



ANONYMOUS

THE DYNAMIC FORCES OF CHANGE

#4

JANUARY 2024

A F P



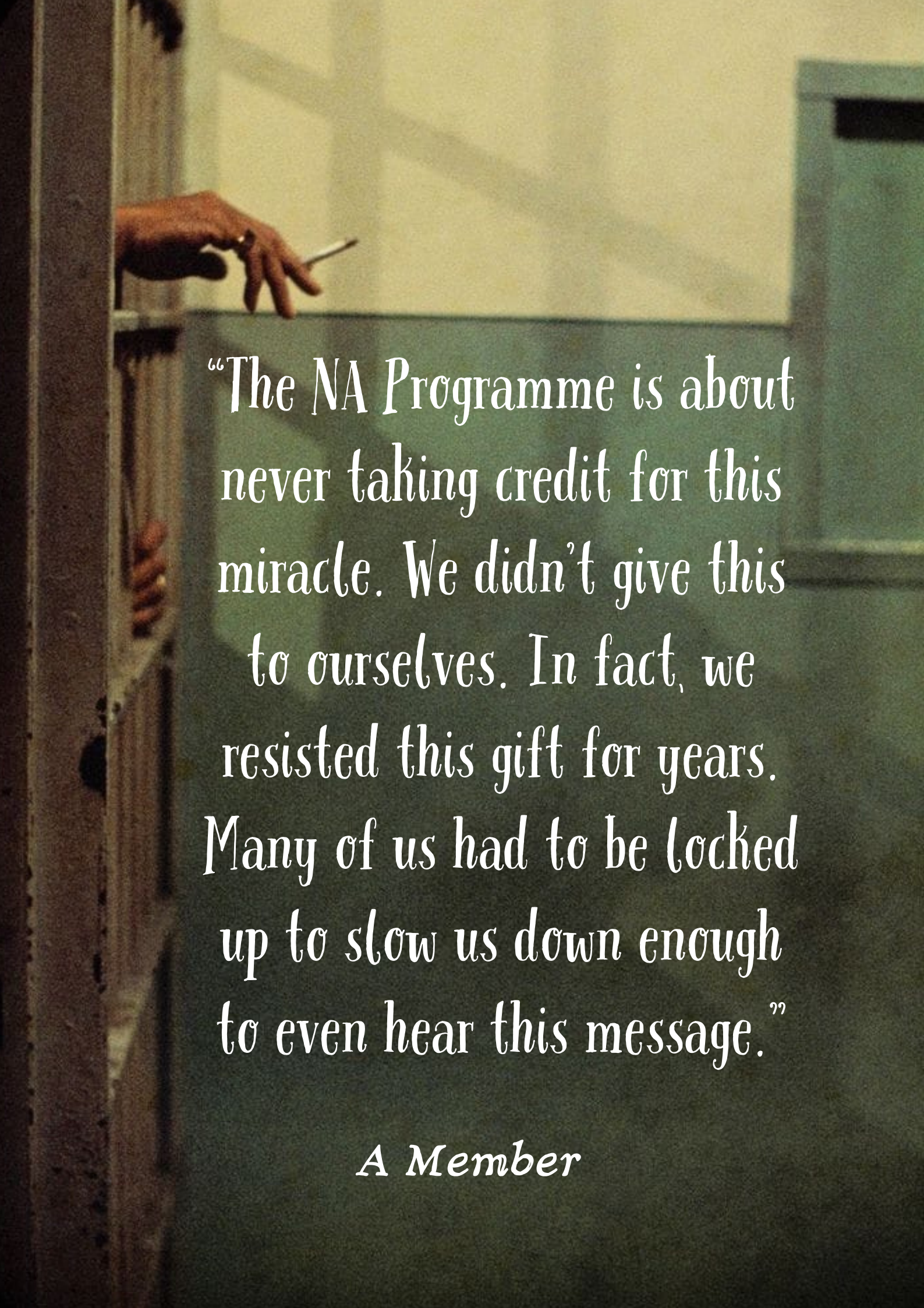
January 2024

“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.”

- The Basic Text, Recovery & Relapse



PHOTO OF ROGER T. BY
CHRISTOPHER K.

A photograph of a hand holding a lit cigarette, positioned behind a metal prison cell door. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid on the lower portion of the image.

“The NA Programme is about never taking credit for this miracle. We didn’t give this to ourselves. In fact, we resisted this gift for years. Many of us had to be locked up to slow us down enough to even hear this message.”

A Member

THE ANONYMOUS FREE PRESS

What's in store for 2024? How will WE stand up and be counted over the next 12 months? Does January bring a a renewal for you? Renewed willingness to embrace the miracle of NA? How can we more effectively contribute to the atmosphere of recovery and, therefore, carry the message? How can we best stay true to the solution and avoid the internal controversies which would seek to divert us? All big questions.

