

ANONYMOUS

FOR THE VOICELESS

'DREAM UNTIL IT'S YOUR REALITY'

#2



A F P



**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. SEND ALL YOUR
STORY IDEAS, HISTORY AND CREATIVE TALENT
TO NEWS@ANONYMOUSFREEPRESS.COM**



TABLE OF CONTENT



PAGES 4/5: THE HELPLINE ISSUE

PAGES 6/7: DECADE ON UK HELPLINE

8/9: THE GOD I FOUND IN NA

10/11: DUDLEY S. INTERVIEW

12/13: MY HEART BROKE EVERY DAY

14/15: THE FELLOWSHIP IN GOD'S HANDS

16/17: SPONSORSHIP & SUGGESTIONS

18/19: WLC NO.7

20/21: ANGELS IN THE SNOW

22/23: JUNKY MOTHER

24/25: HOLD ON PAIN ENDS

26: STEP 10 QUESTIONS

27: ORIGINAL ARTIST

28: HONESTY OF SELF

29: CANDLELIT DINNER WITH GOD

30/31: A STEP 3 STORY

32: STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS '73

THE HELPLINE ISSUE



UKNA Helpline
0300 999 1212

DECEMBER 2023



We have had an incredible response to the first issue of *Anonymous* and that is important. It seems there is a huge appetite within the Fellowship for such a publication where we can all contribute as equals, whether writing about aspects of the Programme, using recovery as an inspiration for creativity or honoring our phenomenal history.

To have been able to acknowledge with love the great works from years gone by without controversy was so liberating. We certainly did not want to add to any disunity by favouring past methods over present structures or vice versa. We just wanted to celebrate all that is good and pure about this phenomenal Programme, and judging by the response, I think we succeeded. Spiritual principles are never in conflict.

So, on to issue 2 - the Helpline issue. All of us in NA are here because of somebody's service and one of the greatest acts of service we can get involved in is the NA Helpline.

This December issue also celebrates WLC 7 and themes like Sponsorship, Group Conscience and how the Steps can be applied in our lives.

We also delve into some quite big issues around making sense of the God concept in NA. Our Fellowship has something of a unique take on spirituality as we seek Freedom in recovery.

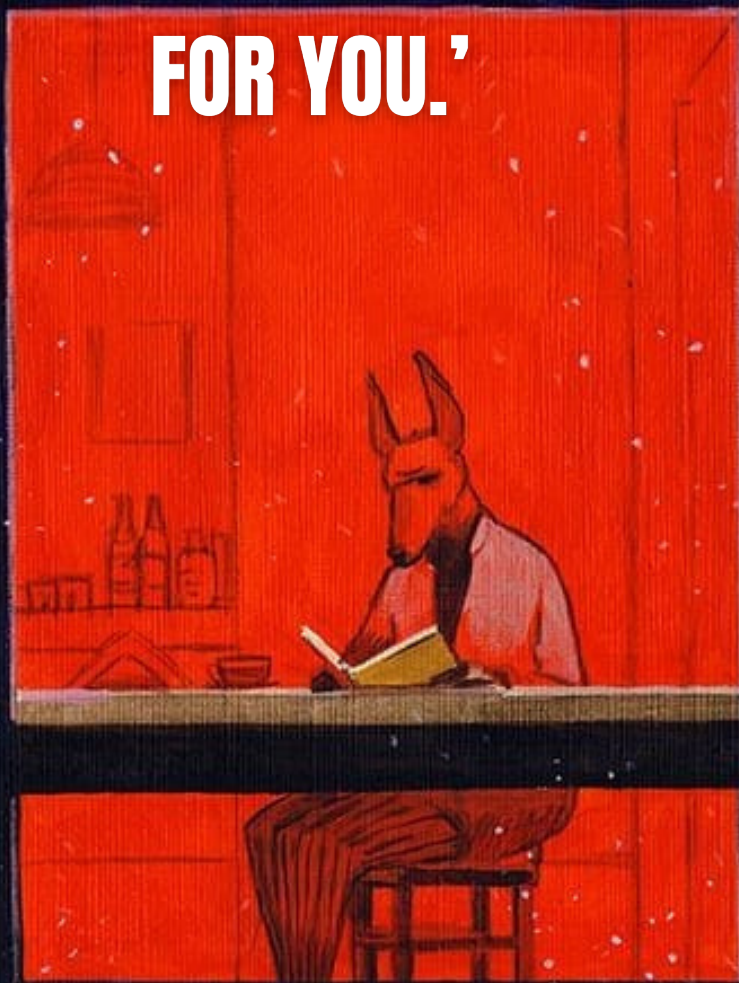
Remember folks! WE are NA so it is vital that all of you who want to contribute to the discourse around how we best fulfil our Primary Purpose get a chance to air your experience and perspective. Email us at news@anonymousfreepress.com and get involved. You never know who you are inspiring.

Every single one of us is needed to help make sure that more and more Newcomers find the incredible gift of daily reprieve.

We are also pleased to report that copies of *Anonymous* have been printed for inmates at a prison in British Columbia in Canada.

Anonymous Free Press.

**I HAD BEEN TALKING TO THE SAME GUY
ON THE NA HELPLINE FOR TWO OR
THREE HOURS EVERY NIGHT. FINALLY,
HE SAID TO ME, 'IF YOU EVER GET A
YEAR CLEAN IN THE PROGRAMME,
PROMISE ME YOU WILL DO FOR
SOMEBODY ELSE WHAT I HAVE DONE
FOR YOU.'**



By Scott B.

When I was nine years clean and doing the helpline, we lost the office in London and I was heartbroken. Then I got my testicular cancer diagnosis and I had one of my testicles removed and I was stuck at home for quite a while. Then I started doing the helpline from home by remote. My shift went from 4pm to 6pm on a Friday to covering other shifts when people were absent.



