

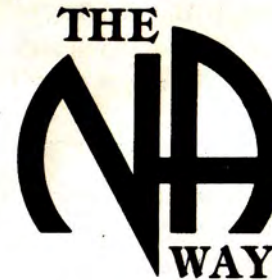
My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE
N.A.
WAY

JANUARY 1983

N.A.

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 to 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".



**JANUARY
1983**

VOLUME 1

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*Please mail all articles, subscriptions
input, questions and letters to:*

The N.A. Way Magazine
Post Office Box 110
Lisbon, Ohio 44432

The N.A. Way presents the experiences and opinions of N.A.s. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply any endorsement by either Narcotics Anonymous or the N.A. Way.

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*"I came in and went
back out...on the
'Thirteenth Step'..."*

That Deadly Extra Step...

A recent experience brought back some painful memories. Our basic text states "If sharing the experience of our pain helps just one person, it will have been worth the suffering" and "We are each other's eyes and ears; when we do something wrong, our fellow members help us to help ourselves by showing us what we cannot see."

An area I recently visited has an older N.A. Fellowship than my home; more meetings, more members with longer terms of clean time. It was a beautiful place for me to go to enrich my recovery, but I would hate to be a woman trying to find recovery there. This recent experience painfully reminds me of the great impact that lust and insecurity had on me. My God helped me live my principles over the recent weekend there through a sincere willingness to change and a firm Second Step. This was not made easy for me. I came looking for friendship and felt honestly like I was placed on sexual exhibit by most of the men. I am quite familiar with this very real feeling. This exact feeling led me originally to the Fellowship. I acted on this feeling and my actions killed me. I came in and went back out the doors of the Fellowship on the "Thirteenth Step" and as a result was legally dead for nearly five minutes. The following is my story...

— — —

I was married for several years and have a couple children. During my marriage I felt that I might be a "potential" addict. I *only* smoked pot, drank beer and wine and used prescription drugs that *everyone* else used, only maybe a little more sometimes. During my marriage there was no cheating even though my husband did not want me sexually toward the end. When my marriage ended, my disease was free. I found that men wanted to date me and wanted me sexually. These men were more than happy to give me the drugs I wanted and help me try new ones. I found just the sort of "provider" I was looking for; a dealer who used me as his private prostitute for as many full

syringes as I needed. I knew he was insane and thought that I must be insane to be with him. I truly believed that I had a moral problem and suicide seemed the only way out. I tried to kill myself twice.

One night I met a guy in a bar. He took me to bed and then to a meeting. I went to meetings with him for several weeks till he got tired of me and "hit" on another new girl. There were three or four guys around who were more than willing to help me get over him and find *recovery*. I was so sick and wanted acceptance so badly that I would have done anything. One night I found myself in a meeting with all the guys I had slept with. My guilt and humiliation were beyond expression, and my desire to commit suicide came back full force. Who knows how I got the nerve to share in that meeting? I sat quietly and said, "I believe the people in this program stop using drugs and start using people." This must have hit a nerve because nobody responded. My denial took this lack of response as proof that I should return to the street. At least there, when people used you there was no pretext of love, care and concern.

My ex-husband, the dealer-lover was happy to hear of my disillusionment. We went to a bar to celebrate my return. I took the first drink on my own without knowing that he had dropped "acid" in it. I had not "tripped" before...I rememberd a long ago friend had gone insane on acid, and I was afraid of it. Not knowing what was happening or why, I finally, hysterically convinced him to take me home. Once there, he would not leave. I was frightened and knew I was in great trouble. I wanted and needed help. I wanted to get back the feeling of cleanliness and freedom that I had experienced during the last few weeks. Either he knew this or I told him, and he went crazy. He raped me. I wanted to die. I gathered up all the pills I had hidden *just in case* and prepared to take them all at once; uppers, downers, sleepers, etc. He stopped me and told me that he had all that I needed to find peace in one small full syringe. I didn't care anymore and let him "fix" me. He used twice my normal dose. I felt it hit my heart and lungs. In the few seconds left, I heard him laughing and thought..."What a bad way to die, my kids will have to live with this forever." I thought "if only those program people had really wanted to help me, not just wanted me sexually then this wouldn't have needed to happen". My God heard

this prayer. My medical record says that I was dead for a little while. My God however, chose to let me live. I went to one more meeting. God heard me and let me go to an N.A. meeting. I didn't care anymore about the people — I just wanted to live. An N.A. member saw the pain in my eyes at that meeting and reached through my denial with his unconditional love. He cared enough to share and has never made any sexual moves on me.

