

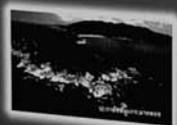
June 2008

NATODAY

Free Publication
of
The Australian
Region

**ADDICT ARE NOT
WELCOME**

ชาวเกาะสมุย-พะงัน



Cover photo taken in village on
an island in Southern Thailand



From the Editor

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articles cartoons, etc to

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A Moments Silence

In the last NA Today, there was an article by Clive S entitled “Too many dark days”. Since that article and now, Clive has passed away. In his article he spoke of the struggle of relapse and the dark days in between. Amongst those dark days, Clive managed 12 years of clean time, though it was interrupted from time to time by relapse. So this moment of silence I am asking you for is not about his death or the way it happened, it is about his life and what he gave to NA. His message, his efforts, and his contributions.

These are the things I want us to remember him for.

In tribute to you Clive and all those who have fallen but gave so much along the way.

The Power of One

This story is about the power of one person and the opportunity we have to alter the lives of others. The reason I believe this is possible is because that is what happened to me and what I have since seen happen to many others as a result of each person giving away what they were so freely given.

Can a single person influence the future of another person? Or even influence the destiny of a whole group of individuals? Would contemporary society be the same without Alexander Graham Bell or Thomas Edison? No telephones and no electricity throughout our life, or would another great mind have been waiting around the corner to flick on the switch or dial the number and assign the previous parties to history as unknowns. What would my life and that of my associates in recovery be like without Dr Bob, Bill W and of course Jimmy K the founder of NA. Did those individuals change the lives of thousands of people or would someone else have been waiting around the corner ready to flick the recovery switch and start some other self help style program.

I love grandiosity so this story needs to be big. It should span a few continents and cover a couple of generations. Let's go right back to the period shortly after World War 2 and let's finish on the pristine beaches of Byron Bay at the 2008 convention. Why not toss in a pile of success and a little bit of loss and remorse, a few mammoth achievements and a knowledge that by carrying the message of recovery the lives of others can be changed forever.

Sydney, 1981 saw one of the coldest Augusts for many years. It was late one particularly bitter evening where I was found overdosed, yet again, blocking the doorway of my apartment. The woman I was living with rushed out to get help and stumbled into a 12 step meeting. She saw a light on and later told me "it looked like the type of place where people would help". She brought Tony back who dragged me inside. This first meeting remains permanently etched into my mind. One of those events that occur which seem insignificant at the time but history exposes them as life altering moments. This is what happened for me on that evening.

Tony had a hard weathered face. He had spent years wandering the yards of Goulburn Goal. He once told me that it was his hatred that had kept him going. His hatred of life and those that had put him there was what he had lived with every single day. During that first meeting I also noticed something else about Tony. He had the eyes of a child. Clear, untroubled and always direct. He was nearly 10 years in recovery and he had that look certain people have when they have achieved that level of self understanding and peace that this program can offer. Tony went on that night to tell me his story. He told about how he felt as a boy. He talked about self worth and inadequacies. He told me about the time he decided to carry out an armed robbery with a plastic gun on the local hairdresser to discover his victims were off duty police and then to lose 5 years of his life as a consequence. Tony also told me about his introduction to this program and how an old war veteran who had survived World War 2 had almost not survived drinking. It seems his sponsor had been 12 stepped in the 1960s and that the old war veteran had gone on to 12 step Tony who now went on to 12 step me. The bit I could never understand was how someone got to keep what they had by giving it away. Tony said it was passed on to him and that he must pass it on to me and that to stay clean, I would need to do that for others.

August 1982 was a very different year for me. I was a year clean and the winter did not seem nearly as cold as usual. Something to do with being in recovery I guess. One night I was making my way to a meeting and a former comrade from Asia comes blistering around the corner, clearly on a mission. This was a person I had shared some of my darkest moments of addiction with, often in places that if things went wrong they went very wrong. I seized my friend John and we entered in a discussion about what we had been up to. He had just finished a short jail sentence in Thailand and was back in Australia with no understanding that his drug use and the recent events were linked. We spoke for nearly 2 hours and I told him about recovery and NA meetings. I talked about the people I knew and about the new way of life I had found. I remember walking away that night and it hit me that this was exactly what Tony had done for me a year previously. I finally started to gain clarity on what Tony had meant by giving it away to keep it.