I started doing eight to ten shifts a week. They asked me if I was doing too much and I told them 'I need this', I wasn't getting to meetings and this was connecting me to them. Forget that it was people calling the helpline. For the rest of my eight and a half years of helpline service, after every call I said 'thank you'.

It was after that when 'we keep what we have by giving it away' took on real value for me. During those days there were many times when a call, not only made me feel like I was doing the next right thing, but it was someone for me to talk to. The more you do for NA, the more you get.

We talk about selfless service and when you are sitting in the rooms and someone says they were directed to a meeting and now they are a week clean, you feel a collective pride. We are part of a team. It is completely Anonymous. I came into the rooms but I regularly called the helpline for support and the guy I always spoke to me asked me to do helpline service when I was a year clean.

When I got to 11 months I answered a call for helpline service and got trained up. Because you would have people calling you up thinking you were going to get them narcotics.

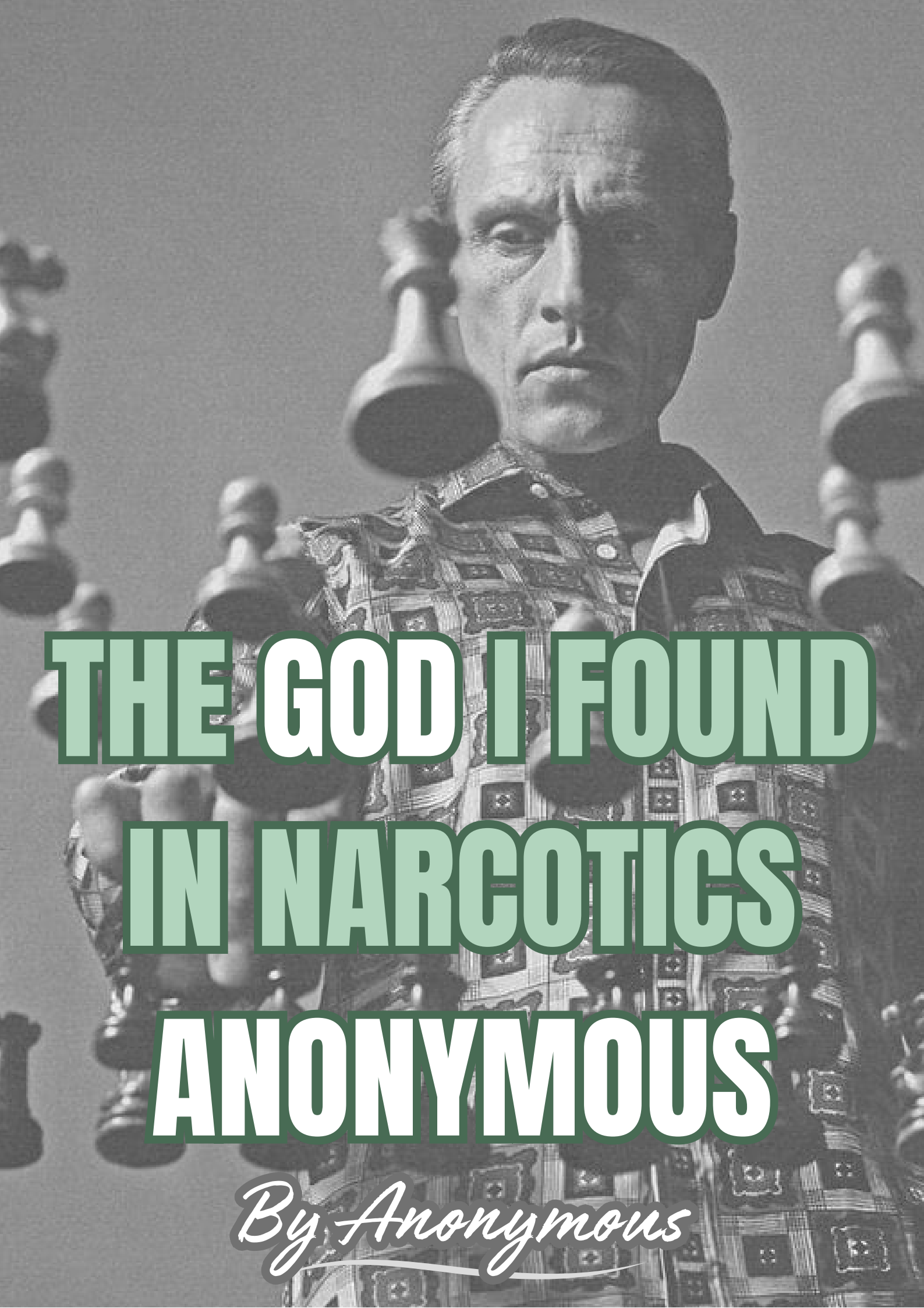
People screaming and shouting because they can't get drugs, family members who are looking for missing addicts. The helpline is always looking for volunteers, all you need is a year clean, access to a phone and two hours of your week. Four shifts a month is a service position. You have to have some experience to do the evening shifts because it isn't really addicts looking for meetings, it is frantic wives, the husband has gone missing, or they have stolen the kids Christmas money, or remortgaged the house. Sometimes when I finished a shift I would give my wife and hug.

She would ask me 'what is that for?' And I would say 'no reason'. But there was a reason. I knew what I had done during that two hour shift. We were providing basic information around meetings, a 12 step list around the UK etc, but also a little bit of care and listening.

People are calling for help and our job is to be there for them.

It taught me about commitment and being responsible. It also taught me to carry the message by taking Scott out of the equation. I am just an addict in recovery at the end of a phone. Service didn't keep me clean. Service kept me coming back.