I wish I could say that my sick behavior ended here, but I had not found Second Step faith yet. I tried it different ways with different people, but it was still the same. When I realized that I was taking advantage of the vulnerability of new men, and realized that I cared about someone's recovery and yet was jeopardizing that recovery by acting on my own sick needs, I began my Fourth Step.

Recently, trying to be "in love" with another recovering addict has resulted in more emotional devastation than my relapse. Lust complicated by insecurity has taken me to a "bottom" in sex and relationships. Just for today I surrender to this aspect of my disease; I abstain in order to find recovery. Today I know a peace and happiness that I've never known before. If and when I find the "right" person, it will be the result of my faith in and surrender to my Higher Power. No longer do I need to go from one person to the next using us both. I'm learning to love *me* and believe that someday I may love someone else the way God wants us to love.

Please look through my eyes and hear through my ears. Look into the eyes of the next new person of the opposite sex you meet who is seeking recovery. Feel their pain, respect their dignity, share recovery with them in their vulnerable search for acceptance.

IT'S A MIRACLE!

One would think that any time people like us got together, the results would be mass chaos. Groups of self-centered, self-willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely; but we do. The reason we can is our Twelve Traditions!

A Path Through the Confusion

It doesn't seem like too long ago that life was unbearable because of the confusion going on in my head. Today there is just as much confusion, but I know what to do with it. It's called turning it over. This for me has to be done on a daily basis.

The confusion I feel today seems to be centered in the controversy within our Fellowship. Much of it deals with the language and terminology being used to define recovery and some of it

concerns things going on in service. I used to jump right in, because my disease told me I wasn't powerless over such things. I rode right back out the doors of N.A. on a cloud

*"It's called
turning it over."*

of controversial confusion. I thank my God that I made it back alive. Today I have a different outlook on it all.

Today the only way for me to survive the confusion is to live "as best I can" the spiritual principles of our program. I have to pray to God as *I understand Him* to take my will and my life, to relieve me of self enough to be used as an instrument. I have to make a commitment to the program on a daily basis, without reservation. When I do this, it seems like the confusion is a lot easier to live with, because I know why I am here. I'm not here to add to the confusion, but to try to help make some sense of it all by sharing my recovery patiently and with loving tolerance. I pray to my Higher Power that it all is serving a purpose.

I'm clean today in N.A. because I can relate.

— — — — —
*Destructive behavior can be corrected as soon
as we loosen our grip on old ways.*

Reflection of a Meeting



When will the energy we put into the battle of personalities be used through the healing power of principles?

I have no life without recovery and my personal recovery depends on our unity. My love for you is for a very selfish reason. You are all I have. You are an addict like I am.

Please see through my awkward words and allow the feelings behind them to enter your hearts. Tonight at a meeting, I saw the healing power of empathy being pushed aside by the darker powers of ego and self-will.

I tried to surrender to two first steps in the beginning only to relapse from denial and confusion. I have found personal recovery in N.A. working just one First Step, based on the disease concept of addiction. This has replaced the denial and confusion of the past with acceptance.

Do you remember my first meeting; the emptiness, despair, pain and worthlessness that sat in my chair? You reached out to me and held me with your eyes, for you were looking into a mirror that reflected your own pasts. Tonight were your eyes seeing only an enemy?

For the first time in my life of sick causes and non-existent beliefs, there is a pure, simple program of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions that must be preserved or surely I will die. As the months have gone by, our N.A. meeting has been in labor to give birth to this simple, separate and distinct philosophy. Somewhere in time and growth your beliefs and mine separated and came in conflict. I saw the results of our conflicting ideas in the eyes of the new person tonight sitting in the chair you and I each sat in once. Those eyes held confusion. Will it lead to denial and relapse?

I pray for my God to soften my words and extend my message to those who seek it. For I have no recovery unless there are new people to share my recovery with.

I pray for you with love.

PAIN and ADDICTION

Today I am in physical pain. Pain; that feeling I've tried to escape from all my life. I tried to suppress it at all costs. Escape from reality became the major part of my addictive character, because living in reality meant suffering physical or mental pain.

