sunday afternoon Tom and I went to see Kate and Bill. They told us about Narcotics Anonymous in Sydney, and how the N.A. meetings differed from A.A. meetings. In N.A., we were told, the members concentrated on how they felt, not what they did, and recovery was talked about much more than in A.A. They said they would support the meeting.

In the meantime plans had been going ahead to start Families Anonymous in Melbourne. The Director of Counseling at the Center had arranged a meeting room for Families Anonymous at a Community Health Center. Tom went ahead and booked a meeting room there on Saturday nights for Narcotics Anonymous. As far as I know the first meeting took place in August 1976, with seven members present.

From the start the theme of the meetings was recovery. We all knew how to use drugs and we all knew the effect they had on us. The primary thing we were all interested in was how to stay clean, how to cope with life without the use of drugs, how to handle unpleasant feelings and emotions, in other words, how to get better.

At these meetings I learned that I was an addict, and that my addictions started as a child, long before I ever picked up a drink or a drug. As a child I became addicted to fantasy, because fantasy was much more preferable than reality. When I got older I basically didn't change, I just used alcohol and drugs to shield me from reality.

I broke through many emotional barriers in N.A., and learned a lot about myself by identifying with other addicts who were also.
I'D TRY ANYTHING ONCE

For almost eleven years I was hopelessly addicted to drugs. I felt that I couldn't live with or without them. My whole existence during that time was centered around drugs, not realizing that I was actually committing slow, agonizing suicide. I was dying out there in the streets and I had lost all control of my own life. I have gone through hell to get where I am today, but I'm happily recovering and I am clean and sober today. I tried it my way for so long, which never worked, but I am thankful to my Higher Power for letting this crazy junkie live long enough to make it to the N.A. program and find a loving, understanding Fellowship of other recovering addicts.

I guess I was doomed to be hopelessly addicted way back in 1969 at the ripe old age of thirteen when my family first moved to Atlanta. This is a town where you can find it all and do it all. I was a popular person during my teenage years, and I had lots of different types and kinds of friends, but I always chose to steer more toward the wild crowd. I loved thrills and excitement. I grew up with three brothers and a father who loved to race cars and build and ride motorcycles, so to me, the name of the game was thrills, being daring and bold and trying the things that made me feel good. I'd try anything once and if it felt good, I was hooked. I did it again and again, so it was with my drugs.

I experimented with all kinds of chemicals during high school. I learned which ones I liked the best and which ones just weren't for me. It was a lot of fun then, but the drugs really hadn't gotten out of control yet. I went through the turbulent seventies, the rebellions, the drug
and hippie cults. It was alluring and exciting and it was just plain cool to be doing all those things. It was a major part of our lives and a very major part of mine. I did drugs at school, at concerts, at home and every chance I could.

My next big move in life was to marry a rock musician. This was seventh heaven to me. I was constantly exposed to drugs when we traveled on the road. We did drugs to stay up late at night. We partied and swapped drugs with other musicians, then we would do drugs to go to sleep. You name it; we did it just to survive in that type of life.

After five years of marriage, my husband and I were living like strangers and we divorced. As the initial shock hit me, I became miserable and depressed. My marriage had failed and I felt like a total failure. I wanted somebody; I needed somebody, some type of secure relationship, love and companionship. I sought companionship and comfort with my drugs. I stayed in a zombie-like state for quite a while drifting from sick relationship to sick relationship. This was also the point in my life where my "Lady Jane" symptoms started happening: the ability to attract trouble and the ability to attract sickies. I still continued to use heavily as the way to escape my problems, but in the back of my mind I knew the main reason for my problems was drugs. The drugs gave me such a feeling of power and of being invincible. I developed lots of acquaintances through my jobs and social life the next few years. We all had one thing in common--drugs. I had several good jobs during this time, two with the government and one with an insurance company. It's amazing how white collar, jock executives don't look like drug addicts, but I could sure pick them out of a crowd every time and I sought their companionship and sickness.

By this time everyone around me could see that I was having some kind of problem, but I don't really think they put two and two together. I became a good liar and manipulator. I was one of the best con artists. I did seek some
counseling and therapy at this time in my life, but I gave up after a while. Professionals had never been down the same road as me and none related to my particular problem. It wasn't just the drugs that were my problem; it was also my distorted personality and all my ways of life that had developed over the years.

I tried many times to stop using and associating with the same old crowd, but I was weak and I knew it would take a miracle to get me on the right track. So, until that miracle came along, I continued to use hard and heavy.

I had various live-in relationships with men and knew all the tricks of the trade. Their personalities were just as sick and warped as mine, but somehow we met each other's needs--the getting and using of our drugs. I always picked the ones that I could manipulate easily to get what I wanted. My needs were going to be met, regardless of the price. I was using the needle pretty heavy at this time and it was obvious that my meagre salary could not support the tremendous habit I had. I started dealing with armed robbers and people with connections in organized crime. This is where the big money and the big dope was. I became paranoid because of the large amounts of illegal drugs I had and because of the large amounts of drugs I was using. Drugs seemed good to me at one time, but they were getting way out of control. I stayed loaded twenty-four hours a day. It's like the N.A. program states, "We lived to use and used to live."

I was strung out. I've always been violent to some degree, and during those years of heavy using, my violence raged out of control. I carried guns, knives and other weapons and I know that I would have dilled anyone who tried to take my dope. Whenever my "big time" associates were dry and there was no dope available for a while, I learned to take care of my habit the way a lot of girls learned; I sold my body. I learned quickly that you could make good money selling your body, but the money never lasted when it all
had to go into your arms. I started staying out of work a lot now; I was too loaded to make it in half the time. When I did make it in, I had to take my little dope kit in with me and I'd spend much of the day locked away in the bathroom getting off. Eventually, I lost my job. Slowly but surely, I was dying and I was beginning to get a taste of what it's like to be sick and tired.

It was then that I decided to try and do something about my problem. I had legal problems out the ears, an uncontrollable addiction, a family that avoided me like the plague and a lot of mixed-up, confused feelings. I had thought many times of giving up this way of life and trying to meet new people and maybe trying to get myself into a drug program. My ideas were in the right direction, but I never followed them through. I was seriously sorting my life out or trying to at this time, when an old lover and using buddy popped up on my doorstep out of the clear blue.

I knew right then where we were headed and I had a feeling we weren't going to make it, alive, through this one, this time. We went after what we wanted, and soon the drugs were plentiful and we were back on that same twisted path to hell. Things got way out of hand; the dope started running low; this time I felt more desperate than I ever had before. This, my friends, is where the party ended. We were arrested. The next few days in jail were living hell. I was sick and hurting, mentally and physically. I wanted to die!

My family and attorney urged me to seek help with my problem before it was too late. What did they mean, "too late?" Hell, look at the mess my life was in. There was no hope for me now. I agreed half-heartedly to seek help at a drug clinic and undergo drug therapy. What more did I have to lose? At first, I wasn't sincere about giving up drugs or even putting any effort into the drug program. I didn't even know how to begin living without drugs. I knew I couldn't stop through my own power. It was while I was
attending this drug therapy clinic that N.A. was mentioned to me quite often.

I knew what the N.A. program was. I had heard about it and had gone to a few meetings, but I had never fully taken the time to understand the program. I thought it was a big joke. But, I went to an N.A. meeting that night with some other people from my drug clinic and saw all kinds of people there with the same problem as me. They were drug addicts. I don't remember too much about the first meeting, my mind was still jumbled and the drugs were still not all out of my system. But certain things that were said at that meeting stuck with me and impressed me. There were people there with the same, or worse, problems, yet they were clean. They had learned to live their lives without drugs. I saw then that there had to be hope for me. I couldn't love myself at that time, but everyone in the program loved me for what I was. I kept going to meetings and I started meeting lots of understanding and wonderful people—people that I felt comfortable around and I knew they could relate to my problems. I really had a willingness in my heart, at this time, to try and I wanted to do it for me instead of my family.

I have come a long way and I've gone through hell to get here, but I know recovery is possible and I have seen some good things happen to me since I've been in the N.A. program. I've become a trusted servant of a local N.A. group, which I love. I'm getting in touch with my Higher Power, as I understand Him, and He is working miracles in my life today that I never thought would be possible. I am beginning to love myself and I have finally found freedom for the bondage of drugs and I have found a new way of life, clean and sober, one day at a time. I have stopped using and started to live. What a great feeling! The Narcotics Anonymous program works and I love you all.
I started using drugs at about age fifteen. I was basically a very shy person and I had trouble getting along in social situations, like talking to girls. I never felt like I fit in anywhere. I found that by taking a few drinks, I could feel like I was in a whole new world. I could relate to people better and I could be the life of the party. I started drinking at parties and on weekends with friends. I did not think I was using alcohol as a drug. My drinking got worse when I got into high school. I got in trouble several times with the law. I would come home drunk and my parents would scold me and ask why I was doing the things I was doing. I really couldn't tell them, and I would feel really bad. They tried to help, but nothing they did could stop me once I started drinking. Drinking caused me a whole lot of trouble going through high school; I spent four years in a three-year high school because of drinking.

I didn't use any other drug until I was twenty, when I went away to school. I started taking speed. It was "in" with the crowd I hung around with. During that time, I gradually started using more and more speed and continued drinking at the same time.

I came back home and started working in a hospital and began smoking grass. Grass wasn't "in" in those days and only "dope fiends" smoked grass. I felt the same way too. At that time, "using drugs" was something I would never have done, even though I drank like a fish.

But I was into being rebellious, and being weird, and I was hanging around with musicians and artsy-craftsyt types and we got to smoking a little pot. I thought that was great. I
just thought it was cool. I liked the idea of feeling different from other people. The drug experience seemed real neat. I also said at that time that I would never use any hard drugs; I would never use anything other than pot. That didn't prove to be the case, because about a year after I started using pot, I had to use pills. People came around with other drugs and I tried them. I liked the way they made me feel. They made me feel different from the way I was and if I wanted to feel "up" I could take speed, and if I wanted to feel "down," I could take tranquilizers.

Getting drugs was never a problem. There were always people with drugs around. Drinking and drugging got to be a crazy thing with me—a real nutty kind of lifestyle. I was sponging off my parents, living at their house, because I was spending most of my money on booze and drugs and having a good time. My moods became real intense; I'd stay in my room all the time, unless I was partying, boozing or doping. I became intolerable for them to be around. They didn't know what kind of person I would be from one minute to the next. I had been in jail previously, for being drunk and doing all kinds of crazy and bizarre things—nothing major, never any felonies; but I was always being hauled in for disorderly conduct and public drunkenness. My father was a policeman and it really made him look bad. It didn't seem to matter that I hurt everyone around me when I was loaded. What I said to them didn't mean much to me as long as I was loaded.

I didn't have to face anything—chemicals would help me face any situation. It seemed like with drugs and alcohol, I didn't want to act "normally"; I wanted to stay wasted. I'd been in trouble several times. I had been in car accidents. I had been in jail on several occasions, but it didn't seem to matter to me. None of these things stopped me from getting high or drinking. I'd clean up for awhile, but I'd start back again and it just got worse faster.

When I was twenty-two, I ended up in a state hospital for depression. During that time, I started seeing psychia-
trists because I thought I was crazy and being crazy sounded pretty attractive to me. I didn't have to face my drug use; I didn't have to face my alcohol use. The psychiatrist sug-
ggested that I might have problems with drugs and alcohol, but I side-stepped the issue. I spent a year in the hospital.
At the hospital, they kept saying, "Maybe one day, when you get your inner psychic problems straightened out, you'll be able to use alcohol successfully." They never said anything about drugs, and during that whole time, I was on sleeping
medication every night. I found I could take my chloral hy-
drate at bed time and sit in the men's lounge and enjoy the high--cop a buzz. Then I could go back for seconds. It got to be a real habit with me in the hospital. Every night I got loaded. I began to look forward to bed time.

After I got out of the hospital, everything went fairly smooth for three or four months. Then I got a roommate that was in to being "hip" and cool, and so was I, really. I never had a program; I didn't look for a program that would help me stop drinking or doping. I didn't want to; I did not have the desire to never do it again. I started smoking pot again and eventually got into other drugs. I remember the first time I used LSD; I freaked out. Some "real good friends" gave me electric kool-aid at a party and I didn't know it was electric. I was crazy for a week. I was psychotic and had to go get tranquilizers to come down. But that didn't keep me from doing LSD again. I really got into psychedelics.

I had a series of jobs after the hospital and later got married. My wife used drugs and alcohol. One New Year's Even, I started drinking again. I thought, "Well, maybe I can handle it now." My drinking got to the point the marriage broke up. During that time, I was using drugs too. Really, I'm a poly-
addict, I guess. It seems like whatever chemical, once I use it, I abuse it. That's the way it went for me, regardless of the hell I went through with the stuff; I just kept using it.

I felt really good about the divorce, like I was a free person again. I had a good job teaching at a technological
institute, but I began to jeopardize my position by selling dope on the job. A lot of people working at the institute were "heads" and there was a lot of dealing going on at that time.

I moved in with two or three other people and we made some money on the side selling some speed and other drugs. We had a lot of parties at our house. It got to the point where my job just didn't matter to me a whole lot. My performance began to go down a whole lot. I finally lost the job after an incident that occurred when I came to work after partying until seven in the morning.

I was living with these people. Our drugging got to the point that no one wanted to be around us. It seemed like everybody was doing a lot of drugs. Drugs I thought I would never do in my life started ending up in the house. People were bringing over all different kinds of drugs.

One of my favorite drugs was MDA. I got introduced to heroin. I didn't do a whole lot of heroin. I chipped a few times and liked it so well I figured I'd better not do any more. But I got just as bad with other drugs. I got to the point that all I was living for was to use; all I wanted to do was use.

I lost my job and moved out of a nice apartment into a really cheap, cockroach-infested apartment. I started driving a taxi, and that was convenient. Most of the people who worked for the cab company drank and a lot of them did drugs, and they didn't care that I didn't show up for work. That was okay. I didn't have to work all the time if I didn't want to. It gave me a lot of time to do the things I wanted to do. I got to the point where I was drining or using drugs all the time.

I moved in with a "friend;" he was dealing heavy. We started giving out MDA and other junk like pounds of marijuana and hash. We were dealing to all kinds of people. There were people coming to the house that I didn't even know. On top of that, we were dealing to high school kids.
and I was thirty years old. I never thought I would sell drugs
to kids, but I did. It was easy for me to rationalize as
strung out as I was. I was into MDA so heavy that I was using
a gram in the morning, just to get the ball rolling. It got
to the point that although I was dealing, I owed my dope man
money because I was using up all the profits and I wasn't
working much. Things I said would never happen, did; like
people were bringing over stolen stereos.

Something happened and I got fed up with it all. I
cleaned up my act and got a straight job in a liquor store.
Working in a liquor store wasn't very good for me, but it
was something. I moved out of that dumpy apartment and got
my shit together pretty good for a while. But, again, I
didn't have any people who really cared about me and I didn't
have a program to go to. I had gone to A.A. once and didn't
feel like I fit there, when I really did. I went back to
school. I started taking some classes in drug and alcohol
abuse and ended up at an N.A. meeting for the first time.
That's where I met the people in my area who were just start-
ing N.A. I saw something in these people, but I wasn't
ready yet. I went to a couple of meetings and then stopped.
I started using again and started drinking again; I never
really went straight.

The next two or three years rolled by; I was out of
school again, working in a liquor store and drinking all the
time. I was stealing my employer blind. I was marginally
functional. I was trading booze out of the store for dope
and selling dope out of the store. The owner trusted me
implicity when he hired me. He gave me the key to his store.
One of the nicest people I have ever had the experience of
working for in my life...yet I stole from him simply because
I needed the booze and I needed the dope.

I never ended up in the penitentiary, but I certainly
qualified to be there and it's just by the grace of God that
I never did end up there. I got to the point where I was
using and drinking every day. I had to use Quaaludes and
I had to use tranquilizers to feel good. Drinking and drugging because something I had to do just to feel alright.

The parties were gone. The people that I used to associate with were pretty neat people. They had their lives together and just used and drank a little bit socially. They didn't want to toak to me anymore. Nobody wanted to say anything to me, to see me any more. The only time anyone wanted to see me was to buy something or to get something from me, and it got to the point where I didn't want to see anyone either, unless they could do something for me. I didn't care about myself or anyone else.