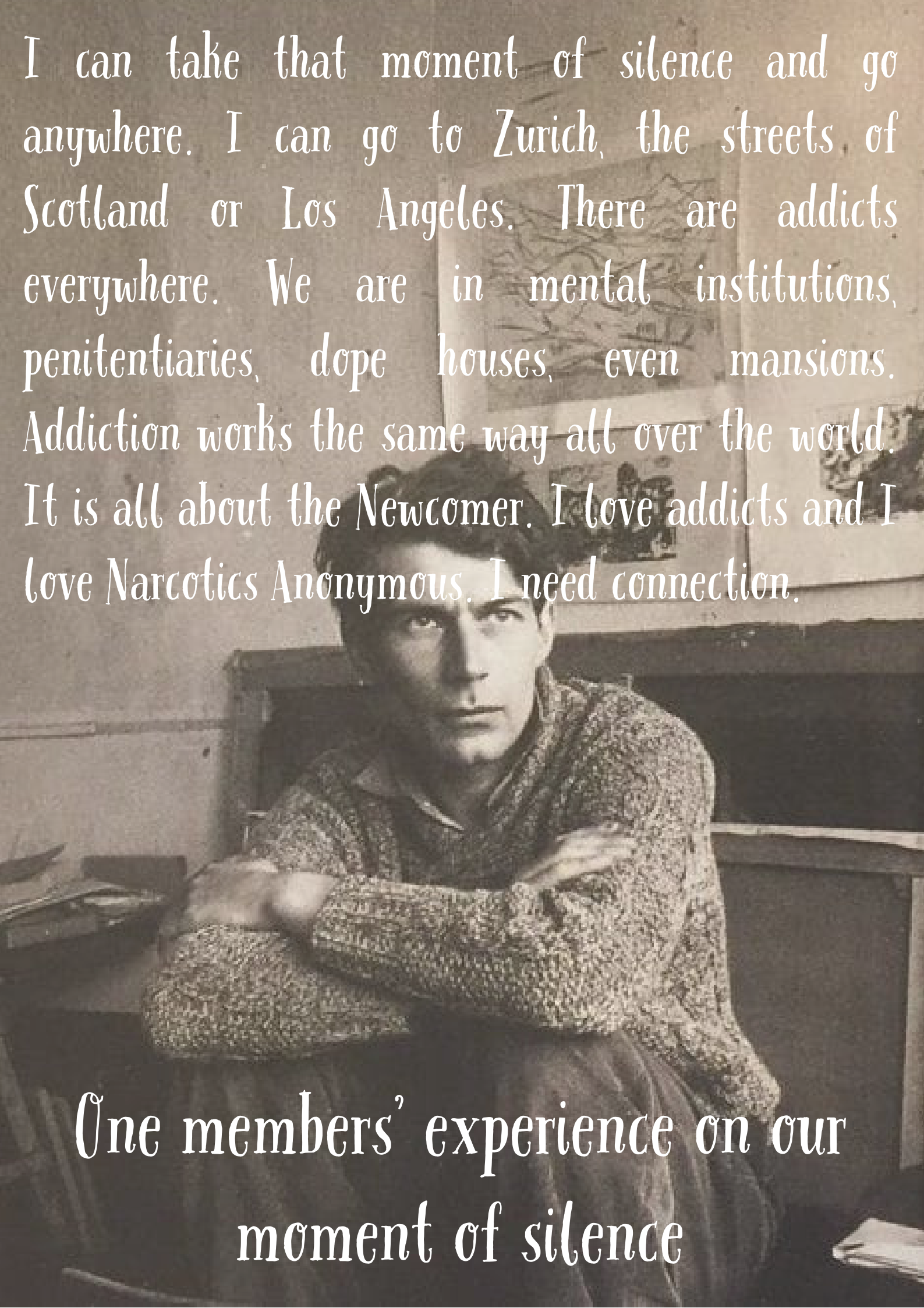
Since we launched the first issue of Anonymous in November, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to the Programme, the work of our predecessors and the power of addicts' stories both old and new. We have attracted 500 subscribers from all over the world. It would seem there is an appetite for these thought-provoking letters. The vast majority of members have been incredibly supportive and generous. We at the Anonymous Free Press are driven to deliver more beautiful insights, analysis, and stories from addicts in NA, as we strive to recover one day at a time. Addicts in recovery are a force for good and it is our mission to capture some of that in these pages. We set out our stall right from the start. We avoid polarities, close-mindedness, identity politics and connect with all that is good and pure about this God-given Programme of ours. Can you think of a better cause?