Today I see pain as a gift, enabling me to learn new ways to live in reality through the N.A. Program. I cannot always accept this gift. When my raw nerves are transmitting signals of physical pain, my brain can forget that it is a gift. I forget to reach out to my God, the still suffering addict and loving friends. Denial slowly creeps in and forces me back into isolation. The world closes in and I am back to "day one". At that point, all I have is an honest desire to start hurting.

Why am I writing this? Why did I get out of bed today? Why did I call a fellow addict in another state, adding to still a larger bill at the end of the month? Why did I wake up my sponsor when they were also in physical pain? Why did I

"Staying clean must come first in these hours of pain."

call the person I sponsor and invite them to a meeting? Above all, why would I consent to speak at a meeting when my physical pain is constant and severe? The answer is, I am an addict. Staying clean must come first in these hours of pain. I can only recover by participating in the Fellowship, sharing and allowing others to share with me.

As a clean addict I have experienced what some would call a lot of bad luck. Physical pain has been my companion from early recovery on. I have in desperation screamed "Why me?". Anger and pain always lead me to quiet surrender and my prayers for relief have always met my needs.

Early in recovery I found a sponsor who had learned to live clean through physical and mental pain similar to my own. We learn how to use the gift of physical and mental pain in our recovery through sharing.

Tonight my God allowed me to share with a new person. She suffers from the same incurable organic illness as I do. I offer hope that we can all work a program of recovery during physical pain.

What my God has shown me more than anything else is... "I can't — We can."

I never have to go back to the hell of unending pain that practicing my addiction brought me. I can accept reality, share and recover.

This is the gift of pain.

BITS AND PIECES

I'm clean today in N.A. because I can relate.

— — — — —

Patience, humility and tolerance are well worth any price that must be paid for them.

— — — — —

Spiritual indifference will surely lead to relapse.

— — — — —

Being grateful begins when we realize that something other than ourselves blessed us with what we have.

— — — — —

If we clean our bodies by daily abstinence, we should clean our minds of preconceptions that are based on past experiences.

— — — — —

We come from many different places, but they all share loneliness, pain and fear. Somehow, addiction draws us together in N.A.

RELATIONSHIP

What I'm telling you is something I'm not quite sure of yet. I think that I've used you to find out who I am. I thought that maybe if you loved me I could become what you wanted me to be for you. I'm afraid I'm not good enough for you, but since you seemed to want me, I thought I'd try to let you love me into the one that you needed. If I could be him, then maybe I'd be worth loving. I've tried this with you, and many before you. I don't even know when I'm doing it, it just seems to happen. Do you understand? I'm not much, maybe (my disease tells me) I'm nothing without someone's love. I feel less by living this lie of loving you than if I could be on my own.

"...I've used you to find out who I am."

In Response to RELATIONSHIP

What you've told me — I understand. I too have used you to find me. But I lost "me" and became a token person in "we". My lack of self esteem; self-acceptance, and self-love rears its ugly head and I seek to find me through another's regard, acceptance and love. You too were convenient. Only in hindsight can I see that.

How could you begin to know what it would take to love you into what I needed when I don't know what I need? Your interpretation of what I need may be, in fact, based in what you feel you lack. Begin again to accept yourself. Maybe then you can accept that I love you for who and what you are — not for what

you want to become — or some fantasy of what "he" would be for me.

Recovery demands change. This includes our ideas in regard

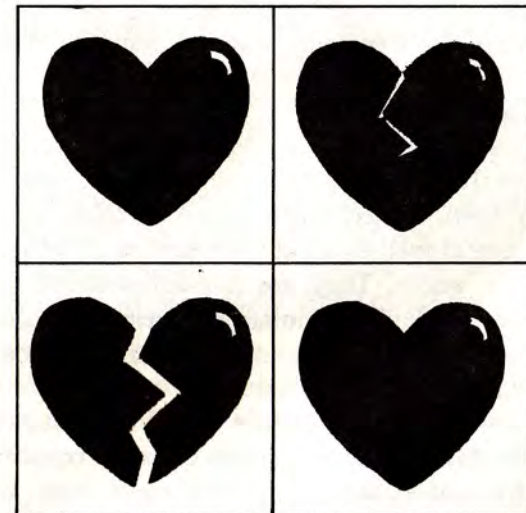
"Just for today, I am willing to be me."

to relationships. Today we are beginning to have a relationship...two-way communication. I love you as I loved you then, maybe even more deeply. More importantly, I like you, even

though you are unsure of you. My spirit is in tune with yours and so often my thoughts include you.