John went on to become over 20 years clean. He completed medicine and became a real life doctor. This was certainly a different path to incarceration in Thailand but that is not his major achievement. I had told him about what Tony had explained to me and he had gone back to Canberra to carry the message. He told his family about NA and they told other addicts in Canberra and then they told more people about this new way of life. He carried the message to his other friends from Asia and on and on it went. Each person passing on the message that Tony had been given.

Where does this story finish? Last week the son of two of the people from Canberra celebrated 6 months clean at the Byron Bay Convention. He had also had the message carried to him. Why does that seem important to this story? Because if one person in the chain of recovery had not carried the message, the whole chain of recovery would have collapsed. If the old war veteran had not told Tony who had told me who then told John who then told his friends from Canberra who then told their friends and on and on it continued. The chain of recovery remained intact because each individual remembered what our primary purpose is.

A single person really can influence the future of another person or can even influence the destiny of a whole group of people.

It really is about the power of one.

Paul G.



A Little Tribute

Hi my name is Brett and I'm a recovering addict! I've been in Recovery now for almost 9yrs. I'm an Aboriginal Australian. My tribal heritage is Wakka Wakka from my father's side, which is South Burnett Qld. My mother's heritage is Gomileroi which is Northern NSW, an a little bit of Scottish to spice up the mix.

First I need to tell you about my mate Trevor. We were best mates in primary school. He was also Aboriginal, we got asked a lot if we were brothers. Many a fun time was had back then. High school came along and our paths veered off in separate directions. Occasionally we saw each other; a few times we got drunk and stoned. I discovered that he loved amphetamines and he learned that I loved heroin.

So years passed again and I got told that Trevor shot himself. I was shattered and I cried for the first time in quite a while. It hurt so badly, it was unbelievable. In hindsight I think I just didn't want to acknowledge it. I actually thought that if I was there I could've prevented it, ah the delusional mind of active addiction. This has been very emotional writing this so I have Pink Floyd playing as loud as possible in the background. It gives me solace and makes me feel comfortably numb.

I did have a slight moment of clarity and I made a half assed promise that if I couldn't help him, maybe I could help someone else. So with that thought in my mind I continued to use for about another four and a half years. I didn't know any better and I didn't know how to stop. So, grace of God stuff, I found the rooms of NA. God sent me 4 angels, Spot and Stripe my 2 dogs, Jan my councilor and Krissy A. who had the audacity to challenge my ego when I rang the NA phone line. He he!! Well now the fun begins Recovery bring it on. Early recovery all I could say was "When is it gonna get serene?"

90 meetings in 90 days hey? Well how's about 89 in 90, always a rebel yeah? First year for free (sponsor's suggestion) I can do that I'm lazy. So I did a whole lot of meetings, listened to a lot of people speak and realized that some people are damn crazy!!! That was pretty much my 1st yr of Recovery.

Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that I was gunna save the world, now that I had a new outlook on life.

I entered into gainful employment in my 2nd year and I've pretty much worked the rest of my Recovery. My first job was working with Homeless and Indigenous people helping get them into accommodation. Getting people home when they may or may not have had too much to drink. There was also a lot of mediating on behalf of clients having hassles with various authoritarian institutions. Most of my clients were indigenous and a lot of them were related in some way to me.

Next job I had was working with young people doing pretty much the same thing as my previous job. I also did a bit of outreach in the city at night time on occasions. This job really took a toll on my spirit. My experience with welfare work has shown me that negative outcomes out weigh the positive results tenfold.

My last welfare related job was working with men in prison. It involved pre-release and post release support, which is a much needed service that is not really done very well by the institutions that incarcerate them. Prisons are like religion as they are just money making scandals that don't really care about the people they are meant to serve.

So there you have it, my work history in relation to helping people. Now I work as a laborer and I make pretty good money. Alas though I have not given up on people as I am still a very active member of NA. Even though I don't do as much service as what I used to do, I still attend meetings and I have regular contact with fellow members. What I have said about my work experience may sound pretty jaded but that is how I feel about it. NA is different as I benefit from what I put in.