Take this latest edition – the Dynamic Forces of Change. We have an incredibly gentle and thoughtful member talking about the power of our 'moment of silence', what it means to him and why it is so important. This is so valuable to those who have never thought about it like that. We have stunning photographs of members, passed on now, but whose energy leaves a lasting impression to this day. We are proud to keep their contributions and memories alive through our pages. Again we have the regular posthumous contribution from one of our greatest thinkers, Greg P. (we can't get enough). He talks about spiritual principles and the need to play with a 'full deck'. Mind-blowing as ever. Much of the material we publish is about lubricating minds, challenging thinking, and opening doors to a more spiritual application of our Programme. This is what we are interested in, always seeking the enlightened path and demonstrating that the Narcotics Anonymous Programme is one that keeps on giving. We will stay true to our original mission.

Anonymous



*We have a 'universal'
programme. We have a 'just for
today' programme. We have a
'keep coming back' programme.
We wait for you before you get
here. That's why I make that
moment of silence real.*



I can take that moment of silence and go anywhere. I can go to Zurich, the streets of Scotland or Los Angeles. There are addicts everywhere. We are in mental institutions, penitentiaries, dope houses, even mansions. Addiction works the same way all over the world. It is all about the Newcomer. I love addicts and I love Narcotics Anonymous. I need connection.

One member's experience on our
moment of silence

HUMILITY

If your past doesn't keep you humble then there is no hope. Getting to the end of the road is a great moment. When something ends, something else can begin. The NA way. Before I would walk all day and all night. You would see me at 5am in the morning, finding way and means to get more. And you were with me then. That's why I love you so much because I know who you are. We were in those dark places together. We have always been together. But you are either with addicts who are using, or addicts who are getting clean. It's the only choice we have. Let's accept that so we can have a complete surrender and move on to the NA way. Fear ran my life. I needed a way out. This Programme is about never taking credit for this miracle.

A member from Atlanta, Georgia

We move in anonymity. It's our unity. It's our circle. How do you get fancy with an Eighth Step list like mine? The people in NA gave me the forgiveness that I needed so badly. How did obsession work in my life? So much denial. Years of justification. What did I do with all that heartbreak? What did I do with that anger and resentment? All the greed and all the lust? I hope I never lose perspective on where I have been.