One day, following a week bender on booze and downers, I think I reached that moment of sanity that people in the Fellowship talk about. I was living in a sleazy dive in an area of town where I had never thought of hanging out in my earlier days. I really saw myself and knew I was an addict. I was an addict, and an alcoholic. I couldn't handle drugs. I had made a mess of my life. I had known it intellectually for a long time, but this was the first time I really felt it in my guts. I didn't handle booze and I didn't handle drugs--they handled me. I would do anything to get my hands on drugs or alcohol. They ran my life. I didn't have any control once I started, once I took that first fix, pill or drink.

I had reached the point where I would black out for days at a time, and I would end up places not even knowing where in the hell I had been, with people I would never have thought of hanging around with anyway. I was doing things I never conceived of doing when I first started. I was hurting people that were very close to me. I realized that I was thirty-five years old and I didn't have shit to show for my life. I had nothing to show for it, except withdrawal when I got up in the morning, when I didn't have anything to take, when I didn't have anything to drink. I hurt my family; I had sponged off of them most of my life and I was on a dead-end road. I thought I was either going to die or I was
headed for the penitentiary or going crazy. If I went crazy, there wasn't going to be any getting well to it. I knew that I needed help.

I had some friends that had gotten straightened out. They had been in N.A. for three years. One was a girl I had been loaded and drunk with a lot. There were a couple of other friends who had gone through a treatment center a couple of years before. I called my father and asked him to come and get me; my car wouldn't run and he came and got me.

My father asked me if I wanted to go home, and I said, "No, I want to go to the hospital." He asked why, and I said, "Because I'm an addict and I'm an alcoholic and I can't handle my life. My life is a shambles, and I need some help."

He asked if I was sure I wanted to do that and I said I was sure. I went to the hospital and then to a detox center where they didn't give me any drugs or alcohol to come down with.

There was a part of me that was thinking that when I get to the hospital, I'll get a lot of drugs and I'll come down easy and then I'll be alright. Maybe I can get squared away doing the same thing I had done before, many times. I spent a week once in a state hospital doing it. Another time, I spent a year in a state hospital doing it—having the cushy ride.

I had gone to doctors and emergency rooms to get prescriptions that just led to more drug use eventually. I finally realized that I couldn't quit this thing by myself; I couldn't handle it.

I didn't like the sound of this detox center when I got there, but I went in anyway. The next day I woke up so sick that I knew I couldn't make it to work that day, even if I could leave the place. I called my boss from there and told him where I was and what had gone on. Everybody who worked in the detox center were alcoholics or addicts and they were giving me support. I stayed five days in detox and then went to a treatment center out of town. I was shaking so bad that I could hardly keep food on my fork. I stayed in treatment for thirty-seven days.
During treatment, I got a solid education about A.A. I learned a lot about me, and I learned a lot about feelings. I learned a lot about God. There was a real spiritual base to this treatment center. I not only learned a lot about A.A., but I learned some about N.A., and I knew there was N.A. back home. I knew that when I got back to town, I would have some place to go. I would have meetings to go to.

At the treatment center, I was told, "Don't drink when you get back; don't use any drugs and go to meetings. Stick with the winners and work the Steps. And don't take on anything you can't handle. Back home I moved into a halfway house and went to my first N.A. meeting--the first one I had been to in a long time.

This time I was serious about N.A. I saw people still there who had been there four years before. No one told me to leave because I had been such an ass at that first meeting a few years before. They said, "We're glad to see you and we love you and we'll help you, if you want us to; if you'll let us." I was home. I knew I was with people who cared about me. I could just feel it in the room. I knew that God was looking out for me because I could feel His presence in that room with those people. I have never felt that I could get any kind of spirituality in church, and it suddenly hit me that God works through people.

For the last year and a half, I haven't found it necessary to use any drugs or drink because of my involvement with the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It's just been a completely different life. I've gone through a lot of changes and I've had some bad times, but things are really Okay. My best day drinking and getting loaded is ten times worse than my worst day straight and sober. I have my problems today, but it seems like there's one thing a lot of people say in the program: "This too shall pass." I have found that to be true, but it passes quicker the longer I stay straight and sober one day at a time.
The neatest thing about N.A. is that I don't have to quit using for the rest of my life. I can just quit for right now and it's a whole lot easier for me to think about because I can't handle thinking about the rest of my life.

I hear neat little slogans like "God doesn't give me what He and I can't handle." That's true as long as I don't drink and I don't use; good things happen to me. It's a program that gives me a way to work on character defects of characters.

I'm not the person I used to be. I now believe that I'm a good person, and I can accept other people caring about me. I can care about others. It's all possible because of the Steps and the Fellowship. I don't have to worry about my little playmates or playgrounds or playthings now, because I've got a whole lot of friends that really care. These friends are not like the ones who just wanted something out of me when I had dope or booze. These new friends really care and I can depend on them.

Life today is just so much better, I don't even know how to describe it. It is so completely different from what it was like when I was using and drinking, there is just no comparison.
BEING CLEAN AND SERENE IS FUN

Thank God, I'm clean. I love being clean and serene. I love being a member of N.A. I love all of you, my fellow addicts.

Without God's grace and you people, I wouldn't have survived drug addiction. I thank each and every one of you for helping me save my life and enjoy a satisfying cleanliness. You gave me the unconditional love of one addict for another that's essential in my recovery. Your unjudging acceptance enabled me to drop the rock of Old ideas. You helped me enjoy living in the here and now. Today, life's worthwhile. Being clean and serene is fun.

Now that I'm clean, the worse is over and the best is happening to me on a daily basis.

I'm so grateful for today clean, I love to go to a meeting in order to celebrate cleanliness with you and to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. To me, service is like a commitment to God that we'll help newcomers through the grace period early on and beyond this transition into a healthy, enjoyable and spiritual cleanliness.

Yet, it's the responsibility of those of us who have cleanliness to remind addicts: "WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OUR GROUP EXPERIENCE THAT THOSE WHO KEEP COMING TO OUR MEETINGS REGULARLY STAY CLEAN."

I don't tell newcomers to use drugs if they're having doubts about being an addict because I don't know what the next use of drugs might do to them. I don't kill my fellow addicts with such insane advice.

Instead, I welcome them unconditionally to N.A. and offer them what the program suggests: "MANY OF US HAVE HAD SOME RESERVATIONS AT THIS POINT, SO GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK."
AND BE AS THOROUGH AS POSSIBLE AT THE START. GO TO STEP TWO, AND SO FORTH AND AS YOU GO ON YOUR WILL COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROGRAM FOR YOURSELF."

I use meetings like I used drugs. Since I used drugs regularly, I now use meetings regularly to stay clean. I've been able to adapt to N.A. meetings because they really work well with me. I love the caring and sharing. I love the cheerfulness and laughter. I love having a place where I can enjoy Fellowship with people just like me who are clean and serene.

I was so desperate to have to go to meetings; I got into the habit of going. After the first year and a half of my mind telling me every tenth of a second, "It's all over, forget it, you're dead;" it suddenly dawned on me, "Well, looks like I'm going to survive; now, what do I do?" I go to meetings.

I have a positive addiction to meetings. My dose is five meetings a week. Take away that many or attend less per week, and I'd go through physical withdrawals. My nose would start to run again. Palms would sweat; I'd feel like an itch. Speech would stutter, hearing would nod, vision would be as shaky as me and a strange look would come over my face. My emotions and stinking-thinking would play basketball with my head. I'd crawl up the wall with my fingernails. The third day in a row away from meetings, I'd forget they ever existed.

Other addicts may have their rate of grasping and developing the program; mine is at least five meetings per week. I need regular attendance of meetings in order to survive and I need the 12-Steps to help me enjoy cleanliness. Like we say in N.A., "IF IT WORKS DON'T FIX IT."

Arrived at the program, my first meetings seemed like something I was stuck having to do. Being in meetings gave me some place to be while I died. Whether stuck or not, I survived to love celebrating cleanliness at a meeting. I'm no longer fighting into, during, out of meetings; and crying waterfalls after it. I'm enjoying smiles, hugs, kisses and
peace of mind. I'm no longer knocking the money basket across
the meeting room nor throwing a candle through the tabletop.
I'm clean and serene, and into service.

Gratefully, I see stinking-thinking as proving my mind
isn't the best indicator of what's happening. Things aren't as
bad as my mind tries to paint them. By doing the footwork and
depending in God, there's lots of room to survive. I've done
a lot of things the program suggests, thinking, "God, you're
really wrong this time." And afterwards, admitting, "Okay,
God, right again."

On days I'd get to a meeting too early, my head would try
to take over and I'd sit debating whether I really wanted to
stick around for it. Did I really want to deal with me? A
meeting was like a "House of Mirrors"—so many sizes and shapes
of me being reflected back. Did I really want to go in there
and face it? Then, the secretary would show, the door would
open and the habit of going to meetings would save my cleanliness by automatically getting me into the room regardless of
what I was thinking.

In the meeting, there'd be a tremendous relief of not hav­
ing to decide about going to it. I was in it. Once it started,
I felt better and usually uplifted after it ended.

One meeting, I was having difficulty feeling a part of the
program. In the middle of my stinking-thinking, a friend of
mine jumped up, yelled at everybody in the room, stormed out
of the meeting and gave me some serenity. I knew I wasn't
alone. I wasn't the only crazy person going to meetings. This
fact saved my cleanliness that day and my staying clean, saved
my life.

You see, my stinking-thinking at times has a lot to do with
my addictive personality. My addict's mind tries to isolate
me, then divide and conquer. Just like we say in N.A., "AN
ADDICT ALONE IS IN BAD COMPANY." My addictive mind doesn't
want to give up control, so it will try getting me upset enough
to go back out and die in drug addiction. And it seems to me,
when one addict's mind can't get an addict to use drugs, several
of our minds will gang up and try to get a whole group of us to go out and die.

Sometimes, it's simply the feeling of togetherness that I love. A simple thing like picking up cups during the clean up was to me like "WE CAN DO WHAT I CAN'T." This participating in the clean up made me feel a part of the meeting and glad to be a part of the N.A. recovery team.

It's easier for me to enjoy cleanliness when living with what we have in common. The support we give each other in N.A. and the welcome we give newcomers are important.

Now that I'm in a safe harbor sheltered from the storm of obsessive drug abuse I've a tendency to forget about the storm. I need seeing the new people because they remind me how progressive and fatal is the disease of drug addition. It's also necessary for me to be with clean addicts because they encourage me to stay clean and keep on boogying the path of happy cleanliness.

My spiritual progress is like being chained to a truck. I can keep on trucking smilingly or get dragged. In either case, I'm going one way--the way God has in store for me in living the principles of this Fellowship. I find both hope and help in N.A. meetings.

Before this, there'd been years of drug addiction without hope or help. I'd lost the power to do anything about my drug addiction. My life became extremely unmanageable because drugs reached a point with me where they failed to work. With or without drugs my life was a mess. As my tolerance and adaptability to pain and drugs collapsed, I finally went from being very casual one day to a casualty the next.

Turning my will and life over to my automobile and going home, I got in it, locked the doors, pulled on the emergency flashers, got on the freeway, put the pedal to the metal and drove between the traffic in the fast lane and the green fence--right down the middle, following the "Yellow brick road" warning tiles until it totalled in a chase with another greater power, the highway patrol. H.P. said, "Come with me,"
and I did.

My family bailed me out, there was a person in a newspaper article we got to be my lawyer who later turned into a member of the program right before my eyes, during the arraignment proceedings. I went up to school and just as I was about to let them know I wouldn't be there at finals week because of impending court appearances, my mind decided it wanted to run somewhere deep inside my head and hide.

I was afraid of dying, so everything suddenly jumped into tenths of a second. Using the ideas of a traffic signal and the mouse looking for green cheese in a maze, I went on green and stopped on red. When I saw a person wearing something red I'd stop and when I saw green I went. Finally, there was another arrest.

At court lockup, there was an argument with the jailer over our manliness. I took off my clothes, climbed the bars to the ceiling and tried shaking the bars while screaming like a monkey. I'm told my case jacket reads: the trial judge came back to see about the commotion. We exchanged greetings and I was sent over to a county hospital for observation because he felt I wasn't ready for court that day. I don't know anything about the judge being real or not because I don't recall what happened between going up the bars and the two policemen coming to take me away. I do remember everything was okay at the hospital until they put me in a room by myself.

Somehow, I found matches inside the sheetmetal of the room heater and soon had the bedding, pillow and mattress going up in yard high flames. The staff ran into the room. I ran out and made good my escape. Except the double doors I jumped through at the end of the hall were locked.

Crashing to the floor, I crawled away, found a shower and hid until an orderly found me. A nurse stuck me with a shot and they shipped me via Sheriff's certification to a state hospital. From reading a newspaper in the lobby while waiting for the entry interview, my mind came up with the story about being a depressed alcoholic who occasionally experimented with other
drugs socially. The interviewer placed me on the alcoholic and drug wards one week each.

After the state hospital and medical isolation at the county jail, I was finally well enough to have a nervous breakdown my third or fourth day in "Restraint #3" and casually admitted it to the nurse who brought the next meal. The nurse said, "What stamina."

Fortunately, one of the other restraint units was broken, so I had to give mine up when someone started a screaming jag. At the end, I was brought before the judge and given the average nudge of automatic 90 days at the state institute for the criminally insane or would I like to go to the program?

While my mind was thinking about the nurses at the state institute, my mouth was given the grace to say I'd go to the program. I was given two years probation for reckless driving and disturbing the peace, warned not to get a traffic ticket and restored to society in the custody of my lawyer who took me to a meeting the night of my release.

Having been criminally insane one moment, the judge declaring me legally same the next and this program being the society I was restored to when out of jail, I can't honestly tell whether the people here in the program are crazy. All I know is that I've been restored to sanity as far as the compulsion to use drugs is concerned because through God's grace and the 12-Steps of N.A., I've gotten my priorities in order. I'm clean and my number one priority as a drug addict is staying clean one day at a time. I don't use drugs.

Instead, I use the N.A. program of 12-Steps and helping the addict who still suffers. When I'm helping someone else stay clean, seems like all the spiritual wealth of the program surfaces. Today, I use all the tools of recovery like inventory, sponsorship, telephone therapy and service. I have all the tools necessary to help me through the day.

Someone told me whatever was happening, "To expect a miracle." I find a pocketful of N.A. phone numbers is like having a pocketful of miracles. Any time I need a miracle,
I can call one on the phone. I always suggest getting lots of phone numbers because of my first experience with telephone therapy. I'd been driving myself crazy as par for the course back then and finally could no longer handle another moment of it. So, I went to the telephone even though I disliked having to use it. Contempt prior to investigation.

Anyway, I pulled out my one telephone number. No answer to dialing it. Naturally, I think, "That don't work." And I hang up. I get so upset about it not working that I had to go for a walk. It worked. I found a vigorous walk could bring my blood pressure down to normal; whatever that is.

I also got more phone numbers. I got into the habit of using the phone regularly by calling people up "Officially" rather than personally, and asking them whether they're going to the meeting and could I catch a ride, or would they like a ride? From the official calls my habit progressed to the point that telephone therapy has saved my cleanliness and helped me smoothly through some rough spots. I even make unofficial, personal calls to people in N.A. today. I'm even enjoying sponsorship now. The only reason I had a program sponsor to begin with was to have something to say when people asked me, "Who's your sponsor?"

I went through a lot of sponsorship relationships getting clean. I had to learn to "LIVE AND LET LIVE" with them. Rubbing up against some of the personalities before principles I've met here occasionally has surely sandpapered the rough exterior I had and turned it into a smooth work of art in my living situations.

Any time sponsors in the program appear to be human and fall off the pedestal, I'd put them back up there because I don't want them in the trenches trying to clutter up my life. At least, that's what I used to feel.

As a result, amends were necessary when I also got into sponsoring situations. However, I'd rather be friends.

I remember I used to put sponsors on a pedestal, paint a big target on them, and the, fire insanity at them to see what
they did with it. Watching what sponsors do to survive it helps a lot. They go to their sponsors and say, "You should see what's come up this time."

And their sponsors say, "We know. We went through it with you."

I watched them turn it over. Do inventory. Call sponsors on the phone. Do steps. Go to meetings. And not use drugs. So, when insanity struck me, I'd do the same as sponsors do to survive it.

Sponsors can help make up the difference between what it takes to finally stay clean. Having someone nearby who knows how to swim can be important when I'm diving off the deep end.

Yet, most importantly, I go to meetings regularly.

Being in a meeting is very significant to me because the moment I heard about "A LOVING GOD" as may be expressed in our group conscience, I thought, "Maybe, there's hope here for me."