I used to feel that anyone who wanted me couldn't be worth having. If they were, they wouldn't want me. I let go of that old idea. I am worthy of love and strive to be able to give it. Today I can accept it. Just for today, I can be unafraid. Just for today, I am willing to be me.

I love you. Can you accept my love without fear that you need return it? There are no conditions, and no expectations.



Understanding Autonomy

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

Our Fourth Tradition is probably one of the most misinterpreted spiritual principles in our Fellowship. Very simply, it means just what it says: groups are autonomous. Groups may design their meetings to meet the special needs of the members. Groups attract newcomers to N.A. in their own special way, as long as our unity is not compromised.

My home group has only one meeting a week. We fulfill our group responsibility for sponsoring the newcomer by suggesting meetings for them to attend on other nights of the week. We suggest groups meetings that carry an unconfused message of recovery from addiction, meetings where members express their identity as addicts, and share recovery maintained through the N.A. Program at N.A. meetings. Autonomy is not anarchy. We feel that we are not free to suggest anything but N.A. recovery in our N.A. meeting. To do so would be to affect other groups and N.A. as a whole.

Only groups are autonomous. Service boards and committees exist to serve N.A. groups and members, and are directly responsible to them. Projects undertaken by these service boards and committees as well as all of their actions affect many groups and N.A. as a whole. They are not autonomous, but directly responsible to our loving ultimate authority expressed through our autonomous groups. The misperception of service board and committee autonomy has at times put or common welfare in jeopardy. As we grow and mature as a Fellowship, the importance of unity through the expression of group conscience in our service boards and committees affects more lives. We need to protect our group autonomy by reminding our service committees and boards that they are directly responsible to those they serve; the groups and are not autonomous.



The Spirit of Anonymity

A recent trip to a distant N.A. area has given me a deeper understanding of the importance of our Twelfth Tradition. In meetings there I heard basically the same sort of recovery shared that can be heard in my own home group. I realized that far away from home I was more receptive; I didn't know the personalities behind the principles.

One evening at a member's home, I was dismayed when Fellowship turned into vicious gossip. My gut was in a turmoil. Unlike the times I've participated in gossip, this was painful to me because it was focused on a friend of mine. Some of my friend's principles were made a joke of. This was especially painful for me since I also believe deeply in those same principles. Later, at a meeting I shared on a topic that I'd heard jokes made of earlier. I shared what was in my heart, despite fear of rejection. Personal experience has led me to believe deeply in that topic. I had mixed feelings after that meeting. Some who had made jokes so easily before thanked me for my comment and said they needed to hear *my message*. My message is basically the same as my friend's. My words are softer, and I'm a stranger, so personality didn't cloud the principle.

I pass no judgement on what I've experienced. I only hope to apply what I've learned more fully when I return home. I pray to remember the pain that can come through gossip about one's friend.

I've learned that for me, personal adherence to all our Traditions is necessary. Anything a *group* should do, as a *member* of that group, I believe I should also do. After all, groups are made up of individuals like me, and you, and my friend.

Expression of Concern

A member of our Fellowship called me the other night in confusion and despair. I shared with them what I could at the time, but I'm moved now to share more. The person was concerned about the atmosphere of recovery in several of their local groups. He felt he wasn't getting the recovery he went to N.A. meetings for because these groups blatantly and defiantly violated traditions. I have been to meetings that made me feel as he does. We have seen areas struggle with the problems of affiliation which occur as a result of the personal affiliation in the lives of the original group members who continue in an incomplete surrender to the N.A. Program. Some areas continue to struggle in that controversy.