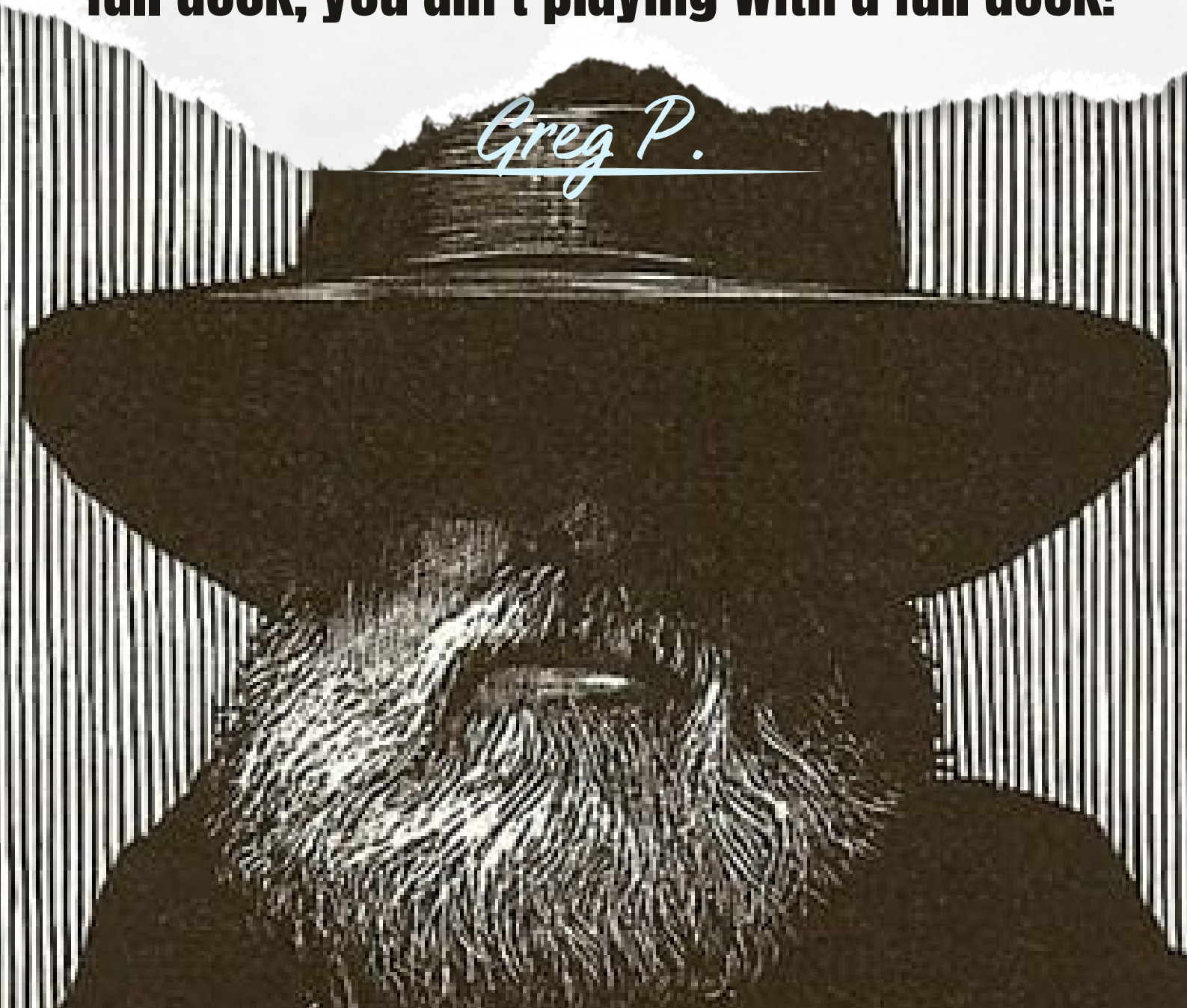


“My God removes my defects of character by giving me the ability not to act on them.”

Greg P.

Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. It's kind of like a set of chess pieces; anybody ever seen a pretty set of chess pieces, nice carved chess pieces? If there's one missing, it's not a set and you can't play chess. If you ain't playing with a full deck, you ain't playing with a full deck!

Greg P.



What if honesty always worked? What if being open to let other people in our lives always worked? What if that was a principle? What do we do when we don't practice that principle? What if letting people into our lives - the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using - what if that was a real principle? What if that worked 100% of the time - that principle? What do we get if we don't practice it - a big hole in our program?

You know, one of the things about that statement I said when I started out with "our program is a set of principles written so simply that we could follow them in our daily lives". It's kind of like a set of chess pieces; anybody ever seen a pretty set of chess pieces, nice carved chess pieces? If there's one missing, it's not a set and you can't play chess. You can have pretty chess pieces, you can move them around, and we can kind of make up a game similar to chess, but you ain't gonna play chess without a set of pieces. And you're not going to get all the benefits of recovery without a set of principles and as someone who has tried desperately to ignore certain principles in this thing we call Narcotics Anonymous, I can vouch for that. If you ain't playing with a full deck, you ain't playing with a full deck.

It's tough, it's tough - it's tough to get the goodies without playing with all the pieces, without the set. It didn't say a series of principles, it didn't say our program is a number of principles, it didn't say our program is spiritual principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. It said it is a set of principles. I think it is beneficial for any of us to do some tenth step work on that, to really take another "continuing to take inventory" and look at how we're doing with principles and see which ones we've left out of our set. Which ones are missing in our set? Is that something like a "searching, fearless moral inventory"? These things are so confusing; they all say the same thing, don't they? And they all describe a process and they all fit together. "Our program is a set of principles" - you can't play without the whole set. Oh God, isn't it strange?

Me and my younger sister Elaine were IV using and it was at the start of the HIV and AIDS epidemic here in the UK. She was 11 months younger than me, we were into Punk and we used together with her partner. I went for an AIDS test at the time and it was clear and they were like, 'cool, if you don't have it then none of us will have it'. But those two had actually contracted HIV and my younger sister Elaine went on to die in 1995 at the age of 25. I don't even think she was an addict. I used to say, 'she died of this disease'. But I'm not even sure. She was 25. She was a young, young woman.