Narcotics Anonymous is my life and I'm quite happy to share that with anyone. NA also enables me to fulfill that half assed promise I made to my mate Trevor. I am helping someone else and I know wherever he is out there, he's happy.

Lotsa Lovin Brett

Choosing Our Leaders

I was recently on a convention committee. I was new in town and I didn't really want to be on the committee, but got sort of hassled into it and agreed in the end that I should contribute, get to know everyone, you know how it goes.

The chair of the committee was known to be difficult and I heard that he had once punched someone during a service meeting. The thought did occur to me at the time I was nominating, "I wonder why they elected him".

Everyone spoke openly about his inability to do this type of service and after I had been around for a few meetings I realized why no one had been joining that committee. People were afraid of him, or just couldn't be bothered dealing with him, so he had to try pretty hard to make people help out. He ended up with plenty of the wrong people in the wrong jobs and even though the event went well in the end, the division and fall out just wasn't worth it. Most of the people on the committee never spoke to him again. He had major fallings out with all of them. He used shortly after the event.

The simple solution to this and many other problems can be found in any piece of area level literature. The guide to local services or the twelve concepts booklet or banners, the problem and solution lie within Concept 4.

It reads, "Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants". I think when they selected this particular candidate they were remiss in observing this concept. The concept in its longer essay goes on to say that one of the first things we look for in a leader is humility, because in NA, to lead is to serve and to accept responsibility, which can be a difficult experience for a recovering addict. Being a leader in NA is not about giving orders or being a dictator, it is about being a servant.

In NA we are trying to be better people. We may not always succeed, but we try to live with a pure intent which I love and find noble. Sometimes because of this we don't want to upset anyone, so when people come along nominating for what is clearly the wrong job for them, it is hard to say NO!

We are people pleasers and we think "Its okay, we'll patch it up or cope with it, but in this particular example, it caused a lot of damage that was entirely avoidable by simply voting NO and saying "Maybe this job isn't really for you". It's hard to say these things, but its worth it in order to protect all the people involved especially the newcomers who may have to watch or be part of all the conflict inside these committee meetings being facilitated by people without the right skills.

In this particular instance, we didn't do this individual any favours by putting him in the wrong job. He is isolated now, resentful and using. I think we wrote those concepts for a reason. We probably shouldn't ignore them.



The Mullet Man

January 2nd 2008. I was at a meeting last night and something special happened...

There was a man at the meeting. Actually there were several men at the meeting but there was something about this one particular guy. I had seen him at a meeting two weeks earlier. There was something about him. What was it? I asked myself. He was so familiar to me. Something about him I knew but I could not put my finger on.

He has a "mullet", a hair style that was big in the 80's. Short and tidy on the top and the sides but long at the back. It's been described as business at the front, party out the back, some say Jesus had a mullet.

Anyway it was his mullet that struck a cord with me. As I was racking my brain, I asked myself, did I look after this guy when I used to work in treatment? Did I sell him a snow-board years ago? Have I seen him out in the surf? Or have I just seen him around the rooms? Nothing was ringing a bell.

Then it came to me, I remembered. So I went up to him to confirm. About two months ago I was at work (I am a fireman) when I was called to a cliff rescue in Manly. When I arrived on the scene I discovered a man (with a mullet) had fallen off a cliff about 15 meters onto a landing where two ambulance officers were treating him.

They needed assistance in moving him so I scrambled down the cliff face with ropes and a stretcher was passed down from above. The casualty (the man with the mullet) had a suspected broken leg. He was a homeless man and he was trying to get to a cave on the cliff face to spend a night there. I said some prayers to myself for this home-less man with a mullet as this was something I wanted to bring with me to work.

The ambo's were cold and hard with their treatment of him. I guess they see this kind of thing all the time. Belittling him with any in-

formation they managed to get from our friend with the mullet in their patient care. Not taking him seriously and certainly not treating him with the love and compassion that we are used to in the fellowship. Usually medical information regarding a casualty is shared amongst emergency workers discreetly but

when the ambo's discovered the man with the mullet was hep C positive they shouted it out to everyone adding to double up and wear extra gloves.