I find I can go to a meeting and someone will say what I need to hear or while I'm talking something will air that I didn't know was about to surface, and the loving God in the group conscience gives me the support I need in order to face, accept, admit and survive being me without having to use drugs.

Of course, I've been into all the talking from the start. My first meeting was a topic discussion. It was on the 12-Traditions. "If I had any, they're the dirty dozen," I said and you went on with the rest of the meeting.

I felt like a dead battery those first meetings. I was like a dead man with moveable parts. I had completely used up my energy. I feel God's grace simply gave me the energy to get to the program. And a loving God charges me up ever since. Talking about God in a meeting helps me store up God conscious energy. At any low point during the day, thinking about what was said about God taps into this reserve and helps me get through it.
My early program days were ghastly. Socially, all my surface communications seemed burnt like melba toast. From the face back there was a void filled with stinking-thinking and a continuous buzzing. My emotions were bare like panic buttons worn on my sleeves. Every time I met someone, these emotional buttons would get pushed and stick on pushed. I was like a bizzaro. Like an emotional vampire flying to latch onto someone at a meeting and suck up all the self-esteem I could. I drained or strained one relationship after another. It's all I had as a survival kit besides drugs.

I used people, places and things to get drugs; now, I was using you up to get clean.

I simply couldn't handle energy once it reached a certain level. Someone would say, "Hi, how's it going?" that would be okay. The third or fourth person saying it would get a chair to duck. I could seem all hugs and kisses, friendly, then flop into annihilation over little more than a look or comment. Any question to me was like an incoming attack. Any time someone asked, "D'you know?" I thought it was directed at me. I had to sit in the corner alone in a room full of clean addicts because of the fear of hurting people I loved. I felt like I had, "Two chances, slim and none. I could tread water all I liked; until I picked a direction, I was going to drown." So, I used to sit in meetings drowning in my slim or no chance. Talking my head off during discussion meetings, yet drowning.

Here's where the first Three Traditions are important to me. I love the common welfare and unity; the loving God, and the only requirement for membership in N.A. being the desire to stop using drugs.

Our common welfare coming first brought a lot of clean addicts over to shake my hand at the meetings. The loving God through you people broke down the walls of my self imposed exile. Your care and acceptance broke through my false price and self-hate.

I'd been afraid to trust you because I couldn't trust me. Needing you to help me stay clean was frightening. Yet, your love did it. I was hugged back into caring about myself. It
dawned on me, as long as I was willing to grow along spiri-
tual lines, this is all the direction I need to keep me bou-
yant in life's changes.

I had difficulty living life on life's terms in the past. Good, bad or indifferent, my reaction to life on life's terms was using drugs.

By the grace of God and using the 12-Steps, I'm living life on God's terms. Anything that happens in cleanliness, I know God's in it and a lesson of trust in God's love is available.

I still have addictive tendencies. When there's a half pint of food at the deli, I buy a full pint to make sure. When someone invites me to dinner, I eat dinner first, then go. This way I'll get enough. I occasionally buy fruit juices and go sit in the park to drink. It's helped my cleanliness sometimes when the urge to use drugs came on me.

Basically, I know I'm clean only by the grace of God. God is the cure.

God is giving me the gift of cleanliness. My cleanliness is a proof to me of God's reality.

My powerlessness and unmanageability as the result of drug abuse had already been recorded long before this in jails, institutions and near death situations. I was unable to stop using drugs on the basis of self-will or self-
knowledge. I was unable to start a run or stop a run. I was using or not, depending upon what I was doing when other people met me. I had no control over it.

I'm incapable of being clean one day at a time. Yet, I'm clean. As far as I'm concerned, a power greater than myself is giving me the grace to be clean. God is working in my life to keep me clean.

Even though I first admitted being an addict at the meet-
ints because I'd rather say that than crazy, I'm glad there's a room of clean addicts because your saying you were addicts made it easier for me to break through the alibi system of denial and admit, "I'm an addict."
I need to be with clean addicts in the meeting. I have
a tendency to seek the approval of the people with whom I
socialize. When I'm with clean people regularly, knowing
you're here helps me get through the day clean so I can go
to the meeting and have your approval.

I'm glad the only requirement for membership is a desire
to stop using drugs. Or even a desire to have the desire to
stop. I feel the desire to stop is a gift from God.

The fertilizer of my drug related experiences brought the
desire to stop using drugs to the surface. That's what it
took to get my attention. That and the watering of the seed
of abstinence.

A meeting is like a pool of cleanliness.
At a meeting, someone may say, "EASY DOES IT." I go to
a hundred meetings and "EASY DOES IT" gets watered a hundred
times. The next thing I know, I'm going around saying, "EASY
DOES IT," and I'm not really sure where it came from. I just
know it works because I'm clean.

Today, I know a lot of my insanity was drug related. Yet,
a lot of it was me. I used drugs as a defense against how I
felt and an excuse for what I did. Even having no excuse was
an excuse to use drugs. I had a pyshological addiction to
drugs long before it progressed into a physical one. Being
me meant using drugs.

Whenever I'd be me, friends would say, "Don't mind him,
he's crazy." So, I started doing what they did and they'd
say, "Don't mind him, he's loaded." Now, I'm a member of N.A.
they say, "Don't mind him, he's clean."

What's different? I don't mind being me any more. It's
okay being me. I have value simply being human. In the Great
Chef's favorite recipe, I'm the ingredient who's supposed to
be me so that I can gradually merge into God's love. By
being clean and serene, I'm able to have cake and eat it, too.

God helps me face what's happening today. I accept my
actions, thoughts, feelings and emotions. I admit them. And
everything isn't such a big deal any more.
My most frightening times are when I feel "Meeting'd out." I remember this happening to me very seriously between my first marriage and divorce in the program. I had moved to another state after the separation and in the city where I was going to meetings, there was one I'd attend in the morning of a weekend day, then return for the afternoon meeting at the same place.

This one morning, the meeting just wasn't doing it for me. So, after it was over, I wandered out into the city not knowing whether I was ever going back to any meeting let alone the afternoon. I got into what my head calls, "The flow." Ending up in the transportation system of the subway, I sat at one of the green benches in the middle of the platform.

The bench had a divider and curled up a la fetal position in the other portion was a person who hadn't waked up yet. As I looked, his body started to tilt off the bench. I reached over to help, the thought, "A person has to be allowed the dignity to suffer what has to be suffered in order for it to take what it has to take to make the program" And I watched him roll off the bench and fall head first onto the concrete where the contact acted like an alarm clock that rang his bell.

He came to and shook himself awake. He saw me sitting there and reached up a hand to me. I reached down and helped pull him onto the bench. He began to talk in a very fast whisper of unknown sounds more like scratches than words. Finally, I gave him a card with the 12-Steps and 12-Traditions on it. He focused on what it was and spit on it. So, I felt there's nothing more I could do and caught the next subway train as it came into the station and stopped.

I went in and sat across the aisle as he got up and followed, sitting opposite me as the doors closed and the train left the station. Again, there's the fast, low pitched whispers of a conversation he's having. This lasted until the conductor came by saying we'd have to move to the first
four cars in order to get off as the next station platform's shorter than the number of cars in the train.

I was given the grace to get up and move forward. He remained behind. At the next station, I got off. He remained behind. The train left the station. Suddenly, I realized as the car went by with him sitting alone—all the other cars in the train had their lights lit. Not the one we'd been in during our short trip. The car was completely unlit.

It now dawned on me what people meant when they say, "We can arrest the disease of drug addiction at any stop along the way. We don't have to take it to the very end."

God's grace through that experience saved my cleanliness. I hurried back to the afternoon meeting at the same place on a weekend day.

Feeling "Meeting'd out" can mean, I'm going through a phase of recovery that's difficult for me or I feel incapable of surviving. Sometimes, God walks me through things where my knowing about it while it's happening would totally blow me away.

So, God allows me to feel "Meeting'd out" or uncomfortable without my having to know what's really the matter until we're out of my danger zone.

As long as I keep going to meetings, letting you know where I'm at, how I'm continuing to use the program and depend in God even though I may not know what's bothering me at the moment and stay clean— it passes.

To me, a human being is normal only when turning will and life over to the care of God.

As long as I had the choice whether to use drugs—I did. Thank God, I got to a point where I no longer had a choice—drugs had destroyed me. I was powerless to do anything except sit in those meetings and wait to die. I felt doomed and the only concept having my attention was survival. Later, I was happy to consider the program in terms of from five to life. Anything I'm going through now compared to those days—today is better.
Drug addiction has proven to me it's a progressive disease. I went from parties on the holidays to partying weekend nights to weekend days to partying weekday nights to weekday days to partying and nothing else, so help me God, until the party was over.

I used drugs because I could not stop using them. I lost the power of choice whether to use drugs. When I used drugs I could no longer guarantee my actions. To think I could just do one whatever was insanity because using it once would give drugs power over my thinking again. "ONE IS TOO MANY AND A THOUSAND NEVER ENOUGH."

Finally, drugs controlled me, drugs used me and drugs killed me. And today, God saves me.

God gives me the gift of cleanliness. God gives me the 12-Steps and the tools of the N.A. design for living clean. God gives me you people my N.A. family to enjoy being clean together. We're all in this together. There is nobody against anybody in N.A. We all get well together. God gives me the newcomers to cave my cleanliness by carrying the message.

I no longer have to go out and take in order to stay clean. I can live within the grace of God's love and simply accept what's being freely given to me on a daily basis. God is giving me the energy and love to put in the footwork.

God's grace and doing the footwork. The footwork releases more energy to do the next indicated action in cleanliness until everything eventually solves itself. Through the footwork, I have the maturity gained to respond to living in the here and now.

Doing the footwork in like healing a mental or emotional disorder as it's surfacing on schedule in God's time to be let go of here and now. On God's schedule, the preparation is also happening that let's me grasp and develop what God gives. As I concentrate on the 12 Steps and do the actions based on staying clean, God
1 cleans us the rest of my act.
2
3 To me, the 12-Steps are like a present given to God's children. As I play with the Steps, my mind focuses on the program and not on messing up my life. I use the program, letting God deal with the total picture.
4
5 In my case, it's like having a circle, triangle and square. As an addict, I pick up the triangle peg and try putting it into the circle space. I keep trying to get the triangle to fit the shape of the circle. God lets me do it until, finally, on God's schedule; the triangle peg must go into the triangle space. So, God gives me the square peg and try fitting it into the circle space. And while I'm doing this, God places the triangle peg into the triangle space. All on schedule. Peg by peg, step by step, action by action, God gets everything into place until there's only the circle peg to to into the circle space.
6
7 I don't mind being powerless because God's powerful. I don't mind being unmanageable because God manages quite well. God's alive and well, and living inside the here and now.
8
9 Once I got to N.A., my drug career ended and recovery began--"There's nothing worse than a body full of drugs and a head full of N.A."
10
11 There may be relapses while I'm in N.A., however, they are no longer part of my drug career. They are part of my recovery career.
12
13 In drug addiction, it's natural to have relapses of the disease on a mental or emotional level because of the process of learning how to let to and let God. Stinking-thinking and emotional benders let me know the tension is building up inside me. I'd better start applying the tools of the program or the tension of the emotional or mental relapse will snowball into the avalanche of a physical relapse into drugs.
The tension I have comes from the stress of letting go and letting God; letting go of the things that have served their purpose and letting God help me develop what works here and now.

All my old ideas are like having both my hands squeezing my throat—I need to let go absolutely in order to breathe. Living in God's will for me rather than mine, everything happens on schedule while God is actually preparing me to handle what's coming up next.

This is where not being too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired or Serious (HALTS) helps me stay clean. I mention serious because I may get by a while being too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired—my danger is taking myself too Serious about it. When HALTS happens I may need food, a meeting or rest.

Sometimes, I'll go, "I'm not tired, I'm not tired, I'm not tired;" until I collapse of nervous exhaustion. As I'm denying any area of my HALTS maintenance, the tension inside me is starting to build.

I ignore where neglecting HALTS is taking me and just as I am about to snap, I will get the urge to use drugs. Or I will start thinking about them more frequently. Thinking about drugs is a red alert to look at my HALTS maintenance system. Where am I getting too HALTS?

Just because my mind is thinking about drugs to get my attention, doesn't mean my body is asking for drugs. It may be asking for a meal to ease the hunger; some rest to ease the tiredness; or a meeting to ease the loneliness, anger or seriousness.

When I'm getting enough food, rest and companionship in this program, almost nothing can happen to bother my serenity. Take away the meeting, the food and the rest—watch it.

Today, I shake hands instead of throats. Each moment of the day is a turning point either to continue spiritual progress or turn back into drug addiction. I need complete
faith in God's Care and protection.

An inventory helps me keep pace with cleanliness.

When looking back at all my turning points I know God can develop the potential in my living situations. Just because I got into drug addiction at one turning point doesn't mean I can't enjoy spiritual progress now. An inventory of turning points in life can be useful step in learning about my potential interests.

Of course, even procrastination can work for me when it gives me the opportunity to stop using drugs, regroup and start fresh with the 12-Steps. However, I'd better start addressing what is bothering me and talk about it or I may never get to it. I need to start participating in my own recovery by doing some of the suggested steps in addition to showing up at meetings to be with you people.

Your example shows me the importance of the 12-Steps. Without your clean example, I would have hurt a lot longer. You people are special with me. One of you told me as a newcomer, "I'd like to see you make the program." Thanks, you helped save my life.

Three months into the program, I met another of you at my first convention. Conventions are fantastic. I went from poor me in a room full of people to a meeting hall internationally clean and serene with hundreds of people praying, sharing, loving and living in unity. Yes, conventions are great.

Though I have had to learn how to pace myself through a convention using the HALTS maintenance, I feel conventions can really aid the recovery process. They are a place where we can carry the message by showing people it is possible to have fun clean.

Anyway, I was introduced to someone who actually sat with me and gave the time to freely share experience, strength and hope of what it was like, what happened and what it's like now. This person taking what I thought
was time out from busy activities to share with me also served to help save my life. It made me feel, "Hey, people really do care."

As a result of this, I am available to the new people. I feel it is important for us to sit one on one and share what the program really has to offer. It's important to let people know what a beautiful gift cleanliness really is. I'm as happy or happier than I've ever been before I came to the program. Living clean is indescribably lovely.

Yet, the only real way a person can know how happy or worthwhile is recovery and being clean is to do the suggested steps.

I was so energized by that convention, I lost my fear of failure about doing an inventory. I started writing everything I could remember on paper. My first inventory was more like a written Fifth Step of admitting the exact nature of my wrongs. I had so much garbage to dump that I simply wrote a fearful, immoral inventory.

Afraid of facing anyone with this inventory, I mailed it to the person who had shared with me at the convention. One day, I got a phone call, "I got your letter; how's it feel to be like all the rest of us?"

It felt so good, I hung up. I had to call back immediately and apologize. I was told, "That's okay."

From actually doing this inventory to the best of my ability at the time, I learned, "I'm like all the rest of us and it's okay!" This was news to me. This was the first time I'd suffered innocence by association.

Family had said before this, "You're okay it is those friends you keep." It was guilt by association though I was doing as much or more than anyone.

I no longer feel guilty nor ashamed with what I used to do. The morals I had were necessary to live with what I was doing back then. I find all my liabilities can be turned by God into assets when helping a new
1 person achieve cleanliness.

Admitting all of it helps me lighten the load and
helps them identify with someone in N.A. Telling them
what I used to be like may also help them let go of shame
and guilt. However, the Fifth Step is taken with someone
who can handle it. Getting clean at someone's expense
doesn't work.

When I share with newcomers I am careful about what
I say and how much. I do not force information on them
like a pusher. Too much information overloads their input
system. It is better to just remind them to go to meetings
and don't use drugs.

Removing drugs from me, brought a lot of thoughts,
feelings and emotions up at once which was confusing. I
couldn't handle it. My switchboard blew fuses. Inventory
helped.

I have a tendency to think negatively. Writing
inventory puts it in a different light and I can look at
it more positively.

Confusion is best handled by writing all of it on
paper one thought, feeling or emotion at a time until
every bit of the confusion is inventoried. This gets it
out of the head and onto the inventory where I can deal
with it by using the program on it.

I can call someone and talk about one of my feelings.
I can inventory one item in depth. Or I may just turn it
over. Gradually, I'm in touch with a wide range of
feelings because I know what they feel like when I am

clean.