A Member From London

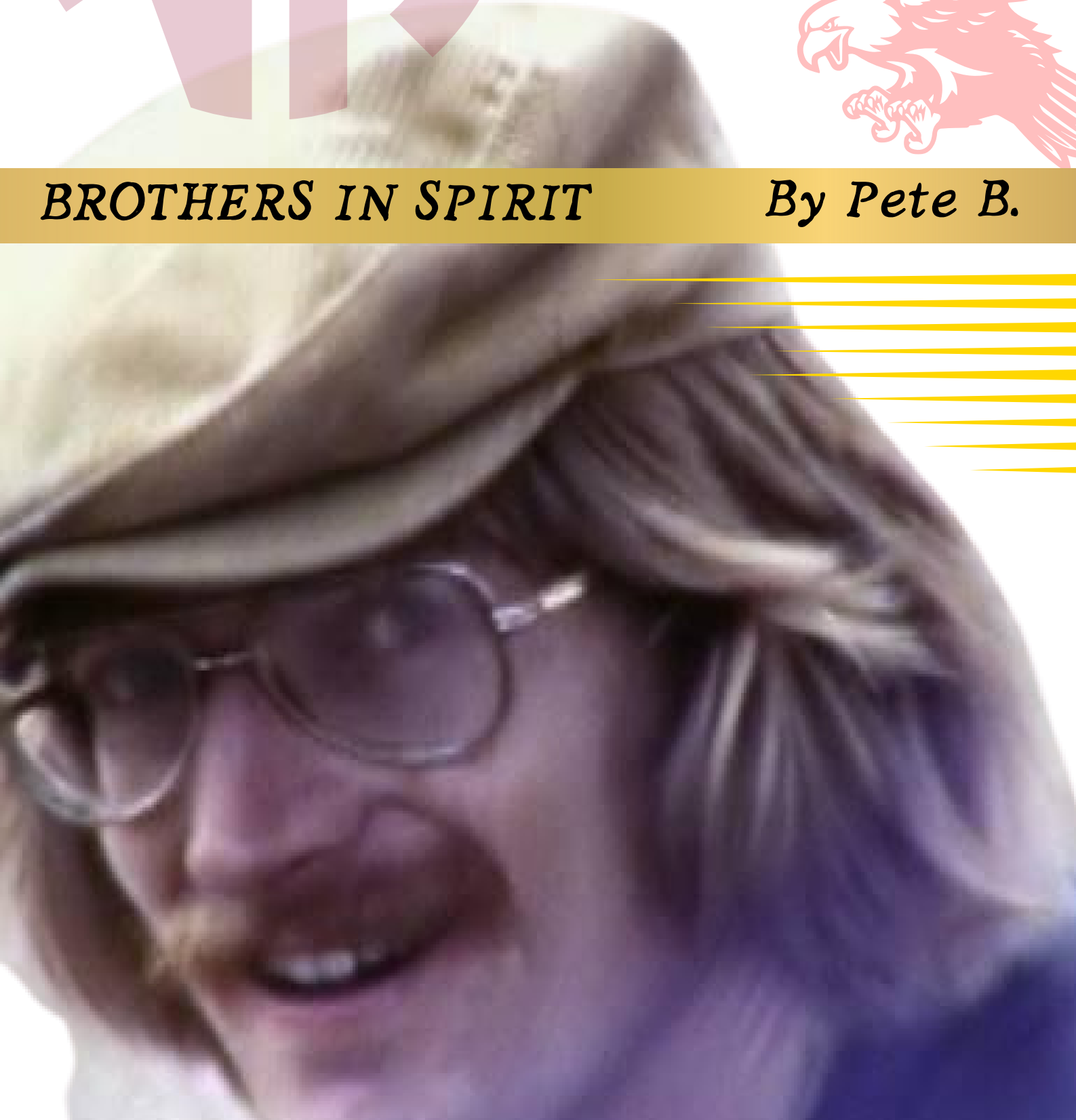
There were some really serious consequences as a result of using but even that wasn't a rock bottom. I didn't even get clean then. It was incredibly sad. My mum never got over that, neither did my dad and there is certainly a lot of stuff in my Step Work about Elaine passing away. There were major consequences from my using very early on and I just did not acknowledge it. I did not understand abstinence. The steady progression of the disease continued until I was in Amsterdam, begging on the streets in the middle of winter. Any semblance of manageability was gone. And like any good addict I just soldiered on. Some 20 years after Elaine's passing - in 2005 - I admitted a level of surrender. My eldest son who was 14 at the time said to me, 'If you are still doing that, I am not coming back here'. That did something to me. I accepted the offer of a detox and Narcotics Anonymous H&I came in and for the first time ever I heard the message of NA. I really loved the readings I heard from our literature, I heard someone who had used like I did and they had found a way out of it and this was really attractive to me. I found it really powerful and when I left the detox I dragged myself to a meeting that day. I got a Basic Text, I was clean and my life was vastly improving, but I still had the reins. I was picking and choosing which suggestions to follow. The disease was building up its strength again and, lo and behold, I picked up. And I went out for another 10 years. I did a marijuana grow in the family home - my son's bedroom. We got busted and me and my two eldest - kids who I had a responsibility of care to - were arrested. This is very difficult and painful for me and I have written about it in my Step Work. But I cannot change the past no matter how much I want to. Instead I want to demonstrate the transformation in my life because of the NA Programme. I had 32 years of active addict thinking to counteract. As a result of my painful hopelessness I did 90 meetings in 90 days. I needed it. My head was ruined. My job was to get my arse into a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I was in the middle of the solution. It was good. I was helping, doing the dishes, putting the chairs away. Anything to keep me in the middle and that is the beautiful thing about service. I put one foot in front of the other and I stuck around. Life can sometimes be difficult NA has carried me through the storm.

NIA



BROTHERS IN SPIRIT

By Pete B.



He was one of the kids in my first meeting - me an "old" 25, most of them teenagers. After debating leaving, a kid reached out to me - I stayed. They became my tribe. Where 1 went, 3 or 4 carloads followed. We took "Never Alone literally.

We were a creative crew - especially Phil. He was off-the-chain creative. Told that using another fellowship's step book was a tradition violation, we decided to write our own. We did it in Phil and Kenny's apartment. We called Bo S. from there and got involved with World Literature. I got swept up in it all and lost track of my friend when I moved out of state.