Others grow with unity. The following is suggested based on my observation:

*"Only through surrender,
faith and commitment..."*

Only through surrender, faith and commitment can addiction be arrested and recovered from. This is true for our groups and areas just as it is for each of us. I began to understand and finally accepted that I was powerless over addiction through the patient sharing of members who cared for me more than they disliked my personality. They allowed me to believe that I was powerless over drugs until I could accept that denial, which kept me sick. They then showed me the denial in my chemical orientation and identification. They continually shared with me that the steps could solve all my problems. I finally came to understand and then surrender to the fact that all of my problems were the result of what I was powerless over...my disease — addiction — not chemicals; substances or any material thing. Through surrender I have been given an opportunity for unlimited recovery by not limiting my concept of this disease to the "symptom" that expressed itself most obviously in my life. This gift could only come through the N.A. Program because this program is the only thing in the world that offers recovery from the disease of addiction.

Denial is not limited to those with short terms of abstinence. One of my personal definitions of a *N.A. Newcomer* is a person who identifies themselves in terms of a chemical. Our common experience shows that when our disease has progressed to the point of compulsive use of one drug, any other drug may be effectively substituted for our favorite. Chemical identity is denial. I personally attempt to treat any person who claims powerlessness over substances with the same sort of patient, tolerant sharing that was provided for me. Incomplete surrender can only mean incomplete recovery. Again, a newcomer to me is anyone who wants recovery and has not yet surrendered to their powerlessness over addiction. We cannot change the nature of the addict or the disease, but through recovery based on surrender, we can live an example that will attract addicts seeking recovery to N.A. I believe that we are guided by a power greater than ourselves in this. We have been given the gift of unlimited recovery from addiction to offer the world. We must share what we have or we will lose what we have. Addicts resist surrender. Denial, confusion and controversy will continue — they are symptoms of this disease. Our patient, tolerant sharing of pure principles of recovery (based on powerlessness over the cause of our problem, the disease, not any one or even all of the symptoms) will overcome all resistance.

Food for Thought...

N.A. has introduced me to me.

— — — — —

Learn how to be good to yourself at no one else's expense.

— — — — —

*Looking at others' defects is but another means of
escaping my own.*

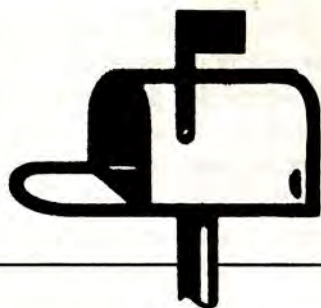
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A day clean is a day won!

— — — — —

*Thinking about doing something doesn't
make it happen...doing it does!*

Letters from Our Readers . . .



Joy, Harmony, Good and a Happy New Year . . . Thank God for people like you in our Fellowship! I pray for more like you!

Love in Fellowship,

— — — — —

FROM OVERSEAS:

. . . N.A. will grow a lot more in my city now and will spread all over my country for we learned so much from the service workshop we attended there (in U.S.A.). It took me back a bit at first, but now for me I have made my decision that it's all N.A. for me. I feel more comfortable each day.

Keep in Touch,
Love & Care,

— — — — —

Dear Fellow Members,

I would very gratefully appreciate it if you would start my subscription with your very first issue which I believe was just a few months ago. I don't want to miss out on any of that good stuff you've got. I really hope you can do that for me.

I recently discovered the N.A. Way through another member who attended a service workshop over Thanksgiving. Thank you very much and keep up the good work.

With Love,

Dear N.A. Way,

I thank you very much for my October and November issues of the N.A. Way that I have just received. I will try to carry your magazine's message to fellow addicts. Enclosed is a subscription for a friend of mine. I inform others that you need articles, one liners, questions and ideas.

In the November issue there was no release form for articles, poems, etc. Maybe it was forgotten or something. My suggestion is that every issue have a release form. The November issue is just fantastic!

Love & Fellowship,

— — — — —

"FINDING A FRIEND"

Dear N.A. Way,

I got super messages about recovery in the October '82 issue. What's bugging me is this person that wrote "Recovery through the Written Word". There was no address to respond to. I know that being isolated is not real healthy for me, even though now I'm never alone. Would you please help one recovering addict to share with another by hooking us up?

Sincerely loving the N.A. Way,

P.S. God bless super work like yours!

Dear N.A. Way,

While I was reading the N.A. Way (Oct. and Nov. issues) I felt on several occasions that I would like to communicate with the authors of some of the articles. I don't know for what specific reasons authors could not include their addresses for comments. If this practice (including addresses) were used, I think many friends could be made and N.A. Unity promoted. If this practice is seen as dangerous or legally troublesome, could another means of communicating be instituted? I don't think including first names and addresses is violating any traditions. I do think it could open lines of communication Nationwide. Just a thought.