I know what it feels like to go to meetings, to share,
to write inventory, to do what actions a day of clean-
liness indicates. I've developed through the 12-Steps the
ability to survive being me.

Serenity happens sometimes because I am used to the
process of living clean. I'm not as fearful now. God
doesn't make any mistakes. We are all part of God's plan.
We are a vision of hope to the addict who still suffers. In N.A., people who are hopelessly and helplessly addicted to drugs can and do recover to live clean and happy lives.

Keep it simple--SMILE. This is important to me because it gives me a positive way to look at K.I.S.S. especially smiling about the way I learned something of the power of love.

I was stopped by a patrolman and there wasn't a license tag on the bicycle I had borrowed from a friend in the program. I refused to sign the ticket because someone reading cards had told me not to sign any legal documents. So, the bicycle was impounded and I went to jail.

At court, everyone had a nice laugh about the explanation. I was released on condition of getting the bicycle a license.

Three of us from the program; the owner, myself and a friend of ours went to pick up the bike. At the police station, the detectives on the case were arranging its release when I kissed someone's hand.

Suddenly, a detective came barging over to us, eyes bulging. He asked, "Do you know this person?"

"No," I said.

"Don't you know you can be arrested for assault?"

"I love all my brother's and sister's..."

"I'm not your brother. ..." he said.

"I know. You're older--you're my father."

And he quickly backed against the wall away from me as if I'd pulled a loaded gun. And he didn't bother us anymore. We got the bike and had a license tag put on it. And I learned something about the power of love.

I smile a lot more. My pilot light is always lit. When I react to what people are doing it's not because I dislike them. I'm reacting to what they're doing. Their actions may show me something I need to deal with by using the program. Usually, it's an area I've been avoiding. So, I get upset because the actions of others tend to
remind me what I need to be working on in order to stay clean. Applying the program calms me and I can once more get along with people.

Anytime the ability to be agreeable begins leaving, I get the person's attention before it gets physical. I explain it may have to be settled later because I can't deal with it now. Talking to the sponsor in this case, helps me ease the tension so it's not taken out on a third party. Feelings are okay. I just need a kinder way of communicating them. Gentle words are more acceptable than throwing chairs.

The Fourth Step inventory takes the lid off what's happening and admitting it in a Fifth Step exposes it to the sunlight of the spirit. Once the sunlight touches it, the emotional and mental disorders begin to evaporate.

My formal Fifth Step was with a member of the program because it was hard for me at that time to go up to someone on the street and say, "Heay, I'm a drug addict. I've got to talk to you." Civilians rarely understand where I'm coming from during a conversation.

Sometimes, I feel like a coward of internal warfare. An unknown soldier who almost died from self-inflicted wounds.

After the Fifth Step, I was told, "Be good to yourself." Thank God, I can't think of any other way for an addict like me to be clean than N.A. Being clean in this program by living the 12-steps of recovery, really is being good to myself.

If I'd come up with one other thing to do besides this program, I'd be dead now. Sometimes, I think I really did die. I'd get afraid that God's simply keeping me alive long enough to show all the beautiful life I could have had. After I admit it, the plug's going to be pulled.

Now that I admit it, somehow, it's okay. It doesn't bother me as much as it did. I like whatever God has in
store for me because I have been shown the program works.

During my probation, I had an investigation for a homicide I did not do where my alibi was the fact I was out of state at the time while hitch-hiking to a convention. I got two traffic tickets in one week then had an arrest and jailing for reckless driving. There was also a totaled automobile in another accident. And I still got off probation on schedule because the program works.

The whole truth is that while I was going to meetings and letting you know what's happening with me and how I'd applied the 12-Steps to it, God brought another lawyer to the program.

My first Probation Officer who's so capable and friendly got promoted. So, I was given a rookie to train who felt it's necessary to go to court to be taken off probation.

On the way up the elevator the day of the court appearance, I noticed my newcomer P.O. looked nervous about something. Perhaps this was a first time before the bench. "It's going to be okay," I said, sharing some "Easy does it," don't worry support.

When my case was called the Prosecuting Attorney turned and looked smiling at me, and asked if this was all that stuff I'd been talking about in meetings the past two years?

"Yes," I smiled and the P.A. went into Judge's chambers. When they came back I was taken off probation and told to keep going to meetings.

I loved it because I now knew the importance of meetings. Having gotten away from meetings for a month while hitching to that convention, I'd been taught quickly I was too new on the program to be that long away from meetings. Someone offered me drugs and I got loaded. When I got to the convention I had to move my cleanliness date up from my first year.
I admit today, "The exact nature of my wrongs was the inability I had to turn my will and life completely over to the care of God."

I am glad the 12-Steps work because I lost faith in my decisions. My feelings and thoughts based on my emotions are all part of my using drugs pattern. I am incapable of having faith in my choices. I need to apply the principles of this program to all my living situations and depend in God.

That is why it's important each person in the program develops a contact with God that works for that individual member of N.A. Go with whatever works for you to keep you clean. I'm not writing these attitudes or opinions here as a roadblock to someone else's recovery. This is not intended to trigger any reactions in you. This is simply the insanity I've been having the need to apply 12 Steps to in order for my survival and continuing spiritual progress in cleanliness. It's the simple slogans in the program that are easier to remember.

I'm so far over the edge, it just seems the part of the edge I've been given to deal with. Only I deal with it by turning it over to God. In order for me to survive, I must turn not only my will and life over to God; I must also turn everybody else over to God.

I don't expect things of a meeting; I don't expect things of people, places and things; I don't expect things of me; and I don't expect things from God because my mind is not the best indicator of what things to expect. As a result of having no expectations of life; it's very easy for me to be without feelings of frustration. I'm also able to pace myself more realistically. I set short range goals and am willing to let them go or accept whatever's the result. I'm living at my rate of grasping and developing.

Though sometimes I may fail at something a thousand times and on the 1001st accomplish it, then think, "Those
weren't failures, I'm merely improving the technique; I'm still willing to let go of my schemes and go with God.

Someone once told me, "God takes away the things we're proud of and gives us the things we're grateful of."

So, I'm learning to be grateful; to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. It's the altitude of my attitude that helps most times. And when my attitude is one of gratitude, I feel naturally high.

I find this attitude of gratitude works in every bothersome area of my life. Gratitude even heals my resentments. I'm given constant opportunities. Having gratitude always helps me develop my conscious contact with God and enjoy God's love being freely given inside me.

Any time I'm bothered, I use it as an opportunity to find an item of gratitude. With resentments, I list what's bothering me on one side of a sheet of paper and balance it with at least one item of gratitude. Usually, I can find many items giving me gratitude in each situation.

When I don't know what's bothering me exactly, I give thanks for getting through the insanity of the resentment or situation without having to use drugs. Generally, I can always find some gratitude even when it's just, "I'm grateful for this situation because it gives me an opportunity to look for an item of gratitude."

Hitting an intellectual bottom in the program, I felt all my intellectualizing was simply rationalizing and justifying fear.

Fear isn't a big deal as far as I'm concerned, it's only natural. Not discounting anyone's feelings about fear; mine are very strange.

I feel the way my mind acts is like a filter blocking me from the tremendous amount of energy God has available for me when I can let go of all my fears.

What my mind does it get me into unmanageable situations and when it discovers no way to deal with these because it doesn't have experience in them, it simply bails out and
leaves me holding the bag.

With my mind going out to lunch, there's no longer as conscious a filter separating me from all the energy God has ready to deal with the situation. Since the feel of this energy is something I'm not accustomed to at the moment, I think it's fear. Actually, it's a tremendous surge of God's energy without the mind filtering it. Oh, well, so much for the strangeness of my thinking. I can't think about the disease of drug addiction with my rationale because it's an irrational disease. I must deal with this disease by applying the 12-Step to it.

I don't necessarily buy into anything my mind comes up with as real. Reality is a phase of recovery. Taking the big deal to a meeting, talking about it in terms of the program and depending in God—all the big deals pass. And the ones that don't, I use the tools I have to survive and stay clean long enough until God lifts them from me or lifts me from them.

I was at a state hospital. I got myself into a lifestyle where I was forced to live on a drug ward. And I was writing what I thought was the most revealing stuff ever written. Like each word in each sentence was the tip of the iceberg, keying massive concepts at once. Fantastic rainbows of vision.

Later, well after my release, I happened upon part of this masterpiece in some of my belongings. It was barely readable and what could be read, could not be understood at that moment. What I think is appropriate may be completely unappropriate the next moment. That's if I survive the mistake of acting on the insanity of my decisions. And just because I know better, doesn't mean I'll do better.

I was really set up once for spiritual awakening. In the city, I was applying for some financial program to help an addict go to school. After we talked about my addiction, the counselor asked if I had any other problems.

"Yes," I admitted, "Jaywalking." I'd been doing this instead of working the program. Any time I felt tense or needed an adrenalin rush or I don't know what, I simply jumped into six
lanes of traffic. I was having difficulty not doing it. "Do you have any friends?"
"Yes, God."
"God!"
"Yes, God is the only friend I have."
The counselor okay'd the application. Only I decided to let it go.

Then, I'm in another city. I've a letter to mail. I'm in the "flow." I don't find a mailbox. I'm catching a bus and suddenly there's a mailbox across the street. I go for it. The bus driver or somebody honks. I clear the curb parked bus. At full stride, I'm hit by a green van and flipped about twenty feet into the intersection. I land on my sitting muscles and get up; make it across the street; mail the letter; then, settle back into the energy of the accident.

Emergency personnel arrive; I'm asked if I want to go to the hospital. "No," I answered. I got my ticket for running the red "Don't walk" sign. Apologized for the van. Was told something like it was okay. Then, caught a bus to the office of a therapist.

"Here I am."

I was in so much shock I looked like I was on drugs. I was given something to deal with the shock. I took it. And I moved my cleanliness date up simply because at the moment I didn't want my mind having the slightest chance to open the door on my addiction to drugs. I'm very grateful that's what I did.

I've been clean and serene ever since. It made me grateful for having survived something. And then, I realized I'm grateful for having survived my drug addiction.

Besides, it knocked a lot of hostility out of me.

I'm not suggesting this as a way to get gratitude that works. It's the spiritual awakening I had that got me over my fear that my mind was always trying to set me up for illness and accidents so I could use drugs. I knew no matter what happened to me, I was determined to stick with the pro-
gram even when a relapse happened. I'm grateful to have sur-
8 vived the relapses of this disease.
9 
10 Please be assured, this isn't a signal for others to have
11 similar experiences in order to get spiritual awakenings. It's
12 not necessary to go to such an extreme length. Gratitude can
13 come from the joy of having survived a day clean. It can come
14 when we thank God at the end of the day for our cleanliness.
15 
16 My gratitude is being clean. A lot of expiences get my
17 attention. Yet, I love being clean. Being clean is a spiritual
18 awakening.
19 
20 Making amends is also a spiritual awakening. We're ready
21 for our final steps into God consciousness when we make amends
22 and balance the books by God's grace and the principles of this
23 program.
24 
25 I'm learning not to discount someone's efforts to make
26 amends. A lot of spiritual progress goes into amend making.
27 When people come up with amends, I let them know it's okay. I
28 thank them and thank God. I like to forgive others as I would
29 like to be forgiven. I forgive them and I forgive me.
30 
31 A person came to me with amends, saying my showing up at
32 meetings was the cause of a resentment. However, the resentment was
33 no longer there.
34 
35 "It's okay," I said. "we're getting well together."
36 Besides, I couldn't think of a nicer person to resent then.
37 Even I resented being me when I got here. I don't any more. I
38 enjoy cleanliness.
39 
40 It seems to me the program's been working whether or not I've
41 been keeping track of it. Amends are being made. Bills are
42 getting paid. A lot of my character defects have simply vanished.
43 Most of my shame, guilt, remorse and resentment is lifted
44 from me. My load's much lighter. There's nothing else left that's
45 seriously bothering me at the moment. I'm stuck being calm and
46 happy. I'm doomed to being happy, clean and serene. Guess I'll
47 have to accept it and be grateful. It's a miracle.
48 Using drugs is not part of my basic makeup, otherwise I wouldn't
49 be able to give it up.
What I've had all along is a spiritual disease. Once I'm given the ability to turn will and life over to God, serenity comes along and stays with me. God's love is an infinite love. God's love for each of us is infinite. Inside, we have a contact with the infinite love God has for us.

I'm no longer worried about the problems of living. Now I concern myself with applying the program. As a person who ran from life, I'm running to the program instead of the problem. I'm picking up the phone, shaking hands and writing inventory instead of using drugs with my automatic reach for it.

Of course, it's been a matter of practicing the program until it became easy to do. It's hard at first because I've no practice at being clean. Once I did apply the footwork of all the suggested steps put into practice in my living situations, I got clean feedback from the actual doing it. I know what works. Thank God, it's a simple program. It just takes practice.

Now when I get up from whatever side of the bed or fall of my cloudy perch, I automatically fall back into the old ideas of doing inventory, calling someone on the phone, going to meetings and helping others help me stay clean.

Some of it's also very trying to everyone involved. That reckless driving offense during probation happened as the result of my not wanting another ticket for something I felt I didn't do.

I'd been to the meeting, to the after meeting meeting and was giving someone a ride when I backed out of the restaurant parking lot because the parking lanes were blocked with people parking and talking, and I didn't have the patience to wait. As I backed onto the highway, the only traffic happens to be a police car. The person in it gave what I thought wasn't the loss of love. So, I signalled to turn. He turned around and came after me in order to warn me, as he explained later, about the hazards of entering the road-
way in that manner.

I turned at the corner and on came the pursuit lights.
The siren wailing as we drove into the foothills, I headed
towards a sponsor's house. I'd been told to come visit if I
ever had a problem.

The sponsor came to the front yard to see what the noise
was as I pulled up at the curb, telling the person with me not
to move because the officer was going to pull a gun. The patrol
car drove up and parked diagonally across the front of us.
He got out, positioned himself behind the roof of it and
kept his gun drawn on us. As I was being frisked, I said,
"That feels good."

The sponsor said, "Shut up." And I did. Seems like I can
take direction very well when there's someone on hand to direct
me. Left to my own devices--it's a high speed chase.
I was taken to jail and my passenger let go. It was sug-
gested by the court that I could volunteer for a program if I
wanted to participate in some community service since it didn't
appear like jail or fine would do me any good. The court felt
I was a person who got nervous when the police came and would
thus take off.

I nodded approval and was released on my own recognizance.
I served 80 hours volunteer action doing clerical work.
This proved a blessing in disguise, later when I was in the
same court. Because of this O.R. I was able to also be released.
I'd been to pick somebody up at a recovery house and drove
back to the place where several of us on the program were living.
As I arrived, someone was making sandwiches. As that person
grew to the phone, I moved the sandwiches over, got out some more
bread and started making more for those of us who had just
shown up. I guess someone thought I was taking the other sand-
wiches because I was right in the middle of watching peanut butter
swirl when I felt a lot of energy coming my way. In one motion,
I turned and watched myself slapping someone down to the floor
and then have another person rush into the kitchen to get me.

After sticking that person with the knife, neither of us
could believe it, so I was charged again with the same consequences. Fortunately, the knife being used to swirl peanut butter had been a dull metal one instead of a sharp steak.

The police were called. An arrest for assault and trespassing followed when I was living there and the other person who was visiting had attacked me. Because of the previous O.R. requirements having been met, I was released even though people were trying to detain me for some testing.

On the trial date, I was freed of the charges because the other person had failed to appear in court. Thank God. All of us have since made amends and we're friendly with each other now. We're no longer fighting over peanut butter sandwiches. So, I'm glad nobody was dead because we have a lot in common now that we're clean and serene. A kiss on the cheek to each of them.

My feelings about people, places and things may seem the same today as when I first got here, yet, my reactions to them are much more serene. That is—my reaction to my reactions to people, places and things is better. The program is working to help me be a fellow among fellows in N.A. and the community.

Being clean is one amend being made because I'm no longer part of the problem. I'm part of the program. Being clean is an important amend. I'm no longer being an intentional problem to the community. A clean addict in N.A. is one of the community's most important assets. We're all a resource in helping the addict who still suffers. I remember going back to all the meetings I'd gotten my early cleanliness and making amends for my actions new on the program. The people said, "That's okay." I was told not to be so hard on myself; I'd reminded them what it used to be like. All of it had served its purpose.