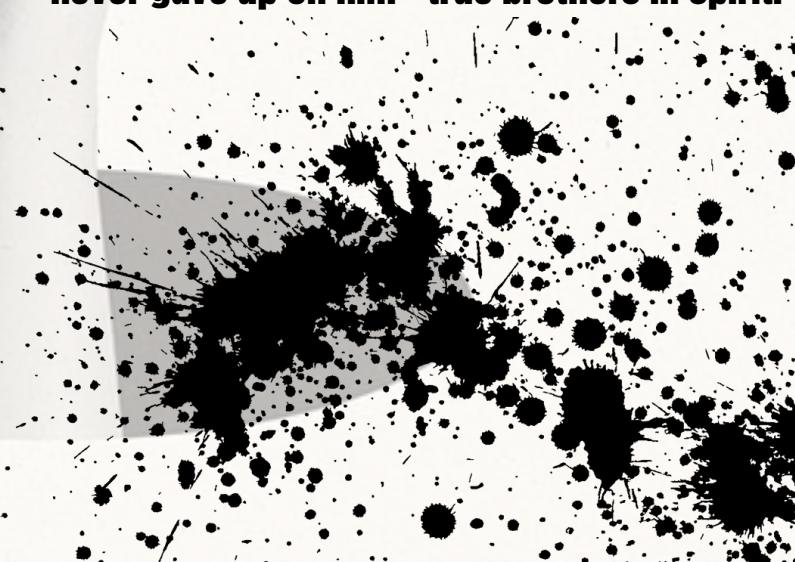
Fast forward 30 years. N.A. had a book, recovery had spread around the world. I'd missed most of that part. At 4 years clean, I needed more than service-based recovery. I found a sponsor and went through all 12 steps. Up to then, life on life's terms had been a difficult proposition. I'd gone through 17 jobs in 4 years clean. I'd had a complete inability to maintain a sustainable relationship.

The steps were a game-changer. I met and married a girl I'd been avoiding. I got a job that I still have. We traveled the world, raised a great son - we watched our dreams come true, and then some. We did most of this after our group got kicked out of N.A. Ironically, despite my involvement with the Basic Text, the group I found still used the Big Book to take addicts through the steps. N.A. hadn't developed a guide yet.

Recovery couldn't wait. I stuck with my group and never looked back - until Phil reached out to me. Thanks largely to him, I came back to N.A. 4 years ago.

He reminded me that I was his sponsor. Who knew? He was hosting a speaker jam. Twice in 2 years I sat in a meeting with a half dozen of the addicts I'd gotten clean with. All were still clean - all except Phil. He'd struggled to find sustainable recovery. He had a couple more relapses after that. Each one broke my heart, anew. But I never gave up on him, just as he'd never forgotten me. I'd seen too many miracles. You don't quit on anyone seeking recovery.

One day he called - something was different. He was moving across country - it sounded to me like he was running to freedom. I encouraged him to go. He reached out to me when he got there. We started going through the steps together. I was now using N.A. literature - they'd developed some guides while I was gone. He'd never gotten past a 4th step before. He did the work, and I got to witness a true miracle. We're now on the 12th Step, he's doing better than he ever has, he's sponsoring others for the first time, has a good job. Our zoom calls fill me with an indescribable joy. He didn't forget me, and I never gave up on him - true brothers in spirit.



The disease has great
interest in the Basic Text
collecting dust on your
coffee table.

We have a disease that
wants us to use these
books to keep the window
open at night.

Our freedom comes from
the literature.

It brings peace to our
heart.

**ANONYMOUS MEMBER FROM LOS
ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

A PRISONER was talking about the hell of being in jail, the treatment, the beatings. He was asked by a journalist, 'what is the toughest part of being in prison?'. He said, 'leaving'.

For some of us the toughest part is leaving. All the abuse we suffered in a relationship, all the anger and resentment, all the addiction, sometimes the hardest part is leaving.

The human mind can adapt to survival – a survival mentality which adapts to the conditions. That's why we can not even have a home and be ok with it. The problem is when you're in it long enough it becomes all you know. When better comes along we don't always jump on it. When getting clean comes along, we will go back to what it once was. We are glad you survived that overdose or that gunshot or that five years in prison. Survival is good. But survival is not the success that recovery has in mind for us. There is something you have to experience beyond survival mentality. Recovery is an inside job so it is more interested in freeing you on the inside than on the outside. Recovery is about freeing your spirit rather than your situation. And that is a tough message to swallow in a society that is more interested in changing our outward situation. Change her. Change the job. I've done that over and over, asking God to free me from 'it'. If 'it' gets better then I will get better. But the problem is when 'it' gets better but I get worse. I was just dragging my chains around. From one relationship to the next and got the same results. Sometimes we are in prison with no freedom on the inside but we paint the walls with a smile. But we are in a spiritual prison held by the bars of our emotions. Can you imagine having resentment down deep in your soul and you've got to live in that stuff? I've done that for too long. What I value most is freedom. We have a disease which robs use of any hope for a quality life. We have a disease which cripples our ability to experience freedom. But NA puts 12 Steps in front of us which is going to allow us to experience the real meaning of freedom. Freedom to love. Freedom to forgive. Freedom to care.