Finally we packaged and lifted the patient from his perch and carried him to safety. At the rear of the ambulance we put him down on the ground and I was left to untie him from his stretcher. He started to cry... maybe from the shock of his fall maybe from the reality of his situation... maybe from the treatment I witnessed from the ambo's. It may have been a combination of all three things. As I untied him I reassured him that "he will be OK no matter what" and touched him on the shoulder as I asked God for some extra love for this man with the mullet.

The biggest smile I think I have ever seen came across this man's face and he confirmed he was that man. That same man on the cliff edge. He remembered my kindness. We hugged. I felt god's love.

Later he told me that after he was treated in hospital the nurses gave him a voucher to catch a cab for anywhere he wanted to go. But he was homeless. He tore up the voucher. A few days after that he ended up in a shelter for homeless men and the message was carried to him there. On September 29th he went to his first meeting and he has been clean ever since.

It was such a gift to make this connection with the man with a mullet... Ian.

Love all serve all,
namaste,
Marc.

Service Journey

When I put my hand up to be the Group Service Representative (GSR) of my home group I had no idea that I was opening the door to major opportunities for changes in my life.

Firstly here was the challenge of writing my group report on time, remembering to take the 7th Tradition funds to the Area Service Committee (ASC) and facilitating the group conscience. I really wanted to get things absolutely right and was very angry when anyone gave me any suggestions. I wanted to control things.

By making many mistakes and finally having to accept help I finally grasped that I was only human, that I wouldn't die if I made a mistake, and that getting help makes things easier.

My experience on the ASC taught me that things don't have to happen in my time, that other people may in fact be right even when they disagree with me, and that things get broken and then fixed and NA won't disappear just because we sometimes fight and get things wrong.

I worked on committees with people I didn't easily like and found that I can cooperate and even admire people whose opinions are very different to mine. I learnt that it was more important to get the work done than to change people so that they are more like me.

When I went to the Region I found out that NA is truly run by NA members, that there were no kings and queens and that all the important decisions are made by everyone just sharing their ideas and praying for the clarity to understand each other. I just had to get my reports in on time, take the money and organise myself to read and understand the material. (This turned out to be great training for going back to school later on).

When I went to the APF I was encouraged to offer the experience of my home Region to new NA communities by sharing guidelines, discussing history and talking about the mistakes and successes of our service committees. I also had to write my report, remember

to send our contribution to the treasurer on time and read all the material and send reports and articles to the APF Newsletter.

When I attended our APF meeting I found that sharing about recovery, talking about sponsoring people, discussing the steps and how to start meetings were just as valuable to community growth as sharing our service minutes and participating in the formal parts of the meeting. I found that the time that we spent sharing with each other outside the meetings were important golden opportunities to help each other.

This reinforced for me that service is really all about recovery and that we cannot successfully carry the NA message unless we live by spiritual principles and are prepared to support each other.

I am still an active member of my home group, and whenever we elect a new GSR I cannot help wondering where service will take them.

Anon.



Perspective

For me one of the key signs of addiction in me has been a tendency to blow things out of proportion, making mountains out of molehills. I have tended to do this all my life, before during and after my using days. One thing I liked about drugs was that they often had the ability to shrink problems, although they were still there and reinflated the next day.

When I got to NA, I found that sitting in meetings and getting my mind off myself for a while was one way to get problems back into proportion, and that worked better than drugs as I was usually able to face and deal with them the next day. I often felt that I needed to get to a meeting just to face my scary job as a high school teacher

the next day, singing the Serenity Prayer (to the tune of Ode to Joy) as I walked through a park to work the next morning.

Still, even with meetings and that prayer, I seemed to blow just about everything out of proportion back then. The boss said I should wipe my coffee cup better because it was leaving a ring on the rack above the sink in the staff lounge and I felt my days were numbered in that job. I could feel that my day was ruined because somebody looked at me funny in the morning. At work, I thought the kids were out to get me, and given how erratic and irritable I was, that may well have been true.