**THE GOD I FOUND
IN NARCOTICS
ANONYMOUS**

By Anonymous

UNIVERSAL TRUTHS SERVING THE FUNCTION OF GOD

I've always thought unshakable faith very impressive. But I have never been a theist, let alone a deist. How was I to find a recovery God when I didn't believe in a creator? This was my process.

Somebody once told me: "Whatever shapes your actions and perspectives on a daily basis serves the function of God for YOU." That statement was like a nuclear blast demolishing a previously locked door around a seriously big and difficult question. How can God play a starring role in my recovery if I don't know what it is?

What I really liked about this thesis was that it felt tangible.

It seemed to marry up with the idea of the God "we find in NA" or "God is a word we use for convenience - we are only interested in the power behind it."

Is God the Programme - a set of principles written so simply we can follow them in our daily life?

My friend had more to say. He put forward the argument that we NEED a set of principles in our life. Without them we will live in painful confusion, unable to make sense of life. And, he said, whatever sits at the top of your pyramid of principles 'serves the function' of God.

Next question. What was at the top of my list of principles? Surrender, unconditional love, service? At this point I felt catalysed. On a mission. Determined to develop some faith of my own in a loving, caring Higher Power that could guide me in my recovery.

Enter Tradition 12 and the powerful notion that Anonymity contains EVERY spiritual principle. Could God, for me, be Anonymity?

Our Guiding Principles book says: "Anonymity allows us to experience equality. When we let go of our own opinions, histories and judgments of ourselves and each other, we can feel the presence of a Power in our meetings, and we can hear wisdom from any addict.

"Anonymity opens us up to grace. In anonymity we are finally allowed to be ourselves. Anonymity begins as letting go."

It goes on to say: "Just as white light contains every other colour within it, the principle of Anonymity contains every other spiritual principle. The core of our disease is self-centredness; its opposite is Freedom from self.

"Anonymity is so much more than not being identified by name, or having no name; it means we let go of things with which we have identified ourselves, and the ways we expect recognition.

'Anonymity means that we surrender to being part of something greater than ourselves.'

I sometimes call my High Power the "Ultimate Reality". Step 3 says it is our connection to reality which means we don't use - drugs in one form or another. It brings order to the chaos.

Now I see MY God as Anonymity - an ultimate authority (or Ultimate Reality) which reveals to me every spiritual principle and shows me where I need to apply it in any given situation.

Whether I do or not, depends now on the strength of my connection to God.

Tradition One states that our conscience is a reflection of our relationship with our Higher Power.

This also fits with the idea that we are a non-religious programme and that God for me is an ideal or a guiding light through the trials and tribulations of life as opposed to a creator or supernatural being.

NA gives us the freedom to find the God which works for us. No dogma, no enforced morality, no religiosity. We are part of a Fellowship which takes its "collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities".

In other words, equal status, group conscience recovery from the disease of addiction.

Total Freedom. Total Anonymity.



A black and white close-up portrait of an older man with short, light-colored hair. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the left of the camera. He is wearing a dark, vertically striped jacket over a light-colored collared shirt and a white V-neck sweater. The background is out of focus, showing a brick wall on the left and some indistinct shapes on the right.

DUDLEY S.
U.K. ORIGINAL

**TINKER
TAILOR
SOLDIER
ADDICT**

These are excerpts from a recorded interview with Dudley S before his passing in 2018

The first meeting I ever attended was on August 5th, 1979, in a club house that was then on Biscayne Boulevard in Miami. I, like several addicts in London, had been going around what I call the mother fellowship, looking for help. But we couldn't really talk about OUR stuff. We needed a place of our own.

It had never occurred to me that I was an addict but from my first meeting I felt completely at home. I read 'Why Are We Here?' and my eyes were swimming. I cried a lot. What was I going to do when I got home to London?

Within a year of that happening - August 5th, 1980 - we got an NA starter pack from Frankfurt in Germany and started the Milburn Street meeting in Chelsea. The rent was £3 a week negotiable. It was a Thursday. I was terrified. We had a few pamphlets and we didn't know what to do. So, we just sat there and read all the pamphlets. We were all crazy. I don't know how we didn't all kill each other!

The first suggestion I followed was 'keep coming back'. It was a very strange journey. I was in NA for 12 years and on all sorts of committees and holding service positions but I was still raging. I went to someone and said 'I want what you have, will you sponsor me?' I was prepared to go to any lengths to recover. I had done all this service and started a lot of meetings but hadn't done the Steps. I did the Steps deeply and enthusiastically and I came out of that process with a feeling of vulnerability and humility. That was the most valuable feeling.

I had done this chair at an NA convention in New Orleans, then California, but the third time I was asked I said 'no'. I didn't want to become a circuit speaker. I needed to stay connected with reality.

One of the most helpful remarks was 'the way we fail is by not adhering to spiritual principles'. And the three are honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. When I accept those three I can begin to have a spiritual understanding. And that was wonderful when I discovered that.

It is a hell of a privilege sponsoring people. I sponsored a deeply spiritual man in the final months of his life. He had cancer. And I asked him, 'why did you ask me to sponsor you?' And he said it was because I made him laugh. He taught me a lot. What I value most about the Fellowship is the humility of it... accepting our deep equality and democracy. No stars, no grandees, no leaders. I believe that anything that threatens that or exploits it seems to me to go against the grain.

If I could say something to a Newcomer it would be this: stick around. You don't know what you want yet. You think you do, but you don't. I used to think I wanted to be a multi-millionaire. A famous film star. But I don't want that.