Freedom to chose God's will over self will. We have got the keys. We don't have to wait anymore for someone to bring us the keys. What are the keys? The key is trust. The key is faith. The key is honesty. The key is open mindedness. We have got the keys to freedom. If you live your life based on spiritual principles, 90 per cent of your decisions are already made.

We are born looking like our parents but we die looking like our decisions. We get the principles out of the book, into our heart and into our behaviour. But we have disease that's going to fight all the way. The disease hates the NA Programme because it doesn't want to get caught. Because if it get's caught it will have to return everything it stole from us. like joy, like freedom, like peace.

Our freedom comes from the literature. It brings peace to our heart. It is messed up to be carrying the same stuff at ten years' clean that you had at one day clean. There are certain things on the inside that need to be processed and released. That's why we write. What we don't write about we carry and what we carry robs us of our peace to the core. This stuff needs to be release and removed. Some of us have issues so deep that it isn't healed going over it just once. Some things you can pull out with two fingers and some issues need to be bulldozed. Bring the shovel in 6 and 7 is what my sponsor told me. I want to be free on the inside. I came from the projects in East LA, gangland, cholos. I put tattoos on both sides of my neck and I did my time in prison. All the tattoos were part of the mask because if you came at me I had to look like I could take you. This stuff kept me alive in that environment but when I got here I strategically hung out with people who don't look like me, think like me, were raised like me. I took the tattoos off my neck, my chin and my hands. Then I started reading. Because I wanted to change.



*A Question of
Honesty*

**THE TRUTH IS LIKE A
LION. LET IT OUT. IT CAN
TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.**

How I wish I had taken heed of this thought-provoking statement when I got into my first serious relationship after getting clean. With a full set of Steps behind me and daily engagement with the Programme, it seems I was still allowing self-centred fear to spawn various acts of dishonesty. But lying to my new 'dream girl' about being an addict almost sunk this love affair before it had even began.



The stigma of being an addict is one of the last things we overcome in societal terms, according to Our Symbol. We were a few weeks in and the question of when I was going to own up about my past was keeping me awake a night. I knew that if she Googled me, she would soon find out the truth. Why was it so difficult for me to grasp the nettle even though I knew this was a bridge I was going to have to cross? She was the 'forever girl' and I did not want to torpedo the relationship before it even began. So I disconnected with reality, rationalised and justified the ongoing dishonesty. After a few weeks the ticking time bomb which I had set with my own fear and avoidance of the truth detonated and she uncovered media reports of my drug case. The fallout wasn't pretty and my new love was distraught. 'Why didn't you tell me?', she said.

If only I had. It might have spared her the pain and confusion. Here I was, supposedly 'working a programme', and still hurting those closest to me. It turned out there was good reason for the reaction. Her dad had been sober in AA for more than a decade before relapsing and dying. She had been the little girl waiting outside the bar or lying awake at night wondering what state her father was going to come home in. When he stopped drinking and attending 12-step meetings, she then started going to Family meetings with her mum. If only I had rigorously practised honesty. She understood the disease better than most. It is maybe for this reason that she chose to forgive me. It was a lesson I will never forget.