In retirement and having been clean nearly 33 years, I can see that there really are no mountains in my life. Seeing mountains in it tends to be evidence that my attitudes are not quite what they should be, and I need to try to change them instead of looking for a Sherpa.

While it might be insight into the obvious, something I'm pretty good at, I can now see that I don't blow things out of proportion because they are more serious, but because they are a bit unusual. When something happens that could upset me if my attitudes are off, I usually think about how I dealt, or didn't deal with, similar "problems" in the past, remember that they were no big thing, and just use it as an opportunity to be a bit more sane, responsible and mature this time. If the situation hasn't happened before, I may flounder a bit before I get my attitudes in line. It is clear that things that happen seldom get me in trouble, but reacting poorly to them may.

I recently wondered why I don't run into as many coincidences in life now as I did early in recovery. I realised at a meeting last night that I no longer see things as coincidences, just God nudging me a bit, and I am quite happy he does that. I can see that God does for me what I cannot, or will not do for myself, even if I don't appreciate that help at the time, seeing it as a bump, or pothole, on the road of life. I can now see them as speed bumps and guides.

Jim in Tasmania

Behaviour in Meetings Just Another Letter

Call me a dinosaur or relic, that's OK, but with age comes wisdom. When I first attended meetings, I was encouraged to do the following;

- be on time,
- be seated before the meeting started, and/or,
- come a bit early to help set up the meeting, and
- sit through the whole meeting.

So often I see, 3, 4, 5 people get up and walk out for whatever reason. I wonder how a newcomer feels when this happens as they are asked to share? Or when everyone walks out as they read "how it works"? A new member might think they know how it works. I will talk to them after the meeting.

I also see so many people share and then go outside for coffee or a smoke. To me this is an insult to the rest of the people at the meeting. 'You have heard my \$#!@, I am not interested in yours'.

I saw a member ten years clean reading a magazine in a meeting, and as for the amount of people text messaging in meetings, "How important is it"?

Even when I was a smoker, I sat through the whole meeting. Being an addict with a short attention span, I don't need any disruption; especially when my life depends on it. So, please try to show some respect to the meetings. You never know it might help you in later life.

Ian G. Corrimal

Never Know What'll Happen In The Big City

Hi. I am a member of the Thursday night Coogee Men's meeting in Sydney. I feel a great deal of belonging to that meeting and am proud of the welcoming feeling the meeting has. Members turn up early and help set up. Friendly smiles are afforded to newcomers and a sense of unity characterises the group.

Our meeting is held in Church grounds and a day care centre is situated there. The meeting is held at a time when parents are picking up their kids and we do get some curious looks whilst we're hanging out the front. To date, no one had ever asked us what we were up to or what was going on.

As is usually the case, a few minutes before the meeting kicked off some of the chaps were standing on the balcony shooting the breeze and self-harming via nicotine.

Now, we ARE an anonymous programme, but we're not a secret society and if you were an addict, you'd spot us a mile away. On Thursday just gone I saw a fellow walking by who was paying us a bit more attention than most passers usually do. He stopped and spoke to one of the other Men. I heard him ask if we were having a meeting to which Paul responded "we are", and that the meeting was starting in 5 minutes. He decided to join us. He got the usual welcome from the members and the meeting commenced. As is sometimes the case, God likes to make its mark in meetings and the chairperson was used in such a fashion.

The chap passing by was asked to share and I think to a man we were all very grateful he did. It turns out that this man had been in prison and was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous inside. Since his release he had only attended 1 or 2 meetings under urging from his parole officer. Once the pressure from parole had died down he had not attended. He had run into another fellow he'd been incarcerated with who was attending meetings. He had asked whether our passer by was coming to meetings to which

he responded “NO” and that he was living with people who were using. He thought it might be an idea if he did start attending meetings again.

After this “chance” meeting with his friend he walked up the hill thinking about where he might find a meeting and as you can guess, 5 minutes later was sitting in a meeting with us at Coogee. At the end of the meeting at least 2 older members approached our passer by and I believe he was made to feel welcome.

I feel very privileged to be part of a group that has members who go out of the way to welcome newcomers regardless of their own feelings of fear or awkwardness about talking to a stranger.