The 12-Steps have a lot of meaning to me because they helped me understand the power of prayer. Praying can lift negative thoughts. The Serenity Prayer is very helpful. However, I've progressed to the point that gratitude speaks
There was a job once that taught me a lot about prayer. I was going up the elevator on the outside of a building under construction and the foreman was explaining the need to clean the stairwells at the end of the floor we had now reached. I went from listening closely to looking off the horizon and it felt like everything had suddenly jumped off the building. I was shaking when at the stairwell. So, I prayed to have God remove my fear of heights. No sooner had this happened when the foreman came back and handed me a wire brush.

I was told to get a safety belt and clean the couplings that attach the prefabricated walls to the structure of the building. These had been covered by the fireproofing being done. I went to the construction box, got a safety belt and went over to a girder, rabbled it and started cleaning a coupling.

The foreman came up and asked what I was doing. "I'm cleaning the couplings."

"Where's your safety belt?"

"Right here, " I said, pointing to the belt around my waist.

"Where's the hookup?"

"I couldn't find one."

"You're safety tools aren't going to work unless you use them."

Having a tendency to think of things in terms of the program, I thought, "The 12-Steps aren't going to work unless I use them."

"If you have a problem, come see me," he said.

"If I had a problem, go see the sponsor." I already knew that one.

He got me a hookup and I concentrated only on doing what was immediately in front of me to do. As a result, my fear was gone. I moved from hookup to hookup until the task of cleaning the couplings resolved itself. However, I promised
myself to be careful what I prayed for because I might get it. Then one night, I was walking beside a road and thinking about a course I was taking and the certificate being offered. I thought, "I'd sure like to get that certificate." And a van swerved to avoid a rut, straightened up and just missed me. "Not that certificate," I said. From now on, not only was I going to be careful what I prayed for, I was going to be very specific.

I began to actually realize the power of prayer. This stuff works. It got to a point I had to be very careful what I even wrote on paper. During one phase of recovery, I was writing some short range goals and it dawned on me as I re-read the list that there was nothing I could do to accomplish any of it besides just stay clean and continue going to meetings. I turned the inventory over to God. A month or so after this, I'm looking for something at my desk and I find the list of short range goals that had seemed so impossible back then. Every item on the inventory had been taken care of. And I hadn't done anything besides turn it over to God and keep going to meetings clean. This had an impact on me.

I no longer wanted to have the responsibility of prayer. I began praying for just God's will for me and the power to do it. Then, it dawned on me. As a person whose life and will were turned over to God, prayer seemed a lack of faith in God's ability to know what's best for me. I now use my God given energy in the act of giving thanks. Whatever the day brings, I give thanks. I know God has a plan for my spiritual progress. I'm willing to accept whatever God has in store for me. It's no longer a bad day or a good day; it's just, "Thanks for the day."

Thank God for a day clean. Any time an addict gets through a day clean by the grace of God, that's a successful day. Everything else is an opportunity to grasp and develop the spiritual principles of this Fellowship. The opportunity is also here to depend in God and merge into God's love.
Practicing this program in every living situation, helps me give my using time to N.A. All day the 12-Steps work to ease the tension. Sometimes there's so many things happening that seem crazy, I don't have to act crazy any more.

As a clean member of N.A., I'm doing 12-Step work by being an example of the program working and by applying the principles in all my affairs. Nothing else works or worked until letting go, coming into N.A. and letting God develop my spiritual progress. I love this society of clean addicts. I didn't get me clean. We did. God and all of us living clean together did it.

Now that I practiced the 12-Steps on my drug addiction, I know they work. Knowing they work, I apply them to every area of my life. Like I'm powerless over being happy, and my life is unmanageable because of it. I'm coming to believe God will restore me to sanity as far as being happy is concerned. I'm turning my happiness over to the care of God. Now I'll do some inventory of being happy and admit it's possible to survive back to back days of being happy clean.

There's something about the Fellowship of the Spirit that's noticeable at the meetings. We actually are in this together. There's a climate. An atomosphere of cleanliness. An environment of serenity. When it's raining it's not just raining on me. It's important to show up at the meetings and help form a recovery pocket system for each other. Being together with clean addicts is very encouraging.

Even when I was new and thought I couldn't sleep, knowing you were here in case I needed to call on the phone, helped me get the body rest I needed to function even though my mind was off somewhere in a thinkathon.

As I progressed in recovery, the realization came that I'm addicted to being in the here and now. Not being in the present has caused me to feel withdrawal pains. I'm addicted to the energy God has available to enjoy living in the here and now. I'm addicted to God's love.
When I'm thinking about the past—I feel guilty about not being in the present. When I'm thinking about the future—I feel anxious about not being in the present. So, I use guilt and anxiety as signs of the severance pain of withdrawal from the present. I'm withdrawing into the past when I feel guilty and I'm projecting into the future when I feel anxious. I need to have the faith and the courage to live in the here and now. God and the 12-Steps provide what I need. The 12-Steps are a way back into the present. I love being clean.

I love it when people say, "When we got what we needed we found it's what we wanted all along." Of course, some languages the terms need and want are reversed. Thank God, cleanliness is the language of the spiritual heart.

What I need to hear in meetings today is the same thing I needed to hear in those first meetings. "Don't allow yourself to stop going to meetings. Moderate your life; continue going to meetings; give as you would receive; live, laugh, love and be happy."

Drug addiction is a progressive, fatal disease. Once drugs become a problem, either the problem is removed or the problem takes over complete control—and then, the problem removes the person.

God removes my dependency on drugs and gives me the faith and courage to live clean in the present by going to meetings regularly and traveling the 12-Steps as guides to spiritual progress.

I'm told by the people with lengths of cleanliness that unresolved reservations seem to allow people to pick up the first whatever, "Some people feel they may be able to do it and always come back. It's tough to get back. It's tough to stay back. It's easier said than done."

I'm grateful I've given all my reservations to God. I'm an addict. To use drugs is to die. I can no longer deny drugs are a problem. I can't deny my life is unmanageable. I'm powerless over drug addiction.
Living a life of cleanliness and serenity is a beautiful way of being. I'm glad God's given me cleanliness, and the ability and opportunity to attend meetings regularly. Continuing to go to meetings, applying the 12-Steps and depending in God are the best insurances for cleanliness and serenity. Every bit of it has been worth it.

Slowly, gradually, it happens. Being clean and serene is fun.

Keep the clean and serene faith.

God works. The meetings work, The 12-Steps work. The tools and Fellowship of N.A. work. Whatever works for you to keep you clean and enjoying spiritual progress is more important now than it's ever been. We don't ever have to use drugs again. Be clean. Here in N.A. is a way to be clean and happy.

The joy of being clean and helping others live clean is with us. Welcome to N.A. The literature, the 12-Steps, the meetings and God are yours to enjoy. God is loving every moment of it--we might as well.
LONG DISTANCE RECOVERY

My name is Jim, and I'm a junkie. When I was about nine years old, my dad, who was a truck driver, turned me on to speed and juice. I started using these heavily and got into glue. I was mostly looking for some camaraderie, and I spent most of my early teens just hanging out.

I got into cough syrup and inhalers. I really cut back on the booze, because I didn't like the hangovers. I started to think that there might be something wrong with me, and I asked my parents to get me some kind of help from a psychologist or psychiatrist. They told me that I was all right, and that this was just a stage I was going through.

I was working by this time and I was a hard worker. I would always throw myself into anything I did.

When I was 16, I was jailed for the first time. I had done a hit and run while I was loaded. I started devoting my time to raising hell.

When I was about 17 or 18, I killed an old man in a car wreck while I was loaded. This didn't affect me too much at the time. I just thought it was something that happened and was just a bit of bad luck for both of us.

I started making excuses for my behavior, and that turned into my main occupation when I drank. I would drink to black out. I first started thinking about stopping everything and just killing myself.

Though I was a good worker, I tended to miss days and going loaded. So, I changed jobs often. In one year, I had 13 W-2 forms. It was when I was about 19 that I first hit "skid row". I did odd jobs, panhandled and occasionally rode the rails. I owned what I had on and nothing else.
After doing this for a bit, I decided to clean up. So, I took a bath, got some clothes and a job. I managed to stop using for about 18 months. I met a lady during this time that I married. She was an epileptic and I started eating her barbs and copping extra scripts.

We had a child and I thought that I was finally going to be able to stay under control.

I had an accident while working that landed me in the hospital for about two months. I got introduced to Darvon and other pain killers there.

When I got out, the bills were really piled up. I decided that I was going to pay them all fast. I got a second full time job and started using speed to keep me going. I would get up at 10:00 P.M. and do some speed to get me up. I would work until 7:00 A.M. and then eat, some more speed and go to a bar until 8:00 A.M. when I went back to work. I went back to the bar with the guys for lunch. I went home at 4:00 P.M., ate dinner, drank some whiskey to pass out so I could get some sleep.

After about six months of this, I was doing so much drugs, my wife and I separated.

I was drafted shortly after that and wound up in the Army. In the Army, I did booze, drugs, LSD, mushrooms, peyote, pot, anything to keep me screwed up.

I hated people. I thought that I had been shit on and I was going to shit on them back.

I started dealing and other crimes to support my habit. I had no motivation at all. I started to run with some "peace freaks." I was just another low life with high ideals.

I hit the stockade a few times. I got sent to the Army shrinks, who were no help. I was having a lot of trouble and went to see a priest, even though I ranked God somewhere between Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny.

I got boosted out of the Army with an honorable discharge. I got that only because of the people that would have come down with me otherwise.
In the Army, I had been called "Joe Shit the Rag Man." I had no self-respect. People treated me like I was crazy and I did my best to live up to their expectations.

I got into cheap thrills. I did a lot of using and abusing the ladies. I was really screwed up.

I was still legally married, which I had done because of my son. My wife finally sued for divorce. That hurt really bad, even though I had been living with this girl for a year. She walked out on me about the same time, and that hurt a lot too.

I was always drunk and had booze nearby, so when I got picked up, the cops wouldn't look for anything else. After a long series of DWI's, public drunk charges and other alcohol-related offenses, I was paroled to A.A. for one year.

In A.A., I found a little hope. I was able to identify with the alcoholics there, somewhat, but it was not perfect. After about six months in A.A., I found N.A. There I could talk freely about my drug experiences, which I wasn't allowed to do at A.A.

It was at that first N.A. meeting that I felt really at home.

I was deep in debt and had no resources, but I stayed clean. I was still going from job to job and even tended bar for a while. I would still work the streets for a buck. I couldn't put two sentences together. I didn't know anything about prayer. All I could say was, "If there's anything up there, and I don't think there is--then help!" Eventually, from this beginning I was to get comfortable with my own Higher Power.

My ego continued to get me in trouble. I was either super high or super low--on some kind of ego trip. I was still hurting people and getting hurt by them. I had lady troubles. I finally got divorced. My girl friend moved out and then got killed. I got very depressed, but I didn't use. My attitude was, "I'll show you, you S.O.B.'s."
I finally found an N.A. meeting and got a copy of the "White Book," and started reading it. I was really beginning to feel at home in the meeting. There was one other junkie in town that was staying clean, and he got loaded. After that, I felt that N.A. had let me down.

I moved to Iowa and experienced the same problems I had had in Kansas. I tried to get the local drug council interested in N.A., but they were too interested in their own program, when they weren't arguing over money problems.

I heard a couple of good Fifth Steps during that time, however, and that inspired me and taught me to be more open about myself.

I had a lot of telephone contact with W.S.O. in California. When I couldn't take it any more, I would call W.S.O. and just talk.

I went to A.A. meetings in town and sat quietly in the back. I tried to get as much out of those meetings as I could.

I heard there was good A.A. and some N.A. in Lincoln, Nebraska, so I moved there. In those early days, there was only four or five of us in that first N.A. meeting in Lincoln. That group is still going today.

I learned to live just one day at a time. I started learning to be responsible. I did a lot of service work and did a lot of praying.

I was running with a new girl, and she got cleaned up and got some education. Life started to get a little easier. The financial problems started going away. There were still some hard times. I would get depressed and sometimes, I thought about getting loaded. Sometimes I just had to stand still and hurt.

N.A. in Lincoln would start to grow and build up, and then it would drop to one or two clean addicts. But it got better each time when I stuck it out.

I now had enough money to travel a little and could get to new meetings outside Lincoln. I started attending N.A. conventions which were a real shot in the arm.
I enjoy helping junkies trying to recover. I try to do what I can so they won't die loaded. I have been to a lot of funerals.

Early on in A.A. I picked up the slogan KISS--Keep It Simple, Stupid. I try to work a simple program.

The fellowship in Lincoln began to grow. Today, we are active in world service.

I am more comfortable with God and myself today. I have all kinds of mood changes: sometimes I was a lazy, no good SOB; sometimes I was Okay; sometimes it seemed I was back-sliding. No matter what, however, I haven't had to use. It is still a struggle, at times. But the longer I am clean, the more responsible I am. The longer I am clean, the more I am somebody. Today, I do live one day at a time. Today, I care. I try to live and love somebody. Today, I can dream and make plans. But most importantly, I accept it as it is today. I thank God for both the good and the bad. I try to handle my fears as they come up.

Today I am not lonely. I have learned to be myself. I can let others get close.

I have learned that I am not unique. I have learned that I am not strange. I am just a junkie doing whatever I need to do in order to recover.

I have been re-united with my family. My ex-wife and I are on speaking terms. We are friends. My parents accept, respect and admire me. My son accepts me as I am.

I have changed my attitude to one of gratitude. My serenity is taxed from time to time, but I know more serenity is just around the corner. There is always hope.

I have learned that I grow by studying the steps and traditions and putting them into practice in my life to the best of my ability. I grow by going to meetings.

I am especially grateful for the principles of spirituality and anonymity. Today, I am part of a large and growing, beautiful fellowship. I have hopes for it to grow even more. I feel we best grow when we are most anonymous...
working the program and working with others. I look for a larger fellowship so that we can all become more anonymous in our service work.
I came into the program from the streets. For me there was no medical detox. The whole weight of what I had physically done to myself came down when I stopped using. I had a job I could not afford to lose and a host of living responsibilities I could not afford to walk away from. In my addicted head, I had sold myself on the notion that it was as bad to go into an institution as it was to keep using. So I got sicker in an attempt to get better.

Too, I was scared of putting myself in an institution. I was melted into the passenger seat of the car that delivered me to my first meeting. I was too sick to drive and too busy thinking up excuses for changing my mind about the meeting to notice "it was time."

What I heard at that first meeting made me uncomfortable. Even though I was hurting so bad, I could still pick up on the sincerity and caring of the message. By the end of the meeting, I had convinced myself that this was just a room full of psychos who could not handle dope, not addicts, so I made a steady pace for the door. I was stopped by a no-nonsense member who began to talk program. It was straight, up-front program spoken like one street addict to another, with no group therapy overtones.

I left feeling lousy, hurting, sick, but with the illusion shattered about recovery of people like me. I left with the first hope of my recovery. I believed that if I was going to do this without signing into the hospital, I had to completely surrender from the beginning or there would be no beginning.

The first week I was so raunchy with the green sweats that I could only make it to three meetings. All three were in institutions. After each meeting I felt so bad, and I had
this inexplicable feeling that I would never make it without
enrolling in a hospital for the full course. I had the mon-
key telling me that I would be back out in a couple of weeks,
so what's the use! But, one day at a time, I made it the
first week. At the end of the first week, I made a non-institu-
tional meeting where I could relax and listen without looking
over my shoulder. There was something in the ease with which
these people accepted my misery that there was no doubt they
were of my kind. With this meeting, I found a solid footing
for riding out the first weeks of the fog.

I felt like a reptile crawling onto a rock, waiting to be
stepped on by civilization. That first morning, I had to make
myself get up and go to work. All the while, I could sense
that big foot overhead about to crush me. I made it by making
it from hour to hour, from one break to the next break, from
lunch to the end of the day. It was the longest day of my
life. However, because people were used to seeing me in an
unusual state of being, the withdrawals did not stir any out
of the ordinary comments at work. I guess people around me
just knew I did not have much longer on this earth.

The first day I took time to memorize the Serenity Prayer.
Saying the prayer over and over in my head did not work a
major miracle, but it overrode the voice of that constantly
babbling monkey, saying, "It ain't no use...It ain't no use...
It ain't no use."

I felt really awkward praying; my monkey would say, "Who
are you kidding...Who are you kidding...Who are you kidding."
It was no coincidence that I heard about the monkey at my
first meetings. It was this image that saw me through detox.
I hated the self-doubt and feelings of uselessness the crea-
ture fed me. I hated the monkey enough those first few days
that I acquired the Power not to hand my life over to the
monkey. Hate for the monkey enabled me to find the softer
way, handing my life over to spiritual principles. Those
first days, it was hate for the monkey, and not love of God,
that kept the dope out. I knew that I was fighting
for my life and it was a melodramatic struggle for which I was poorly prepared.