The things that I thought I wanted are so far removed from what has been revealed to me. And the things I really care about are so different. There is the notion that your recovery will be 'beyond your wildest dreams'. Only an addict would want something BEYOND their wildest dreams. As if your wildest dreams weren't enough.

Thank you to Frankie R. for this contribution

I DIDN'T KNOW
MY HEART COULD
BREAK EVERY,
SINGLE DAY

*How one addict used the NA Programme to
deal with the death of his one true love*



Maynard N.

“WE ARE SPIRITUAL WARRIORS WHO CAN SURVIVE ANYTHING IF WE KEEP COMING BACK.”

My life today is immeasurably better than anything I had before when I was using. When I was clean for about 18 years clean, I found a woman. We started talking and writing to each other and then I moved from the United States to Denmark to try a relationship and I have been here ever since. I came here in 2001 and got married in 2004.

Almost 20 years later - around 18 months ago - my wife started to become seriously ill. I had dealt with grief in recovery before. My sponsor died from liver failure and I buried my son in 2011 and that was very, very painful. I still miss him very much.

And then the woman I came here to be with - the love of my life, she passed away from lung cancer. That was a horrible, painful and agonising time. And I have to say that I didn't know that my heart could break every, single day.

For those 90 days when we knew she was very sick and was reaching the end, every single day my heart broke. I've cried and cried and still can. I don't mind that. It's a good thing. But I have had to use the programme to heal.

We have our minds, our emotions, our spirit and our physical self. The four basic sides of ourselves - much like Our Symbol. And the more energy I put into those four areas of my life - God, Self, Society and Service, the higher my point of Freedom. The less energy I put in, the lower I go. Recovery is an inside job. How do I know this? Because I can wreck my life without drugs. Drugs are a symptom. My disease will kill me clean if I let it.

If you are here it ain't no accident. You belong. We are a group of spiritual warriors who can survive anything if we practice the principles of this programme and keep coming back.



**“The First Step is a service step.
“What is ‘service’ all about? It’s about
acting in the common welfare... ‘our
common welfare must come first’.
“It’s providing support, assistance
and help for others as if we were
practising devotion to God... as if we
were making a prayer.”**

GREG P.



WHAT IS GROUP CONSCIENCE?

THE FELLOWSHIP IN GOD'S HANDS

What is "group conscience"? Everybody thinks it's that compromise. And I would like to propose an idea to you guys that may be a little different; that conscience doesn't have anything to do with a vote. You know one of the things that happened after I got clean was I started getting a conscience. It didn't have anything to do with a vote. It had to do with me realizing that I had some morals and starting to feel uncomfortable for violating them.

So I would like to propose the idea that perhaps the conscience of the group has more to do with the morality of the group than it has to do with a vote, any vote that's taken. Now I don't think our representatives carry a conscience. This is heresy. I don't think it's possible to take a group conscience and take it to the area. Sorry, can't be done as far as I'm concerned. What you can do, you can get a consensus of a group, and you can get a vote of a group that hopefully is arrived at by people using morals or principles as the basis of their decisions in the group setting. And take that consensus, that decision, that vote of the group and pass on the information.

But conscience only exists in the present; it's like one of these God things. It's like a principle. It exists now; you can't carry it from place to place. It's like mercury - you know, you start to try to put your finger on it and it goes whoosh. You know, you try to define it: Con-Science - tough to define by scientific method. It's not scientific. It's not concrete like that. It's malleable, it's like quicksilver. It moves, it changes as our understanding of spiritual principles and morality grows and changes.

Conscience - Awareness of principle, living by principle, awareness of morality - so part of group conscience has to be the idea of instead of having popularity contests, we need to start thinking of things in terms of principle, about what's best for the group. Remember the First Tradition ("Common welfare..."). As far as "ultimate authority" goes, I don't know too many people who struggle with that except those who are so caught up with power and prestige and addiction. Most of us come to realize that ultimately everything is in God's hands and I believe that this Fellowship is in God's hands. The bottom line for me in many things that occur in my life is (and I hope I don't offend anybody by saying it this way, but this is the way I feel it) - this God shit that everybody's talking about had better be for real or I'm fucked. Because you know what, if there is no God, I know that I don't have the power to make my life turn out.

So you know, it comes down to a choice of either believing or not believing and I recognize that not believing is a dead end. And I might be a fool for believing but it's the only shot I got. It's the only shot I got, because personal power fails me absolutely.

SPONSORSHIP

And some other suggestions for Newcomers

BY FRANKIE R.



With the desire to get clean and after attending a few meetings, it becomes helpful to talk to an addict who has experience staying free from drugs within NA recovery and can take you through the 12 Steps while guiding, supporting and sharing their experience. These are generally called sponsors. Try and find one. Here are some other suggestions.

The first 30 days can be the most difficult in recovery, so don't forget to get plenty of rest and abstain from making any grand plans except staying clean a day at a time.

Give yourself a break and start the process of self care.

It is no coincidence that 'ritual' makes up part of the word spiritual. We can begin our journey by deploying habits or rituals. These are vital - early nights, readings, phone calls and meetings. Have a daily routine and try to stick to it for as long as possible.

Warm baths and regular showers can help the body release natural endorphins and gives is a sense of well-being.

I like to think of recovering addicts as students. We have a text book. It is called the Basic Text. Who reads text books? Answer: students. Make a habit of connecting to our literature and find yourself in the text. There is a huge power in identification.

This will also give you something to talk about in meetings as you start to gain an understanding of our Programme and how it applies to us.

Remember to read our Information Pamphlets, sometimes know as IPs.

One I would suggest is the 'Triangle of Self Obsession' which looks at how our disease is driven by resentment, anger and, in particular, self-centred fear. The 'Living the Program' IP can introduce us to the concept of inventory and how we start to examine ourselves, our feelings and actions, on a deep level in order to gain greater Freedom.