Small gestures of kindness are the things that stand out most to me about early recovery. I know that Sydney is a big city and that big cities can sometimes be unfriendly, but I believe that as members of our fellowship we have a duty to be welcoming. I believe it’s important to remember that we are usually the end of the line and may be the last source of hope for people who are suffering from a fatal disease. A busy life or a bit of fear which are both by-products of this gift we call recovery are no excuse for allowing one newcomer to be turned away.

Regards, Matt T-R



“Oh My God I’m Living With A Lunatic”

You just got clean. You’re ready to leave detox/refuge/rehab/half-way and start a new life. Maybe you’re finding it hard staying clean on your own or you have to move out of your old place, as it’s still full of using whackos you used to hang out with. So what do you do? You decide to move in with other recovering addicts, people from the fellowship, people who understand where you’re coming from, what you’re going through...

There is a reason they understand. They are going through it too! You are now committed to living with other recovering addicts and you are ALL going through the shit fight that is early recovery. If you are going to survive the experience you need to know what you’re in for...

The Co-Dependent

“I’ll go to the meeting if you go. I’ll stay if you stay. I’m having fun if you’re having fun. I’m bored if you’re bored. I’ll have a drink if you have a drink. I’ll have a whack if you have a whack”. Living with a co-dependent, you can be excused for thinking there is an echo. There is.

The Answer: Develop an interest in body piercing, branding, tattoos and unusual sexual practices. If that doesn’t get rid of them, start going to performance art in Darlinghurst.

The Control Freak

The control freak wants to know where you are going, what you are doing, and whom you are doing it with, not to forget why and when you’ll be home? They will then give you their opinion/permission (as if this somehow means something to you).

The Answer: Behave as erratically as possible. Never do what you say you will. Change your mind all the time. Answer the phone using different names. Just don’t let the bastards pin you down.

The Martyr

The martyr would have you believe they do it all for you, sacrificing themselves so you can go out and lead your life. “I was going to do something absolutely fabulous you know, I’d rather stay at home and do the dishes/cleaning/cooking while you go out and have a good time”. Martyrs can be extremely frustrating but you must resist the temptation to nail them to the cross yourself.

The Answer: Take them up on every offer they make and leave the house immediately!

The Obsessive Compulsive

The most common form of this is the housemate who compulsively cleans, followed closely by “I like a place to look tidy”, and the rearranging of every item in the room.

The Answer: Do not give up and join in. Every time they leave the house, move most things and hide the rest.

The Paranoid

Hmmm, beware of ex pot smokers and speed heads for this one. It takes a LONG TIME for the drugs to wear off (if at all). They always think you are talking about them at meetings, on the phone, at the bus stop, with other friends, to ASIO etc. They think the cops are still following them.

The Answer: Reassure them that it’s all true and maybe they should move interstate under an assumed name.

The People Pleaser

Be careful what you say around a people pleaser because before you know it, they’ve done it for you, even if you didn’t mean it or have changed your mind.

The Answer: Scream, “Oh my God!!! You idiot!!! Look what you have done!!!”

The Self-Obsessed

“How do I look? Did I sound OK? Was my share boring? Do you think that guy was looking at me? I’m fat aren’t I? This looks bad doesn’t it? You think I am an idiot don’t you?” The most important thing to remember is that they’re not actually listening to you and they don’t really care what you think, because they’ll keep asking till they get the answer they want.

The Answer: Pretend you have amnesia and don’t speak any English any more.

The Sloth

Usually when you get clean, you get clean. You discover hygiene and deodorant and the fact that there is a whole world out there apart from Oprah. Sadly, there is a small majority for whom this is not the case. They continue to live as they used; smelly and boring. They will often then complain that recovery is not that great, “I don’t know why I bothered”. Neither do we.

The Answer: If you can’t get rid of them, move them out to the garage/shed. Don’t let them into the house and put their name down for emergency housing elsewhere, (preferably another city).

The Terminally Depressed

Some people never cheer up. You may think that after they have been in recovery for a while, things will start looking up, yadda yadda yadda... but no. These people never cheer up. Everything is never good enough. Their lives still suck and so do their attitudes.

The Answer: Tell them Prozac is not a bust.