I don't know how I looked the first week at work, muddling through the job, but I made it. My erratic behavior had long been accepted there and the withdrawals brought no comments or complaints from either co-workers or management. Only once did some active "users" offer to turn me on to a few Quaaludes and a little smoke to cool my jets. I yelled that nobody was going to kill me, and they backed away. The subject never came up again.

My memory was so shattered that I had to carry a note pad and make notes concerning everything. I could trust nothing to memory. I was sure of only one thing. I had been beaten by the dope and I was going to recover. I felt I couldn't afford to walk away from the job in a daze, because I knew I could handle it when I got better--"courage to change the things I can." So I carried my note pad, making notes and hoping the strange sounds and nauseous sweats would soon go away.

The saving grace of detox was that during the ever-changing mood-swings, just as I was about to climb the wall, there would come a period of simple ease, with some degree of comfort and a feeling that I was okay.

After the first week of realizing how I had been physically raped by the monkey, I stepped into the emotional struggle. The emotional battle is where the Program made its greatest impact on my monkey. The Fellowship could not take the hurt out of detox for me, but they did set in motion the wheels which led me to what recovery is all about--the spiritual awakening just around the corner waiting to stomp the life out of the monkey.

I believe the Spiritual Awakening began for me when I stopped backing away and allowed the hugs and smiles into my life; I let the Fellowship replace the running mates.

Meetings every night filled the bill on what to do about my self-centered, pitiful condition, how to handle the miserable problem. The meetings kept me out of the presence...
of my old friends and their well-intentioned poison. I could
take my compulsive nature to a meeting and let myself be sur-
rounded by "It can be done," instead of "When are you gonna
backslide?"

After the first couple of weeks, I was able to pray
without feeling like a jerk. With the comfort of prayer
came the conviction of recovery. It has gotten better.
ONE THIRD OF MY LIFE

Today has been one of those days. It was Friday and Monday all together. Trying to get something done was like trying to make a connection when the heat was on. It was a panic all day, but when I got home and lay down for an hour, it felt good. I can go on a natural nod, because I have nothing up here now but a clear conscience. The old hassle is gone, I can lie down, take it easy and be comfortable. The longer I stay clean, the better it gets for me. It's real groovy to get up in the morning and not care whether it's foggy or the sun's shining, just so long as I'm clean. No cramps and no sweats now. I remember the times when I'd be afraid to go to sleep, because I had a "git up" there on the dresser; but if I took my "git up" I'd have nothing when I got up and then I'd be sick again.

I never thought I'd feel good being out here with the squares, but now I think sometimes I feel the same things they do. I don't have all those petty little things going through my mind now, like I did when I thought I was hip--so slick. The only one I was being hip and slick with was me. Everybody else could see right thru me. I don't have a running nose anymore and no itches unless it's an allergy or something. I can go home now at night to clean sheets and blankets, say my little prayers, and go to sleep. It's real good for me. Yesterday was pay-day. I went out and bought myself a few presents--not X-mas shoplifting you know. Now, I can go thru these stores and not even a temptation to steal. I was thinking of this when I said X-mas shopping. This is my third X-mas on the bricks and I can't think of anything I've stolen since I've been out of the joint. I feel that I was basically honest from childhood, I stole to keep up my habit, to get my stuff, to keep my head on.
my chest to keep my stomach from grinding and to keep my nose
from running—that nose, it was always running whether I was
sick or not.

My story is similar to many others, I hit one nuthouse
when I was 13, I really don't remember much about it. That
was on an O.D. of amphetamines, they thought I was a manic-
depressive till I cleaned up off the pills and then they figured
I was just a neurotic.

It progressed though. I started to make the joints. I'm
thirty now and there's twelve and a half years gone out of
my life like this, and twice at Ft. Worth. Man, I sure don't
want anymore of it. Since I've been out of the joint about
three years I can't say I haven't had the temptation. I
can't say I haven't had some obsession, I can't say I haven't
had the passing thought of wanting to use because I have had
at times. Now, however, it's like the passing thought of
"There is a real nice car there. I'd like one like that," and
then it's gone and so is the thought. I notice that the times
and the periods are getting farther apart when they happen.
I haven't had a driving obsession to get my head on my chest
for over two years now, and this is really something. I now
try to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I
understand Him. Sometimes I like to try to play God and run
everything but it doesn't work that way. The longer I stay
around and stay clean, the groovier it gets. The last time
I came out, I was a scared, sniveling little snot, double
hip, double slick, still walking that walk and talking that
talk. Now, I go back to the institutions every week I can
make it. I went back to my home group a while back and it
was greater than my birthday. This was a T.I. Federal and
you know those guys accepted me back and were glad to see me.

I gave a lot of them a hard time, with the attitudes
I used to have. At that time nothing was any good, everything
was rotten, except dope. Sure, I had a craving for narcotics,
but anything that would get my feet off the ground at that
time I was ready for it. Now, however, I know that anything
that would get my feet off the ground that isn't an airplane, will head me for real trouble. I sincerely believe this, I don't know if I work the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability or not, but I do know I've been clean about three years by practicing them the best I can.

When things start buggin' me now, I know where most of the trouble lies: me. Now, I find I have a greater tolerance for people and a lot more patience all around; this is a big change for me. Practicing the principles of this program, the way I understand them and staying clean a day at a time and sharing experiences with other addicts who are new to the program, has changed my whole outlook on life. It's a good way to live.
I can't do any more time

I came to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous as an addict, out of the California Institution for Women at Corona. I came the first night I got out and it's been here that I've learned how to live, so that it hasn't been necessary for me to drink, or to use pills--barbiturates, amphetamines, or tranquilizers--or to use any narcotics, in my daily life. It has been here that I've learned a lot about myself, because we are so very much alike. I've always seen another side of myself, whenever problems and suggested solutions have been discussed at our meetings. I have learned, from those who are following the program of recovery to the best of their ability, how I can do the same if I am willing to make the effort. Also I have learned from those who have made mistakes. I feel bad when I see that some leave this Fellowship to try the old way again, but I know that I don't have to do that if I don't want to. Also it has not been necessary for me to steal or to write any bad checks.

My addiction goes way back. I was drinking alcoholicly, when I first started at sixteen, and I realize today, that the reason for that was, I was sick to being with. I had this emotional illness and it was very deep. I don't think that if I hadn't been emotionally ill to begin with, that I would have been carried away with alcohol and drugs. When it became noticeable that I was using alcohol more and more, being in the nursing profession, I tried experimenting with drugs. It grew and grew and became a horrible problem. Altho' this is certainly a suicidal path in itself I did, when I was aware and in lucid moments, realize I was hopelessly addicted. I did not know that there was any answer. There really wasn't at that time. It was in San Francisco, not knowing which way to
turn, that I tried suicide and was unsuccessful. I was twenty-six years old at that time. I now think that if it had been possible for me, I would have come to this program like a lot who are here today, at that same age. My pattern, however, continued and when I finally reached Camarillo I had lost not only my self-respect but the respect and love of my family, my children, and my husband. I had lost my home and my profession. Somehow or other, I hadn't reached the point where I wanted to try this way of life or to try it all the way. I just had to go on and try in my own way. I tried drugs again and alcohol again and was finally committed to the Institution at Corona three times. The last time I went there I just felt that I couldn't do any more time. I didn't immediately connect it with my addiction. I just couldn't do any more time. It wasn't the thought I can't use drugs, just I can't do any more time. I just felt completely hopeless and helpless and I didn't have any answers. All of my emotional and spiritual pride had gone. I'm sure that at Corona they doubted my sincerity in ever wanting to do anything about my problem. However, I did want to do something about it, and I know that this program doesn't work until we really do want it for ourselves. It's not for people who need it but for people who want it. I finally wanted it so bad I knocked on the doors of psychiatrists, psychologists, chaplains and anywhere I could.

I think one of the counselors at Corona, who just naturally loves all people, gave me a lot of encouragement, for I thoroughly took my first three steps. I admitted I was powerless over alcohol and my addictions, that my life was unmanageable. I had tried so many things so I decided a Power greater than myself could restore my sanity and to the best of my ability I turned my life and my will over to the care of God as I understood Him and tried in my daily life to understand God. I had read all kinds of metaphysical books, I agreed with them and thought they were great, but I never took any action on them. I never tried any faith in my daily living. It's amazing getting just this far, how I began to get a little honesty and could see myself as I was.
doubted that I could get honest but I became aware of my-
self by looking outside myself, at the addicts around me
and getting to know them and understand them, and be friendly
with them. I would like to give credit where credit is due
and I do believe that my daily attendance at psychotherapy
groups in Corona with very understanding psychologists helped
me become aware of myself so that I might do something about
my problem; that when I came out, I thought, Oh! can I make
it outside? So many times, institutions took so many years
out of my life, that I wondered if I could stay clean and sober
and do ordinary things. I doubted whether I could go ahead
with just normal living but God has seen fit to see that I
have been provided for in this last year and a half. I've
been able to work regularly, I didn't have steady jobs at first
but there was never any long period in between them. Although
for a time I threw out the idea of going back to my profes-
sion, which is nursing, I have since reconsidered this and
am now in the process of perhaps returning to full-time nurs-
ing. With the help of some very understanding people I have
met, the future here looks very bright. In the meantime, I
give myself, as best I can, to my job every day and have been
doing it successfully, despite the fact that when I left
Corona everyone thought I was unemployable.

To me this is a spiritual program and the maintenance
and growth of a spiritual experience. Without the kind of
help and the therapy of one addict talking to and helping
another, I know that it wouldn't have been possible for me.
The obsession to use drugs or to drink has been completely re-
moved from me during this period, and I know that it's only
by the grace of God, I now give my attention to my daily
problems. It's amazing, having had a pattern of fear,
anxiety and resentments and self-pity, how much of this
too had been removed. No longer do these sway my life. I
ask for help every morning and I count my blessings every
night and I'm real grateful that I don't have to go through
the sickness that accompanies the taking of drugs of any kind,
including alcohol. I think one of the biggest things that helped me here, was that this is a program of complete abstinence. I got over the idea that I had a dual problem. I don't have a problem with drugs or alcohol, I have a living problem, and this is all I need to think about today. I have a lot of help from my sponsor, it seemed that everyone had let me down, both family and friends. I don't know what I would have done had it not been for the doors that she opened in her letters. She shared her experience, her strength and her hope with me, and it was very beneficial. She continues to be my very good friend. Here in N.A., I have found a family, friends, and a way of life, my own family has also been restored to me through working these steps, and not through directly working on the problem. A lot of wonderful things have happened to me, I can't conceive of anything ever happening that would make me want to forget this way of life.
THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

In writing this I hope that I can help other addicts like myself, who are trying to overcome their addiction by substituting one thing for another, that was my pattern. I started drinking, whenever possible, at the age of fourteen. With this I added weed so that I could feel at ease and be comfortable with my surroundings in the social activities in high school. At seventeen, I started on heroin and quickly became addicted. After using heroin for one and a half years, I decided to turn myself in to Ft. Worth. When they accepted my application, I got scared and joined the Army after kicking at home. I thought that being away from my environment, I would be able to solve my problem. Even here I found myself going AWOL to get more heroin. I was then shipped to Europe and thought that if I just drank, that would be the answer, but again I found nothing but trouble. Upon my release I came back home to the same environment, again I was using heroin and various other sedatives. This lasted for two years. The rat race really began when I tried to clean up--cough syrup, bennies, fixes, etc. By now, I didn't know where one addiction left off and the other started. A year before I came to Narcotics Anonymous I found myself hopelessly addicted to cough syrup, drinking five or six 4 oz. bottles a day. I needed help so I went to a doctor; he prescribed dexedrine and would give me a shot that made me feel good; I found myself going to him practically every day. This continued for about eight months and I was very happy with my new found legal addiction. I was also getting codeine from a different doctor. I now became insanely afraid and began drinking, too; this went on around the clock for a month and I ended up in a mental
institution. After being released from the hospital, I thought I was free from narcotics and now I could drink socially. I soon found out I could not. It was then that I sought help through N.A.

Here I learned that my real problem did not lie in the drugs, including alcohol, that I had been using, but in a distorted personality that had developed over the years of my using and even before that. In N.A. I was able to help myself with the help of the others in the Fellowship. I find I am making progress in facing reality and I'm growing a day at a time. I find new interests now, that mean something, and realize that that was one of the things which I was looking for in drugs. Sometimes I still find it difficult to face things but I'm no longer alone and can always find someone to help me over the rough and confused spots. I have finally found people like myself who understand how I feel. I'm now able to help others to find what I have, if they really want it. I thank God, as I understand Him for this way of life.
SOMETHING MEANINGFUL

I am not the great leader or philosopher that I tried to make people believe I was. The great man that I tried to make believe I was, I know now, I am not. After fifteen years of trying to live this illusion, I now find that I am being accepted for just what I really am. All my life before this, I did things my way. If anyone else ever offered advice or suggestions, I rebuffed them with a closed mind without ever trying what they had to offer, to see whether it would succeed or fail. It seems, that, though my way always failed, I had to use or drink again, until repeated trips to jail began to convince me that something was wrong. I reached the point of desperately wanting to do something with my life that would be meaningful. I had to try something else that would work. I had found N.A. several years previous to this decision, but then I was not ready to change and although I closed the door on N.A. on many occasions, I have always been welcomed back every time.

Since I have become willing to do something about my life with the N.A. program, it has been fuller and with more meaning. I could not experience life before on a daily basis, without drugs, sedatives or alcohol. I needed these just to face each day. I know I have to alter this pattern of thinking and living if I am to stay completely clean. This I am doing through the principles of our program. Although I do not now desire or need narcotics, I have to fill the void left, with something worthwhile. I have found this in the fellowship of N.A. I have to stick with the winners and go in the same direction that they go, and as long as I follow the steps of the program, I know I can make it, too. Although I don't find the program easy, it is simple enough for a complicated person like me to follow.
I WAS DIFFERENT

My story may differ from others you have heard, in that, I was never arrested or hospitalized. I did, however, reach that point of utter despair which so many of us have experienced. It is not my track record that shows my addiction but rather my feelings and my life. Addiction and dependency were my way of life; the only way of life I knew for many years.

Thinking back, I must have taken one look at life and decided I didn't want any part of it. I came from a "good-old-fashioned, upper-middle-class broken home." I can't remember a time when I haven't been strung out. As a small child, I found out I could ease the pain with food, and here my drug addiction began.

I became part of the pill mania of the 1950's. Even at this time I found it hard to take medication as directed. I figured that two pills would do twice as much good as one. I remember hoarding pills, stealing from my mother's prescriptions, having a hard time making the pills last until the next refill.

I continued to use in this way throughout my early years. When I was in high school and the drug craze hit, the transition between drugstore dope and street dope was a natural. I had already been using drugs on a daily basis for nearly ten years; these drugs had virtually stopped working. I was plagued with adolescent feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. The only answer I had, was that if I took something I either was, felt or acted better.

The story of my street using is pretty normal. I used anything and everything available every day. It didn't matter what I took so long as I got high. Drugs seemed good
to me in those years. I was a crusader; I was an observer; I was afraid; and I was alone. Sometimes I felt all-powerful and sometimes I prayed for the comfort of idiocy (if only I didn't have to think). I remember feeling different—not quite human—and I couldn't stand it. I stayed in my natural state... LOADED.

In 1966, I think, I got turned on to heroin. After that, like so many of us, nothing else would do the thing for me. At first I joy-popped occasionally, and then used only on weekends; but a year later I had a habit, and two years later I flunked out of college and started working where my connection worked. I used stuff and dealt, and ran for another year-and-a-half before I got "Sick and tired of being sick and tired."

I found myself strung out and no longer able to function as a human being. During this last year of my using, I started looking for help. Nothing worked! Nothing helped!

Somewhere along the line I had gotten the telephone number of a man in N.A. Against my better judgment and without hope, I made what may well be the most important phone call of my life.