You can answer many of the questions with a simple yes or no at first. Keep it simple

If you have found a sponsor try to share your thinking before acting.

Give the mind plenty of exercise, whether it's playing games, listening to music, drawing or doodling, visiting museums or art galleries or the cinema. Try and stimulate the brain.

Planning which meetings you are going to, getting your clothes laid out and how you will get there in plenty of time, are all suggestions which are shared in meetings.

Eat well. Remember you are building a foundation for a drug free life so nourishment is essential as your body recovers from years or decades of abuse.

It is not uncommon to put on weight when you get clean. A phrase that gets shared a lot in meetings is 'I put down the spoon and picked up the fork'. The Living Clean book says: 'We get hungry when we get clean.'

Eat healthily. The early days of convalescence are very important.

Build up a loving support network of like minded members.

Narcotics Anonymous has a Sponsorship pamphlet called IP 11. You can usually pick one up in a meeting. Maybe give it a read and if you find any of its direction confusing, ask another member to share their experience.

For instance it states that no single philosophy or belief adequately describes or defines what a Sponsor does. That might not be very helpful to a Newcomer, so always best ask somebody.

For the first 30 days I had to message or phone my sponsor every day. This was by mutual agreement and we also had to learn boundaries for cut-off times. For example, no calling before 8 am or after 9 pm.

Sponsors can have a busy life and they are not here to put out fires, or say some magic words to solve the current issue.

This is the reason why we have to build up a support network of other members in recovery and take phone numbers so we can message each other. NA social media channels are also useful.

But the phone is probably one of the most important tools that a new person or can possess for outside of the meetings.

Recovery must always come first. Welcome!

By Al R. and Pete B.

It's Jan 15th, 1982, in the depths of winter. Some 65 NA members cram into a snow-covered, 3-bed farmhouse in Pennsylvania to select the stories for the Basic Text.

This is the story of World Literature Conference #7.

They wanted to do the story section of the Basic Text. And they were looking for a place to host it. So, me, Pete B, George R and our friend Terica were there in Memphis. They were asking for volunteers for the story section workshop and she raises her hand and points to us and says, 'we'll do it!'. We did it at mine, Pete and George's farmhouse in Pennsylvania. That was world literature conference number seven.

The total square footage of the farmhouse was about 1,000ft, not very big. My garage is bigger. We needed releases from the people whose stories we were selecting. We had a diverse range of stories: from addicts who were homeless, to an addict who was a doctor.

Stories came from a lot of different places and we had to make phone calls to them. In those days when you made a phone call you paid for that phone call. And we called Japan, everywhere imaginable. And we ended up with a \$500 phone bill as a result.

That's about \$1,500 in today's money. I was a student and making around \$60 a week and we were wondering 'how are we ever going to pay this phone bill'. The World Literature Committee was pretty much self funded at that point. It did get paid... eventually. We had the coffee pot going the whole time, a giant photo copier, typewriters going the whole time. We were going round-the-clock, people working at 5am while others were catching a nap.

There were only three bedrooms so we had members sleeping everywhere, even the closets and the bath tub. It's not like today. Hotels, airlines, car rental... it was bare bones. We couldn't even go outside because it was so cold and it was snowing heavily. It was Pennsylvania in the middle of winter. We selected the stories and we had a style sheet to work from, which had been developed through the Basic Text workshops.

The style sheet started to define NA terminology as we practice it today. I remember the days when people would say 'you can't stay clean just by going to NA'. I had people tell me, 'I go there to get it, I come here to give it away'. We now know that those lies have been dead for many, many years.

We have been standing on our own for a really long time. Those members that wanted NA to grow and saw the Basic Text as a vehicle for that, even that vision could not have incorporated what we are experiencing today in terms of growth around the world - almost 20 per cent of NA meetings in Iran, for instance. Many people have told me emphatically, 'the Basic Text saved my life'.

Around 20 million copies in many, many languages. Before every workshop we did we said that literature prayer and we knew that we were being guided because we didn't have a clue, but the one thing we did know was that there was something bigger than us which was guiding us in the process.