ANONYMOUS





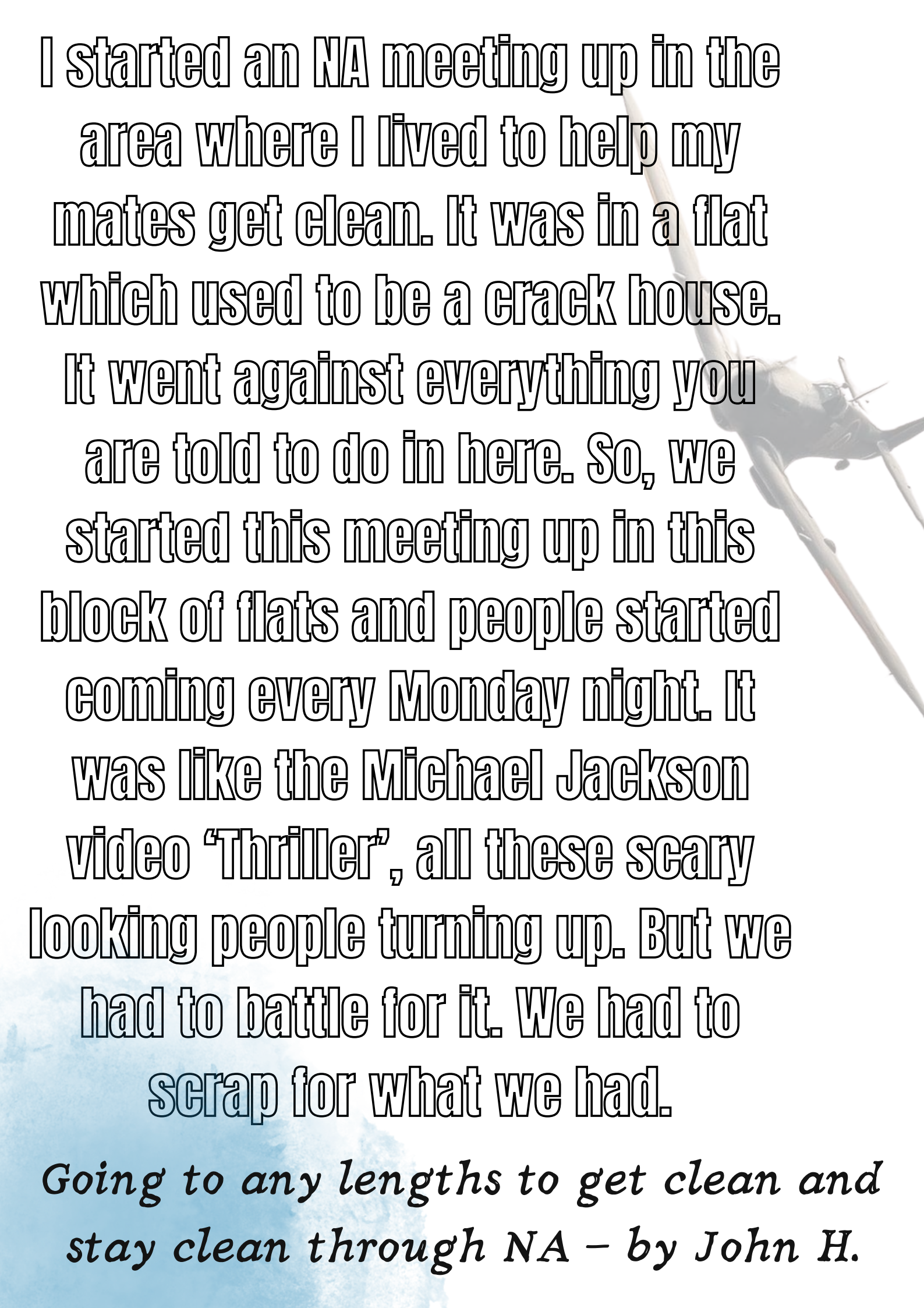
Photograph by Christopher K.



Roger T. by Gene L.

I met Roger in 1980/1981 when I was in rehab in Memphis. The treatment center would carry us to open A.A. meetings and that's where I met him.

Thanks to Joseph P, the treatment center got volunteers to help with the 3rd Literature Conference held at the University of Memphis formerly known as Memphis State. The world literature conference had been going on for several days when I saw Roger on college campus. Roger was attending a hospice meeting being held in the same building we were having the literature conference. I told him what we were doing and he said he would stop by after his meeting, He never left. Roger was swept up in the moment. He stayed at the conference the rest of the week and joined the NA movement that was happening at the time. He and I worked on the introduction to the Basic Text together shaping it with our own ideas and language. I am forever grateful to Roger and grateful to know the impact he made on so many people's lives. Roger, like so many others, volunteered and did the work without the need for credit, ownership and/or validation. We did what we did in our own little worlds to get another day clean and maybe in the hope that what we were doing might help others; this to me is the g-d of my understanding - doing things through people's actions, words and deeds. This is how I am able to see, feel, taste and touch the g-d of my understanding in this world. I am grateful to have known Roger and so many others that aren't here today that have unselfishly and anonymously given so much from their hearts to rest of the world in the hopes of one day an addict might experience the miracle of a day clean in NA.



I started an NA meeting up in the area where I lived to help my mates get clean. It was in a flat which used to be a crack house. It went against everything you are told to do in here. So, we started this meeting up in this block of flats and people started coming every Monday night. It was like the Michael Jackson video "Thriller", all these scary looking people turning up. But we had to battle for it. We had to scrap for what we had.

Going to any lengths to get clean and stay clean through NA – by John H.



A MIRACLE IN JOHANNESBURG

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH, 2023
290 ADDICTS IN TREATMENT RECEIVE 100
BASIC TEXTS AFTER NA FUNDRAISER**

ANONYMOUS



There was an old man on the beach and a tsunami hit. And there were all these sardines washed up on the beach. And this little old man was walking down and he grabbed one of these sardines, it was shaking and flapping around. He threw it back in the water. A group of young people were watching and shouted: 'Hey old man, what are you doing? There are thousands of sardines jumping up and down, dying, and you're worrying about one?'

And the old man said back to them; 'If you were that sardine it would make all the difference in the world to you, wouldn't it?' We are that one sardine God saved.





*Dudley S. after speaking at
WCNA 1987 in New Orleans.
Photograph by Christopher K.*

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