No one came to save me. I wasn't instantly cured. The man simply said that if I had a drug problem, I might benefit from the meetings. He gave me the address of a meeting for that night. It was too far to drive, and besides I was kicking. He also gave me the address of another meeting a couple of days later and closer to home. I promised him I'd go and have a look. When the night came, I was deathly afraid of the dope fiends I would find there. I knew I wasn't like the addict you read about in books or newspapers. Despite these fears I made my first meeting. I was dressed in a 3 piece black suit, black tie, and 84 hours off a two-and-a-half year run. I didn't want you to know what and who I was. I don't think I fooled anybody, I was screaming for help, and everybody knew it. I really don't remember much of that first meeting, but I must have heard something that
brought me back. The first feeling I do remember on this program was the gnawing fear that because I'd never been busted or hospitalized for drugs, I might not qualify and I might not qualify and I might not be accepted.

I used twice during my first two weeks around the program, and finally gave up. I no longer cared whether or not I qualified, I didn't care if I was accepted, I didn't even care what the people thought of me. I was too tired to care.

I don't remember exactly when, but shortly after I gave up, I began to get some hope that this program might work for me. I started to imitate some of the things the winners were doing. I got caught up in N.A. I felt good, it was great to be clean for the first time in years.

After I'd been around for about 6 months the novelty of being clean wore off, and I fell off that rosy cloud I'd been riding. It got hard. Somehow I survived those first doses of reality. I think the only things I had going for me then were the desire to stay clean, no matter what; faith that things would work out "OK," so long as I didn't use; and people who were willing to help when I asked for help. Since then, it's been an uphill fight, I've had to work to stay clean. I've found it necessary to go to many meetings, to work with newcomers, to participate in N.A., to get involved. I've had to work the 12 steps the best I could, and I've had to learn to live.

Today, my life is much simpler. I have a job I like, I'm comfortable in my marriage, I have real friends, and I'm active in N.A. This type of life seems to suit me fine. I used to spend my time looking for the magic; those people, places, and things, which would make my life ideal. I no longer have time for magic. I'm too busy learning how to live. It's a long slow process. Sometimes I think I'm going to go crazy. Sometimes I think "What's the use." Sometimes I back myself into that corner of self-obsession and think there's no way out. Sometimes I think I can't stand life's problems any more, but then this program pro-
vides an answer and the bad times pass. Most of the time
life's pretty good. And sometimes life is great, greater
than I can ever remember. I learned to like myself and found
friendship. I came to know myself a little bit and found
understanding. I found a little faith and from it freedom.
And I found service and learned that this provides the
fulfillment I need for happiness.
FEARFUL MOTHER

I thought an addict was a person who was using hard drugs, was on the streets or was in jail. My pattern was different, I got my drugs from a doctor or friends. I knew something was wrong yet I tried to do right, in working, in marriage and in raising my children. I really tried hard. I would be doing well and then I'd fail. It went on like this and each time it seemed like forever; it seemed like nothing would ever change. Wanting to be a good mother. Wanting to be a good wife. Wanting to be involved in society yet never feeling a part of it.

I went through years of telling my children "I'm sorry but this time it will be different." I went from one doctor to another asking for help. I went for counseling feeling everything will be alright now, but the inside was still saying "What is wrong?" I was changing jobs, changing doctors, changing drugs, trying different books, religions and hair colors. I moved from one area to another, changed friends and moved furniture. I went on vacations and also remained hidden in my home. So many things through the years. Constantly feeling, I'm wrong, I'm different, I'm a failure.

When I had my first child I liked it when they knocked me out; I liked the feeling of the drugs they gave me. It was a feeling that whatever is going on around me, I don't know and I don't care, really. Through the years the tranquilizers gave me the feeling that nothing is really that important. Toward the end, things became so mixed up I was not sure what was and what was not important. I was shaking inside and out. Drugs and alcohol (another form of drug) would not help. I was still trying, but very little. I
had quit work and was trying to go back but I couldn't.
I was trying to communicate with my family but I couldn't.
I would be on the couch afraid of everything. I was 103 lbs. and had sores on my lips and in my nose. I had diabetes and shook so that I had a hard time putting a spoon to my mouth. I felt I was out to kill myself and people around me were out to hurt me. Physically and mentally I had a breakdown. I had just become a grandmother and I could not even communicate with a small child. I was almost a vegetable. I wanted to be a part of living but did not know how. Part of me said I'd be better off dead and part of me said there has to be a better way of living.

When I started on the program of N.A. there were a lot of people who suggested just everyday things for me to do. Things like: eat, take a bath, get dressed, go for a walk, go to meetings. They told me, "Don't be afraid, we have all gone through this." I went to a lot of meetings through the years. One thing has stuck with me, one thing they said from the beginning, "Betty, you can stop running and you can be whatever you want to be and do whatever you want to do."

Since being on the program I have listened and watched many people and have seen them go through many ups and downs. I have used the teachings I felt were best for me. My work area has had to change and I have been going to school. I have had to relearn all the way back to the grammar school level. It has been slow for me but very rewarding.

I also decided that I need to know me better before I can have a meaningful relationship with a man. I am learning to communicate with my daughters. I am trying many things which I wanted to do for years. I am able to remember many things that I had pushed out of my mind. I have found that Betty is not that big pile of nothing but is someone and something that I never really stopped to look at or listen to. April 1 will be my fifth N.A. birthday. How's that for April Fool's day!
I am an addict. I used at least fifty different types of drugs on an on-going basis for a period of eighteen years.

I didn't know it when I started using, but I used drugs only for one reason; because I didn't like the way I felt. I wanted to feel better. I spent eighteen years trying to feel different, I couldn't face the everyday realities of life. Being a fat kid, fat all my life, I felt rejected.

I was born in Arizona in 1935 and I moved to California in the early 1940's. My family moved around from state to state and my father was married several times. He was what you would call a periodic alcoholic, either he was in a state of self-righteousness or a state of complete degradation. This is one of the many reasons we moved so often.

As I moved from school to school, I would relate various experiences that I had and I would talk about my various step-mothers, for some reason, I was thought to be a liar. It seemed the only company that accepted me, no matter where I went, was the so-called lower level people and I never felt I was a lower level person. It made me feel like I had some self-worth by being able to look down on them.

My family life was confused and painful but a lot of sound moral values were passed on to me in my upbringing.

I always made the attempt to stay employed and as a matter of fact, on most occasions, I managed to be self-employed in some type of business. I was even able to maintain some civic status by belonging to fraternal organizations.

I was 5'5" tall, and weighed 282 lbs. I ate compulsively to try to handle my feelings and emotions and to make me
feel better. As a matter of fact, this is how I originally got into using heavy drugs. I wanted to lose weight so desperately that I became willing to use heroin. I thought I would be smart enough not to get hooked and that I could use and lose my appetite, feel good and out-smart the game. I ended up in penitentiaries and jails and bounced around the country. This was the beginning of the end; not only was I a compulsive overeater and remained fat, but I was also addicted to the drugs I was using.

Somebody told me about the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous when I was in the complete stage of degradation and desperation. Seemingly, having no place to go, I walked into this fellowship feeling as low as a person can feel, like there was no way out; I was completely and totally morally bankrupt. I knew nothing about spiritual values. I knew nothing about living. Life ultimately was nothing but pain on a daily living basis. All I knew was to put something in me, food, drugs, alcohol, or to abuse sex to feel good; which just didn't do it for me any more. I couldn't get enough of anything.

When I came to this program, I found something that I had never experienced before - total acceptance for who and what I was. I was invited to keep coming back to a fellowship that told me there was no fees or dues, that I had already paid my dues, via my past life; and that if I kept coming back, I would find total freedom and a new way of life.

Today, many years later, I find that I am free from drug addiction, compulsive overeating, and I have status in the community. I have a nice home, family, executive position and most of all I have a personal relationship with my God, which has made all these things possible. I am able to feel good, to feel joyful, blissful and to feel serenity, even when things are not as good as they might be.

There is no question about it. I owe my life to the Narcotics Anonymous fellowship and God. I can only extend my hope that if you, too, are suffering as I once was,
that you will practice the principles of Narcotics Anonymous, and find freedom from pain and a meaningful, prosperous life.
APPENDICES
"A PHYSICIAN'S VIEWPOINT"

The subject presented in this book is of lifesaving importance to those afflicted with drug addiction and chemical dependency. I say this with a background as a clinical associate professor of both medicine and psychiatry with two years of formal training in addiction and alcoholism. As one of a new breed of medical specialists know as "addictionologist," I have a real sense of satisfaction and regard in being asked to contribute to the book of Narcotics Anonymous, a blueprint of recovery for the drug addict.

Six years ago, I attended my first meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. Three years ago, I sat on the floor of a small house in Marietta, Georgia, in another N.A. meeting. Because of my professional training, as well as my personal life, I was in-depth knowledgeable about Alcoholics Anonymous. I quickly recognized the need that this largely young group of drug addicts and alcoholics were responding in this meeting of N.A. Some years later, when one of the originators of the literature movement in N.A. suggested that I might contribute to the N.A. book from a medical specialist's standpoint, I was both flattered and humbled, because William D. Silkworth's letters of more than 40 years ago came to mind. There are profound truths and wisdom presented in his correspondence, and I would hope to be able in part to replicate this worthy contribution.

Since that first meeting, I have cared for many addicts, those suffering from addiction to narcotics, sedatives, stimulants, and hallucinogenic drugs as well as alcohol. It is now apparent that these individuals are not weak-willed, ignorant, lack guts or will power, nor are they bad or evil. They are certainly not crazy and most have no primary psychiatric disease. They do, however, suffer from a biochemical-genetic disease called drug addiction. As an addictionologist, with training in both medicine and psychiatry, I have watched and participated
in many forms of treatment. It is established truth that
the self-help groups of Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics
Anonymous are the single most effective treatment tool we
have. It is true that many individuals suffering from the
diseases of chemical dependency and drug addiction will need
hospitalization for detoxification. Many greatly benefit from
treatment centers where education into the disease concept is
taught and new, non-chemical coping concepts are tutored. But
critical to after-care in the drug addict is Narcotics Anonymous.

In addition, as I have observed N.A. through the years, an
increasing number of adolescents and adults have achieved clean­
liness through regular attendance at Narcotics Anonymous meet­
ings alone. So, I have come to appreciate N.A. and its value
both as a partial and a total treatment program.

There are many stories of recovery in this book which are
similar to those I have witnessed, played a part in. A pattern
runs through each of the "miracles of recovery" that are docu­
mented in these pages. First, the individuals recognized that
they were ill, sick, and needed help. Then through the precepts
and teachings of Narcotics Anonymous, they recognized the need
for a moral inventory and an acknowledgement of their faults
and weakness in their personality structure. Following was the
requirement to make amends to those they have harmed, either
psychologically or physically. Then, appreciating that the
best way to keep their cleanliness and recovery was to give it
away, they embarked on a life of helping others. Invariably in
those who achieved cleanliness and serenity, this was accompanied
by a feeling, often initially vague, tentative and undefined,
that they could no longer do this by themselves; that they needed
a power outside themselves. Many called this a Higher Power.
Some referred to it as the group; others called it God as they
understood Him; some combined them both. All agreed they couldn't
use mood-changing drugs and they couldn't get well by themselves.

I have watched the Narcotics Anonymous growth, as a com­
plement and a derivative of Alcoholics Anonymous. I saw that
tradition and practice had made A.A. a fellowship of usually
older people where the primary drug of choice was alcohol, al­
though Dr. Bob had used sedative drugs as well. A need existed for the new generation of chemically-dependent individuals where the drug of choice was narcotics, sedative-hypnotics, hallucinogens or stimulants and Narcotics Anonymous was born. Taken in perspective, there is no substance or excuse for conflict, as both fellowships are directed toward helping different segments of people suffering from a common illness—the disease of chemical dependency.

As the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has grown, so has the need for a primer, a guideline, a recovery map similar to the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have witnessed a segment of the effort in Atlanta, Georgia. A dedicated, unselfish group of individuals entirely without financial profit motive have banded with N.A. members throughout the United States to write this book. It is needed, indeed it is critical reading for those who wish to recover, using the guidelines of N.A.

Current medical and scientific evidence indicates that addiction to any and all drugs is a disease, a biochemical-genetic disorder, but we have no pills, no shots, no insulin to effect a cure today or in the near future.

Those of us who are medically trained and work with these addictive diseases are numbed by our impotence utilizing traditional medical and psychiatric techniques in curing people suffering and dying from drug addiction. Likewise, we are both impressed and humbled by witnessing the positive effects on the drug addicts who attend and follow the program of Narcotics Anonymous. As I used to give the drug inserts from the boxes of antibiotics to my patients, I will give those patients with drug addiction the book of N.A. It's simple; it's inexpensive; and above all, it works.

I am so reminded of Silkworth's words in the big book of A.A., as I say to you, "I sincerely advise you to read this book. Though you may have come as an unbeliever, or even to scoff, you may remain to pray and begin recovery." Cleanliness, peace and serenity await you at the end of its chapters.

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II.

¿QUIEN ES UN ADICTO?

La mayor parte de nosotros no tenemos que pensar dos veces acerca de esta pregunta. **Nosotros sabemos.** Nuestra vida entera y pensamientos estaban centrados en drogas en una forma u otra el conseguir y usar y encontrar modos y maneras para conseguir más. Nosotros usamos para vivir y vivimos para usar. Muy simplemente, un adicto es un hombre o una mujer quien su vida está controlada por drogas. Nosotros somos personas en las garras de una enfermedad continua y progresiva que termina siempre en los mismo: Carcel, Instituciones y Muerte.

¿QUE ES EL PROGRAMA DE NARCOTICOS ANONIMOS?

N.A. es una sociedad de hombres y mujeres para quien drogas eran un problema muy grande. Nosotros somos adictos recupera­dos que nos reunimos regularmente para ayudar uno al otro para quedarnos limpios. Este es un programa de abstinencia completa de todas drogas. Hay solamente "UN" requerimiento para hacerse miembro y eso es el honesto deseo de parar de usar. No hay ningún "tener que" en N.A. pero nosotros sugerimos que tengan su mente abierta y que se den una chanza. Nuestro programa es una serie de principios escritos tan simplemente que nosotros podemos seguirlos en nuestra vida diariamente. La cosa mas importante de eso es que "DAN RESULTADO."

No hay ninguna cuerda sujetos a N.A. No estamos unidos con ninguna otra organización, no tenemos directores, no hay cuotas de iniciación, o precio de entrada, no hay que firmar ningún contrato, o prometer nada a nadie. No estamos conectados con ningún
grupo político, religioso, o grupo de cumplimiento forzosa. y no estamos bajo ninguna inspección en cualquier momento. Cualquier puede asociarse sin hacerse caso de edad, raza, color, creencia, religión, o falta de religión.

No estamos interesados en que o cuanto has usado, o quienes eran tus conexiones, que has hecho en el pasado, que gran cantidad de cosas tienes, o que poco tienes, nos importa nada más lo que quieres hacer acerca de tu problema y como podemos ayudarte. El recién-llegado es la persona más importante en cualquier reunión, proque la única manera que nosotros podemos quedarnos con lo que tenemos, es dándolo. Con nuestra experiencia de grupos hemos aprendido que las personas que siguen viendo regularmente a nuestras reuniones son las que siguen limpiando.

COMO TRABAJA

Si tu quieres lo que nosotros tenemos que ofrecer, y estás bien dispuesto a hacer el esfuerzo para obtenerlo, entonces estás listo para tomar ciertos pasos. Estos son sugeridos nada más, pero son los principios que hicieron nuestra recuperación posible.

1. Admitimos que estábamos sin poder sobre nuestra adicción, que nuestra vida había llegado a ser in manejable.
2. Llegamos a creer que un poder más grande que nosotros mismos podía restablecernos la cordura.
3. Hicimos una decisión de dar nuestra voluntad y vida al cuidado de DIOS como nosotros lo entendemos.
4. Hicimos un inventario examinante y sin temor de nosotros mismos.
5. Admitimos a DIOS, a nosotros mismos y a otro ser humano la especie exacta de nuestros mal echos.
6. Estábamos enteramente listos para tener que DIOS nos quite todos los defectos de carácter.
7. Le pedimos humildemente a EL que nos quite nuestras faltas.
8. Hicimos una lista de todas las personas a quien le hicimos daño y nos hicimos voluntarios a hacerle compensación a todos ellos.
9. Le hicimos compensación a esas personas cuando posible, excepto cuando las lastimara a ellos o a otros.
10. Continuamos a tomar un inventario personal y cuando estábamos equivocados lo admitimos puntualmente.
11. Buscamos por rezo y meditación para mejorar nuestro contacto consciente con DIOS, como nosotros lo entendemos rezando nada más que por el conocimiento de la voluntad de EL para nosotros y el poder para llevarlo ha cabo.
12. Haber tenido un despertamiento espiritual al resultado de esos pasos, tratamos de llevar ha cabo este mensaje a adictos y practicar estos principales en todos nuestros asuntos.