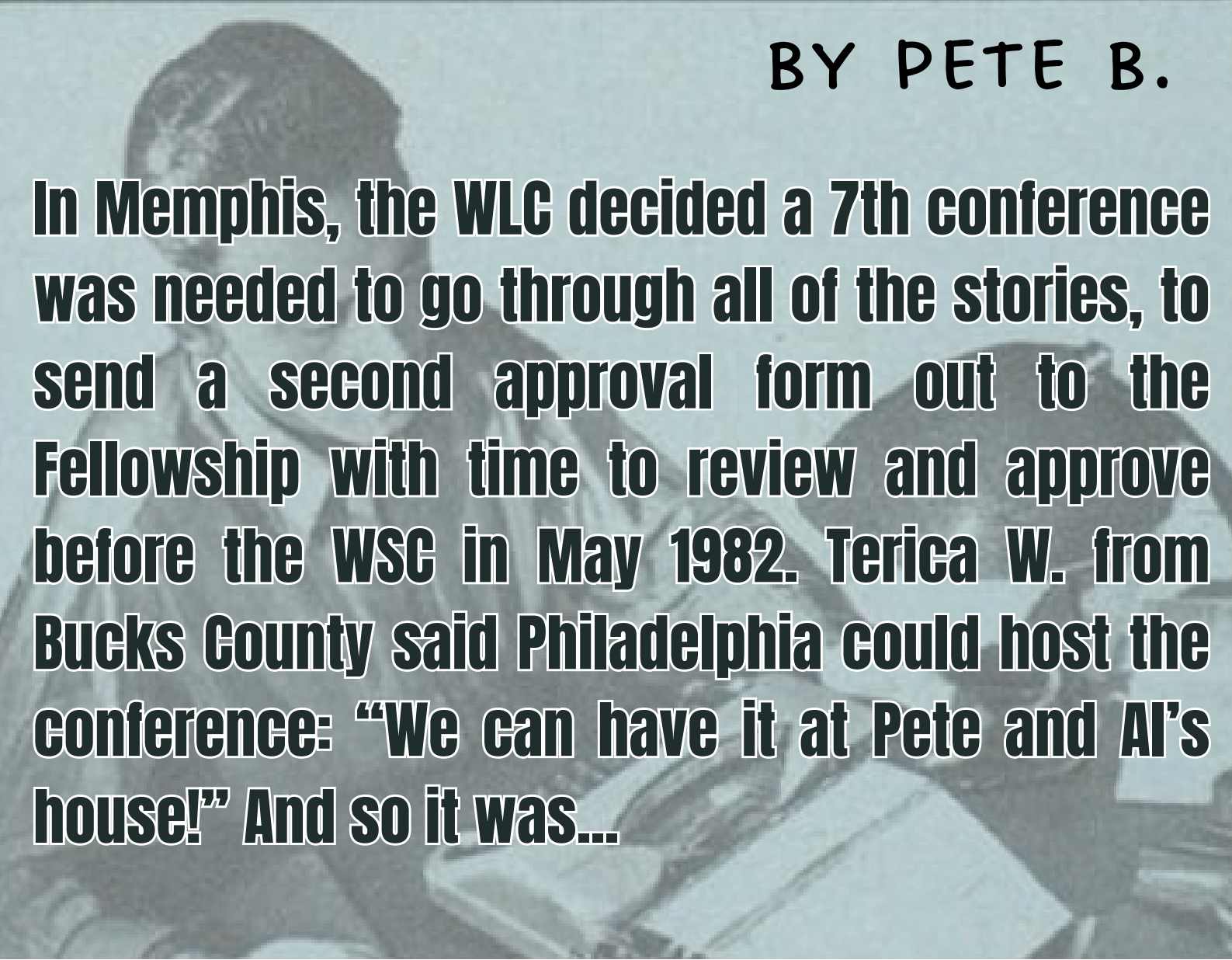
By Al R.



ANGELS IN THE SNOW



BY PETE B.



In Memphis, the WLC decided a 7th conference was needed to go through all of the stories, to send a second approval form out to the Fellowship with time to review and approve before the WSC in May 1982. Terica W. from Bucks County said Philadelphia could host the conference: “We can have it at Pete and Al’s house!” And so it was...

That said, I was grateful that a World Literature Conference was coming to me - I'd only been to one of the previous six, WLC5 in Warren, Ohio, though I'd been involved with the effort since before WLC2.

I had to arrange for the rental of a couple of large copiers and several electric typewriters, then get those huge copiers up the stairs into a spare second floor bedroom.

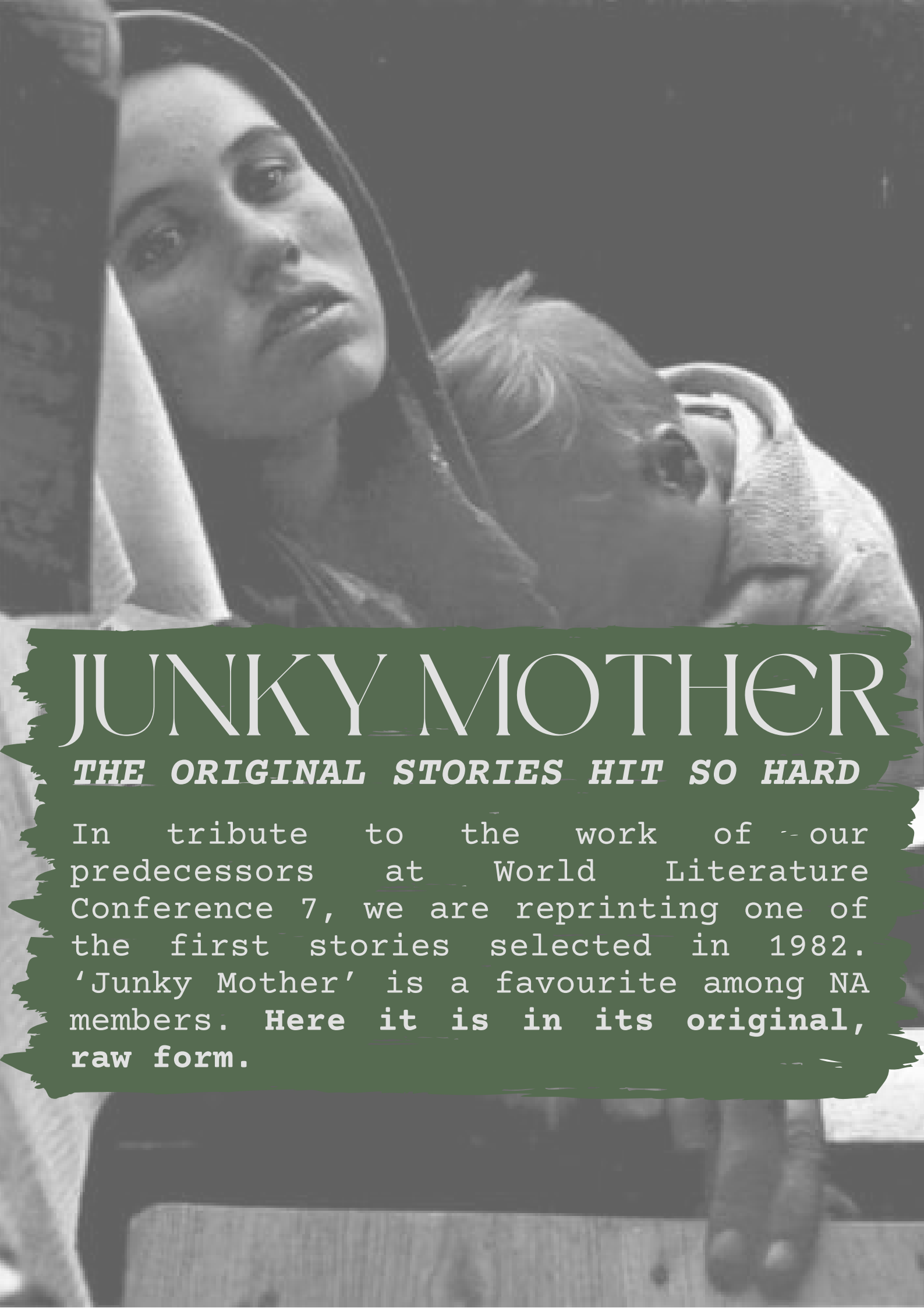
I knew we were talking anywhere from 50 to 75 addicts were coming to do the work (As it turned out, 65 showed up in Ivyland that weekend). I got very little sleep that weekend. My bedroom was next to the one with the copiers and typewriters while housemate Al R. was downstairs. I was also going back and forth to the airport to pick folks up who were flying in. Did I mention there was a driving blizzard that weekend which dumped about 18 inches of snow on us? Linda M. from Kansas and I were out in the snow making snow angels at the airport while we waited for Bo and Anita's delayed flight. On the way to the airport, my Toyota Corolla had hit black ice and went into a full spin. As soon as that happened we both started to say the Serenity Prayer out loud. That car did a full 360 spin and came out of it still going 55mph in the right direction. No harm, no foul. 'Gee', we thought. 'Prayer REALLY works!'