Good luck . . .

— — — — —

Dear Editor,

First of all, I am sorry to hear about the problems with the magazine. I have found that working entirely with recovering people, on a volunteer basis and trying to stay within the Twelve Traditions can pose special problems not present in a commercial business venture. This means slow progress, personality conflicts, bad attitudes and a lot of wasted time. However, the benefits from succeeding in spite of the problems can be worth the effort. Certainly a "better" N.A. is worth it. So hang in there.

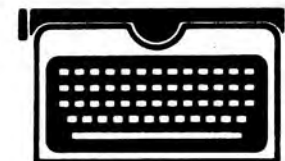
As far as the bull . . . about the N.A. Way breaking traditions, etc. I wish people would let common sense rule and not bend over backwards to find fault with things - I think a lot of people are "Tradition Paranoid".

If I can be of any more help, call or write.

Please mail all articles, subscriptions, input, ideas questions and letters to . . .



The N.A. Way
P.O. Box 110
Lisbon, Ohio 44432



Editorial Note:

If a reader wishes to correspond with the author of an article, please address the correspondence to that article, in care of the Magazine at the address above. We will forward correspondence to the author.

In order to answer several of the questions asked in recent letters, we are printing in this issue our working editorial guidelines on the following page . . . These guidelines are, of course, subject to approval and/or revision by a group conscience of the Fellowship. The N.A. Way is administered by a sub-committee of the World Conference of Narcotics Anonymous.

In Loving Service,
Editorial Committee

ORIGINAL PROPOSALS FOR MAGAZINE (5/82)

1. No names, initials, or any sort of identification including geographical origin of article.
2. Financial report of magazine in each issue.
3. Articles on recovery, personal and group service.
4. No articles containing personal opinions about structural service bodies or activities.
5. We will publish most appropriate input — sent in pertaining to recovery from addiction and experience with N.A.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE & FUNCTION (9/82)

1. To promote unity in the N.A. Fellowship by printing articles on recovery from the disease of addiction.
2. To accurately express group conscience cross section of recovery experience, printing articles sent in by N.A. members.
3. To print any appropriate article without inferring that any requirement is on N.A. recovery, but the desire for that recovery.
4. To promote group autonomy by offering different contrasting expressions of recovery that may be used to promote development and maintenance of a group's atmosphere for recovery.
5. To print articles that will help addicts seeking recovery to find recovery.
6. To express only N.A. recovery and limit contents to N.A. step, traditions and fellowship oriented material.
7. To offer subscriptions to N.A. members and remain a non-profit service to N.A.
8. To maintain a totally volunteer staff until such time that the N.A. Fellowship requires that special workers be hired.
9. To structure magazine so that it remains responsible to the Fellowship of N.A. and it's representatives.
10. To print only articles directly related to finding and maintaining recovery from addiction.
11. To assure the anonymity of staff and contributors of written material.
12. To print all articles anonymously, deleting references to all personalities and geographic areas: to promote the principles of recovery from addiction as introduced and defined in our basic text and as expressed by N.A. members.

RELEASE FORM

ALL MATERIAL SUBMITTED MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SIGNED, WITNESSED RELEASE PRIOR TO PUBLICATION.

I hereby give the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, the N.A. Way Magazine, and their successors and assigns and those acting on their authority permission to copyright and/or publish any original articles poems or other written material pertaining to my personal story of recovery from addiction and my personal experiences or opinions about the N.A. Fellowship or program. I understand that additions may be made to my written material and that it may be changed or edited. I further understand that every effort will be made to assure my anonymity. I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization and hereby release the N.A. Way Magazine, and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous it's service boards and committees from any claim by myself, my successors and/or my assigns.

Signature _____

Date _____

Witness _____

JANUARY
FINANCIAL REPORT

Starting Balance \$115.28

ASSETS

New subscriptions (23) \$276.00

Single Copies (30) 45.00

Donations 4.00

TOTAL \$445.28

EXPENSES

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Freight 15.00

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Phone 85.00

Postage 65.42

TOTAL \$372.45

FINAL BALANCE \$ 72.83

Submitted in Loving Service