Esto suena como una orden muy grande y no lo podemos hacer todo a una vez, no llegamos a ser adictos en un día, así que recuerden--LLEVA CON CALMA LAS COSAS.

Hay otra cosa que más que nada nos vencerá en nuestra recuperación, eso es la actitud de indiferencia o intolerancia hacia principales espirituales. Aunque no hay ningún--tener que--en N.A. hay tres cosas indispensables, están son, Honradez, Tener la mente abierta, y la Voluntad de tratar. Con esto andamos muy bien en nuestro camino.

Nosotros creemos que nuestro modo de plantear el problema de adición es completamente realista, porque el valor terapéutico de un adicto ayudando a otro adicto es sin paralelo. Nosotros sentimos que nuestro modo es práctico, porque un adicto puede entender y ayudar mejor a otro adicto. Nosotros creemos que lo más pronto que nos afrontamos con los problemas dentro de nuestra sociedad, en la vida do todos los días, así más rápido vamos a llegar a ser miembros aceptables, responsable y productivos de esa sociedad.
La única manera de mantenerse de obtener o continuando un vicio es que no se tome esa primera aguja, píldora o trago. Si tú eres como nosotros, ya sabes que uno es demasiado, y mil nunca van ha ser suficiente. Nosotros ponemos, gran enfasis en esto proque sabemos que cuando usamos drogas en cualquier forma, o sustituimos una por otra, soltamos nuestra adicción de nueve o creamos una nueva.

La sustitución de alcohol a causado que muchos adictos se formen una nueva adicción, que en su progresión traen tantos problemas como antes. A nosotros se nos parece alvidar que alcohol es una de las drogas más viejas. Aparentemente, parecemos ser gente con personalidades adictivas quienes son fuertemente susceptible a adicción alcoholics.

¿POR QUÉ ESTAMOS AQUI?

Antes de venir a la confraternidad de N.A. no podíamos manejar nuestra propia vida, no podíamos vivir o disfrutar de la vida como lo hacen otras personas. Nosotros teníamos que tener algo diferente y pensamos que lo habíamos encontrado en drogas. Habíamos puesto el uso de drogas antes del bienestar de nuestra familias, esposas, esposos y nuestros hijos. Teníamos que tener drogas a toda consta. Le hicimos daño a muchas personas pero mas que nada nos hicimos daño a nosotros mismos. Por nuestra inhabilidad do aceptar resposabilidades personales, estabamos creando nuestros propios problemas. Parecíamos ser incapaces de enfrentarnos con la vida en sus propios terminos.

Casi todos realizamos que en nuestra adicción, estabamos cometiendo suicidio despacio, pero tan astuto enemigos de la vida son narcoticos y sedantes que habíamos perdido el poder de hacer nada acerca de ello. La carcel no nos ayudo para nada. Medician, religion y psiquiatria no parecían tener ninguna respuesta que pudieramos usar. Todos estos métodos no fallaron, y en desesperacion buscamos ayuda de uno al otro en Narcoticos Anonimos.
Después de venir a N.A. realizamos que éramos gente enferma que sufrían de una enfermedad como Alcoholismo, Diabetes o Tuberculosis. No hay ninguna "CURA" para estas enfermedades, pero se pueden controlar a algún punto y entonces "Recuperación" es posible.

En N.A. seguimos u programa tomado prestado de Alcoholicos Anónimos. En los últimos cuarenta años, más de un millón de gente se ha recuperado en A.A. casi todos estaban tan desesperadamente adictos a alcohol como nosotros estábamos a drogas. Estamos profundamente agradecidos a la confraternidad de A.A. por haber apuntado el modo para nosotros poder encontrar una manera nueva de vivir.
III.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

A CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

June 1953: Six people met at Sun Valley, California for the purpose of organizing the first "AA-NA" group. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous were adapted for use by the group from the very beginning. Between mid-June and September 14, 1953, this original "governing" or "steering" committee held various meetings for the purpose of writing by-laws.

September 14, 1953: After checking with the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office, the committee voted to change the name from San Fernando Valley AA-NA to "Narcotics Anonymous."

September 21, 1953: The committee met one last time to iron out details for the first N.A. meeting.

October 5, 1953: The first meeting was held in facilities rented from the local Salvation Army Dad's Club, Sun Valley, California. Seventeen people attended that first meeting. These original members made a commitment to continue for one year, agreeing that one recovery would be "significant."

1956 (or later) The first N.A. (unofficial) publication, "Narcotics Anonymous," was printed. This was a brief (eight-page) information pamphlet containing the "20 Questions," a brief outline of N.A., the Twelve Steps and the addresses of groups at Studio City and San Diego, California.

November 1959: N.A., per se, disbanded briefly. It was almost immediately revived by several original members. The early years of N.A. were a period of slow growth.

1960: Entering the new decade, N.A. again entered a period of crisis. The Fellowship was still in a state of slow growth. During the early 1960's only four groups contributed to support of a general service office. All in California, they were at Studio City, Hollywood, Burbank and Los Angeles.
1962: The original white book, the pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published without stories.

1963: In order to insure unity of purpose, the general membership in California established a Board of Trustees. A literature sub-committee was established as part of the service arm of the Board of Trustees.

1966: The new white book with stories and a white cover was printed.

1967: The Board of Trustees was expanded in size.


1969: Because of continued growth, the limited capacity of the Board of Trustees to adequately coordinate a unified "world" effort and frequent regional conflicts, a decision was made by the Board of Trustees and the general membership to establish a central office. This central office was to function as a clearing house, rather than a legislative body.

As a result, the Parent Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous was created.

197-1971: The name, Parent Service Committee of Narcotics Anonymous, was changed to Narcotics Anonymous Central Office Committee.

July 23, 1971: The Board of Trustees authorized a central office.

November 5, 1971: The first "world" convention was held at LaMirada Country Club, LaMirada, California. The convention ran November 5 through November 7.

November 6, 1971: At a business meeting during the world convention, the general membership voted to elect a Narcotics Anonymous business manager with a "formal" office. Various problems followed the establishment of a business manager/business office--primarily money. There were inadequate resources to pay the manager and he was unable to serve without pay.

November 15, 1971: The financial statement for the general service office for January 15, 1971 through November 15, 1971, reported income received from groups in Georgia, Nevada, Colorado and Idaho, as well as California.

January 1972: The world central office opened at 2335 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles, CA.

February 15, 1972: The Board of Trustees authorized by letter the publication in hardback of an N.A. book on recovery--not yet written.

October 23, 1973: The first Area Service Committee, the San Fernando Valley (CA) A.S.C., was created.

November 1974: Following moves to 1346 Highland Ave., Los Angeles; a room in the Suicide Prevention Center, Los Angeles; a room above a bail bonding company on Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys; the World Service Office was moved to its present location in Sun Valley.

Following the move to Sun Valley, it was discovered that several boxes of records and other historical data had been lost.

Prior to the move to Sun Valley, the name had been officially changed from World Central Office to World Service Office.

November 15, 1975: At the California Service Conference, Arroyo Grande, CA, the first "N.A. Tree" was accepted for publication. In addition, the California Service conference authorized publication of a World Director.

November 17, 1975: The "N.A. Tree" was published. This publi­cation is the parent Service manual of Narcotics Anonymous.

January 7, 1976: The Board of Trustees accepted the "N.A. Tree" as an official N.A. publication.

August 28, 1976: The first foreign language (Spanish) publi­cation was authorized. This was followed by a German translation in late 1976, early 1977.

October 24, 1976: At the general business meeting of the Ventura County Convention, Ventura, CA, three major decisions were rendered: an "N.A. Tree" Committee was established to revise and republish that pamphlet; the qualifica­tions for Trustee as they now exist were established; and the decision for a "world Service Conference" was made.
November 13, 1976: The "first" World Service Conference was held at Ventura, CA.

January 25, 1977: The World Service Office was incorporated.

April 17, 1977: The first Regional Service Committee, the Southern California R.S.C., was created.

July 1977: The first "N.A. Newsletter" outside California (Kansas) began publication.

November 1977: The "second" W.S.C. was held in conjunction with the Seventh World Convention at San Francisco.

The conference was cancelled due to lack of quorum as defined by the "N. A. Tree." Only three people showed for the conference.

November 11, 1977: The Board of Trustees predicted by letter that the next two or three years would hold greater growth for the Fellowship than that of the preceding twenty-five years.

December 1977: Two more "N.A. Newsletters" appeared outside California, in Georgia and Pennsylvania.

During this period, through early 1978, printed copies of the white book were in short supply, and groups were furnished emergency photocopies.

February 1978: W.S.O. assumed publication of the Voice.

April 1, 1978: The "third" World Service Conference (the first as it is now known) opened at Van Nuys, CA. The basic concepts of world service and the World Service Conference as they now exist were formulated at this two-day conference.

The Literature Committee as it exists today was established at this conference.

Early 1979: Mainline began publication.

April 28-29, 1979: The World Service Conference, meeting in Los Angeles, directed the Literature Committee to conduct a World Literature Conference for the purpose of collecting material to write an "N.A. book on recovery."

May 19, 1979: The groundwork for a World Literature Conference was laid at a meeting in Atlanta, GA.
May 27, 1979: The steering committee for the World Literature Conference meeting in Atlanta, tentatively scheduled the conference for Wichita "in the fall."

August 26, 1979: The conference committee in Wichita held the first planning session for the conference.

October 6-7, 1979: The first W.L.C. was held at Wichita, KS. Attending the conference were a total of thirty-five members from Kansas, Ohio, Nebraska, Georgia, California, Tennessee and Virginia.

This conference established an initial style guide for the proposed book and began the task of cataloguing hundreds of pages of material submitted by the Fellowship worldwide. The Wichita conference staff guide was later edited and released in pamphlet form as "The Handbook for Narcotics Anonymous Literature Committee."

The Wichita Conference opened at 9:00 A.M. Saturday, October 6, at Ash House. Morning details included a presentation by various members of the steering committee on the history of N.A. literature and the need for a definitive text. The members then were presented a proposed workshop agenda and the session closed for lunch.

The conference reconvened in the Offices of Home Owners' Trust Insurance, Parklane Shopping Center, in workshop form at 1:00 P.M. The Saturday sessions closed at 4:30 P.M.

The conference reassembled at 9:00 A.M., Sunday, and continued in workshops until noon break. Reconvening at 1:00 P.M., the workshops presented a report to the full assembly. The conference ended with a group consciousness session to approve the two-days' work. The conference closed at 5:00 P.M.

In addition to preliminary work on the basic text, the Wichita conference established general guidelines for the Literature Committee concerning the need for a treasury, ways and means of raising money, the need for area newsletters and guidelines for publication, and expanding and improving the I.P. library.
Respective of the basic text, the conference proposed a Fellowship-wide effort that would be an N.A. work—not a supplement to the A.A. big book. Guidelines for collecting material were established. Of 62 proposed topics of material to be included, 59 topics were accepted. Fourteen chapter outlines were proposed and twelve were adopted.

More than 500 man-hours of effort went into the Wichita Conference.

Sept. 8-12, 1980:

The second W.L.C. was held at the Lincoln Federal Building, Lincoln, NB. Attending this conference were thirty-six members from Georgia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, British Columbia and Oregon.

The meeting opened with a background report on the growth and development of literature. Five achievable goals were proposed for the conference: establish an outline of chapter headings; inventory materials collected; collate material into outline form; select material ready for print; and determine further material needed.

The first goal was tentatively achieved on day one when the assembly, reporting back from workshop, adopted a ten-chapter outline with additional preface, introduction, dedication, personal stories and appendix.

Beginning with day two, the actual sorting of material began. Due to the large volume of materials, each chapter was subdivided in various categories. By the end of day three the inventory and sorting process had produced an initial draft of "Chapter One" ready for rewrite. By the end of day four, the ten chapters had been divided into nearly 100 sub-headings.

Prior to the end of the conference on day five, the various workshops had sorted through hundreds of pages of raw material and had produced 511 sheets of paste-up material, the genesis of the book. These 511 sheets were the basic outline of a rough draft. Of 42 pages of paste-up devoted to Chapter One, six final "rough draft" sheets were set aside as the "first draft." The conference ended with a book in recognizable form.
The members at the Lincoln conference worked around the clock during the last three days of the assembly. More than 1100 man-hours of labor went into this conference.

The third W.L.C. was held on campus at Memphis State University, Memphis, TN. The conference opened with 27 people from 8 states in attendance. The initial meeting of this conference established two goals: complete the final draft of the N.A. book; and submit the approved text to the Fellowship as a whole two months prior to May 1, 1981, the date of the World Convention, with final approval for a hardback publication to be sought at the Los Angeles convention.

Day two of the conference began with a consensus on workshop guidelines. It was decided by group conscious to divide into smaller groups and to put each chapter through more than one workshop. It was also decided to "workshop" one chapter at a time until a final draft was achieved.

Beginning with day two, the assembly began daily contact with the local areas. Members in various areas and regions were located to accept long distance calls for the purpose of further input, as well as to solicit funds.

From day one, January 31, through day nine, February 8, the conference worked nearly around the clock in shifts. Each line in every paragraph, on each page of every chapter went through several group-conscious workshops before reaching "final typing." Chapters were rewritten, revised, expanded, cut and edited several times. Not all of the final effort was done at Memphis. One chapter was roughed out in California and air-expressed to Memphis. One chapter travelled to Ohio with a committee member, and was re-written on the plane back from Ohio to Memphis. Long distance calls were made from coast to coast to verify input, assemble new data and to collect stories.

Some of the chapters were found to be in an acceptable first draft stage, based on the work performed at Lincoln. One chapter was incomplete through day six of the Memphis conference.
February 9, 1981:

During the course of the Memphis conference, more than 70 people from 13 states were in actual attendance at some time during the nine days. In addition, dozens more members from coast to coast were consulted by telephone and contributed either by phone, mail or air express.

At Memphis alone, more than 4,500 man-hours were expended in the various stages of writing, rewriting, assembling and final compilation. Nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette players, two telephones and a dictaphone were kept in almost continuous use; and more than 20,000 sheets of paper were used to produce 200 pages of basic text.

February 27, 1981:

The Memphis conference ended and the files, equipment and now-approved text of the review copy were moved to a local member's home. A small group of committee members from Kansas, Ohio, Georgia, California, and Tennessee remained to carry out the conference directive to have the work printed and assembled for mailing.

The members from Georgia, California, Kansas and Ohio eventually returned home and the few dedicated members from Tennessee continued working around the clock to coordinate efforts with the stenographer and printer. This group remained in constant telephone contact with committee members from Georgia, California, Oregon and Ohio.

The eleventh hour efforts of the group in Memphis included dozens of telephone calls to Georgia, Oregon, California, Missouri and other areas, as well as miles of driving from the work area to the stenographer to the printer; lengthy visits with a lawyer (for copyright of the review copy) and post office (for mailing permits); trips to Western Union to collect money orders and to the bank for deposits; the slow, tedious task of proofreading and final assembly of 1200 copies; and the actual addressing and mailing of the review copy to the Fellowship worldwide.

February 27, 1981: The review copy is mailed.
## IV.

**STYLE SHEET FOR COMPOSITION REVIEW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use the word/Phrases:</th>
<th>In reference to (instead of):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLEAN</td>
<td>Condition of abstinence from drugs (Sober)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLEAN TIME</td>
<td>Sobriety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDICT/ADDICTION</td>
<td>Identity as people powerless over chemicals (Drug Addict, Alcoholic, Drug Dependent, Drug Abuser, Dope Fiend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USING</td>
<td>Operating, Practicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOP</td>
<td>Quit (i.e., I didn't quit, I stopped using drugs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WE/US/OUR</td>
<td>Those, These, They (in reference to experience with addiction/recovery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEM'THEIR</td>
<td>He/She/His/Him/Her (remove gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USEFUL</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKING THE STEPS</td>
<td>Taking steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVING A DAY AT A TIME/LIVE TODAY/JUST FOR TODAY</td>
<td>One day at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAKE IT EASY</td>
<td>Easy does it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT WON'T LAST</td>
<td>This too shall pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIORITIES</td>
<td>First things first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHIEVE ADEQUACY NOT PERFECTION</td>
<td>Strive for progress rather than perfection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>