The work was intense. We went through all the submitted stories, lining them up with different types of addicts, attempting to make sure as broad a cross-section of addict types were represented. Calls were made to Australia, London, Hawaii and Japan. We had to get releases for the stories, and several were dictated over the phone. But we got all the stories we needed, sent them out for approval, along with a call for NA History.

The phone bill for that weekend came to \$487, which was a huge sum in 1982. The WLC had good intentions to repay us for that bill, but they had no funds to do so. I just got second and third jobs to ensure our phone didn't get cut off. That's the way it was back then. I didn't mind, knowing that the work we were doing could possibly save many lives. Before NA, I couldn't find a reason to live, clean.

I look back in wonder at the things my higher power - and NA - found for me to do with my time in recovery.

Even today, I still can't believe that all of this happened to this addict in recovery.



JUNKY MOTHER

THE ORIGINAL STORIES HIT SO HARD

In tribute to the work of our predecessors at World Literature Conference 7, we are reprinting one of the first stories selected in 1982. 'Junky Mother' is a favourite among NA members. Here it is in its original, raw form.

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 behaviour and realise 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 NA, was that my pain was not physical, but emotional and spiritual. For the next thirteen year I attempted to dull 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 at 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 in contact with the law, but I know the feeling 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 become more and more self-entered. 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 year, 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 hippie) 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 and 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 the 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 was complete abstinence and that by not putting any chemicals in my body I could get better. They took me to NA 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 immobilising 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 that I had a rebirth - a spiritual awakening - the day I walked in, I had 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.

h o p e

More than 40 years after 'Junky Mother' - the powerful tale of redemption through the NA Programme, Miss Carletta J. from New York City writes of her own incredible journey, demonstrating that members' stories in written form are just as relevant and powerful today in 2023 as they were when the Basic Text was first published.

HOLD ON PAIN ENDS

When I came to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous I was fully beaten. I went to institutions and rehabs all over New York City. I went to mental institutions not knowing what was wrong with me. I went to therapy because I thought a psychiatrist could help me. He said to me, 'what is your problem?' I didn't tell him I was smoking crack so I said 'every time I drink I end up on the ho' stro'. He looked at me and said, 'Miss J! What is the ho' stro'?'... I said 'what? you can't help me'. When I came to the rooms of NA and told my story everyone shouted, 'WELCOME!'.

By Carletta J.

This programme is amazing. If you are here and you are new please... Hold On! We are not exempt from the problems of life. When I got clean, in my second year, my brother died in a crack house. When I got clean, in my second year, I ended up in a shelter because I made wrong decisions. I was homeless, broke and I wanted to kill myself. The disease said 'just kill yourself, this programme don't work'. I wanted to walk in front of a bus and as I went forward a woman touched me and said; 'Mam, are you ok?' In that one moment I knew I could be restored to sanity. I sat on the steps, crying and said 'God take my will and my life, show me how to live'. And I meant it because I knew that my thinking was sick. After that I had to stay in position. I started doing the will of God. I started to bring people to NA from the shelter. This is not a religious programme but in the Third Step it says 'find something greater than you'. I tried to kill myself. What? And I am going to listen to me? My thinking is not my friend.

I had to change my thinking. Now I don't have problems. I have situations. You share with someone what is happening with you on a daily basis. They told me to share. You can't hold on to all the baggage of your past. My baggage was weighing me down. I had to start doing Step work, sifting through the contradictions and now I don't have to hold that burden any more. I dropped it when I found out in the Fourth Step that I was not responsible. Then I found out I had assets. I never wanted to be me but when I did the Step work I started to love myself. Hold On. Pain Ends. It stands for HOPE. People lied to me my whole life. They told me I was stupid. People defame you when you are poor and live in the projects and your mother is on heroin. But I am not stupid. I have had to fight a lot on my life but now I fight for my recovery. I didn't know where NA was when I was lost. But I knew I had to find you. Now I have 12 years clean and I will never turn back. I already know what Hell looks like.

STEP 10 QUESTIONS



The *'We Are The Basic Text'* NA group had a group conscience Step 10 workshop. Here are some of the questions which emerged. They might help you in your recovery.

- 1. DID I PUT THE NEWCOMER FIRST TODAY?**
- 2. WHAT CONFLICTS IN MY PERSONALITY REMAIN TODAY?**
- 3. DID I CONTRIBUTE TO THE ATMOSPHERE OF RECOVERY TODAY?**
- 4. DO I USE THE PROGRAMME TO FIND THE ANSWERS WITHIN ME?**
- 5. HAS MY NEGATIVE SENSE OF SELF BEEN REPLACED BY A POSITIVE CONCERN FOR OTHERS?**
- 6. WHAT ARE THE EXACT NATURE OF MY WRONGS?**
- 7. DID I PHONE A FELLOW ADDICT TODAY TO READ AND DISCUSS THE PROGRAMME?**
- 8. AM I PRACTISING RIGOROUS HONESTY?**
- 9. WHAT DOES WILLINGNESS LOOK LIKE FOR ME TODAY?**
- 10. WHAT DOES INTEGRITY MEAN TO ME TODAY?**



KARABO M.

A CANDLELIT DINNER WITH GOD

BY A MEMBER

I was going through a break up and was pouring my heart out at a meeting. A female member came up to me after the Serenity Prayer and said, 'I am going to be your date tonight, let's go for some food.'

We went for chicken wings. My friend turned to me and said, 'does she make you happy?'. I said 'yeah she does'. The woman laughed and said, 'well, you sure look messed up to me'.

I was hurting so much and she said these words to me that I will never forget. She said, 'You know what I do sometimes? I sit down and I have a candlelit dinner with God. You know why? Because nobody can treat me better than me or God.'

I realised in that moment that nobody can make me happy. The only person that could make me happy was me and the God of my understanding.

If you need another human being to validate your happiness, when they are gone...your happiness is gone. The only thing another human being can do for you is enhance the happiness that is already there.

So keep doing the work because the answer to all your problems are in the Steps. That woman was my friend. She didn't want anything from me. She just wanted to save my life because she knew what kind of pain I was in.

I had around 60 to 90 days clean and things were rough. The thing we must honour here is the saying, 'let us love you until you can love yourself'.



The life I have today is because of countless others, most of whom I will never know. And the programme of recovery I get to experience today is because of countless others I will never meet. So when I take the Third Step, a Power Greater is not hard to find.

By John B.

The world is a much better place because we are here today. Our recovery allows us to be better human beings. People are safer. Children have parents today. And we have a life today because of all of those who came before us. They sat in a seat when they didn't want to. They turned up for a commitment when they didn't feel like it. All those people who came before us so that when we were ready the door was open and a meeting was there. And that gave us a life today. We need to recognise how wondrous that truly is.

When the pain got great enough, I made it to a meeting. That was in 1984. My first connection to a Higher Power was realising that what I was doing wasn't working. I became teachable and I had a moment of clarity. My suffering was as a result of my addiction. If I wanted to live I needed to change how I lived. The reason I was feeling shame was because I was doing shameful things. So, the journey began. The Third Step is very simple. I made a choice to start living in reality. I am NOT the centre of the universe. What can I do to make ME feel good, was my problem. When we talk about self will - what is this self I need to turn over except a bunch of fear, insecurity and misconceptions. I need to protect that? Or is the answer letting go of those things which drove me further and further into addiction? I am a part of something. I am not the centre of it. I am here because a guy called Jimmy K. said we need to be here for the addict who isn't born yet.

Everything I have in my life is because of others. The clothes I'm wearing. The food and water. How did I learn to read and write without language and teachers? Somebody did something to me? Really? Yes, they gave me a life. The life I have today is because of countless others, most of whom I will never know. And the programme of recovery I get to experience today is because of countless others I will never meet. So when I take the Third Step with a Power Greater, it is not hard to find. Whether it is someone printing a book, making a phone call, hearing someone share, or being there for somebody... all of these things are beyond my power. I don't have anything without everything. If I start to understand life accurately I recognise that I am part of a very powerful web of life which is much greater than me. And the only thing that has been creating my problems is my separation from it.



This is the cover of the NA Newsletter from December 1973 - exactly 50 years ago and we can see the creative spirit of recovery in full flight with this special Christmas edition.

There is a wonderful symmetry in knowing that our Primary Purpose works across multiple timelines and that recovering addicts from across the world are continuing the work of generations past, honoring their tremendous legacy.



As we hurtle towards the end of 2023, it is maybe a good time to reflect on the past 12 months and set out our ambitions for the coming year - an end of year stock take, if you like - and an inventory of goals for 2024.

As a Fellowship we have achieved much. Literally, hundreds of thousands of people attending NA virtually, the return of face to face meetings further cementing our connection, and new Members joining every single day.

We continue to live our wondrous Programme, no matter what... inspired by the life-saving work of our predecessors who went to extraordinary lengths to ensure the doors remained open. We work tirelessly to give this amazing gift of life away, not only because it was done for us, but because selfless service is at the heart of our solution.

The Anonymous Free Press will continue to celebrate and honour all that is good and pure about the NA Programme. The Anonymous newsletter allows us to work across multiple timelines - travelling backwards and forwards - in the hope bringing into focus the bigger whole of which we are all part.

Remember, it's a beautiful world - and all the more so for the fact that you are in it!

From everyone on the AFP team - we send our love at this magical time of year.

EXPRESS YOURSELF



anonymousfreepress.com