So anyway, decide wisely!!!

The Realisation of the Truth

If you have ever attended a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous around this country you would have heard my story shared from the floor a thousand times over. It is neither unique nor special. The only thing that makes it so profound is that I was the one to experience it.

My disease of addiction, and the subsequent unmanageability that followed was revealed to me long before I was ever exposed to the fellowship of NA. I lived my life without the fear of consequence and subscribed to an ethical code 'that if it feels good do it and bugger the consequences', an attitude that saw me time and time again return to active addiction having had some amount of abstinence from mood and mind altering substances with some semblance of recovery about it.

Before coming to the fellowship of NA I drank and used for thirteen years. It was just as the reading states; progressive, incurable and almost fatal. I experienced the same progression in my using that could have been read in any textbook on addiction. I drank up until the age of eighteen and when I passed my HSC with flying colours I can remember even now that night how I felt, experimenting with just about any drug I could lay my hands on. Having applied myself to my schooling and education in such a disciplined manner for so many years I truly believed that I had earned the right to feel the best I possibly could for the greatest amount of time available to me – and this was all the time. After all I was only experimenting! My history since has suggested that it ceases to become an experiment when it becomes the main and only focus of your life endeavors.

Recreational use of stimulants like ecstasy, speed, ice and special K grew mundane by the age of twenty-one and I became involved in a regular association with the needle. The drugs took on a whole new meaning at this point and it became the greatest of my desires to add a new ingredient to my repertoire. It was at this moment that I picked up heroin. My tempestuous relationship with 'Harry' lasted no more than five years and at the end

of it I was sitting anything but pretty on a daily dose of 150mls of methadone, weighed over 140kg and for want of a better term was physically, emotionally and spiritually void of any motivation or desire to achieve any of life's goals and ambitions to which I had so much aspired.

I damaged relationships with close friends and family, got into trouble with the law and court systems, became increasingly more entrenched in misery and self loathing and was about to embark on a first name relationship with just about every general practitioner in the greater Melbourne area. I had very simply, given up hope that things could even be any different. It was at this point in time I was exposed to my first treatment episode and to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous.

The last four years have been a roller coaster ride in and out of recovery. I have relapsed four or five times and have never achieved more than six months clean at each attempt. I have forever preferred the immediate feel good, to give me some sort of reprieve from the pain that has existed within. I am no longer prepared to indulge in ignorance because it is no longer bliss once you are equipped with the knowledge of recovery. Having experienced recovery the way I have over the last four years, I am now compelled to 'experience a different approach to the solution and daily reprieve that the rooms provide'.

Today I am three and a half months clean again and residing in a treatment facility in Sydney. The same tough rehab I was always threatened with. I originally came here for a thirty-day period assuming I would then be back on track and able to return to Melbourne better than ever. But this is not the case. It seems the more days clean I achieve, the more I realize the sheer magnitude of how much work really needs doing.

In my time here I have struggled with wanting to leave and varying levels of overwhelming uncomfortability. These feelings pale into insignificance when compared to the alternative of active addiction however. The required amount of drugs and actions to get those

drugs are no longer sustainable. I must have a death. The last month long relapse saw me doing things I thought I would never do. I am left with no other option than to experience the discomfort from within in order to grow. In spite of all of this uncomfortabilty I have also experienced moments of serenity, peace and happiness not just with those around me but from within. This is some of the gold I have been searching for elusively in past recoveries. The term, one addict helping another is without parallel, is something I have never experienced to such a large degree as I have in my time here.

What does the future hold for me? I do not have the answer to this but it is my intention to move up here to Sydney for the next twelve months and remain close to the people, places and memories that I have created in this most cherished of recoveries. In the past I have been reluctant to use the word grateful in the past but for the first time in my life I can say that if for nothing other than the hope I have today...I am truly grateful.

Anon.

Tragic to Magic

This is my story – from tragic to magic. It is my hope that by writing what it was like, what happened and what it is like now that I may inspire others in my position to live a life beyond their wildest dream.

I grew up on the Northern Beaches of Sydney – I had no material wants as there was money everywhere, but when it came to love there was only smoke and mirrors. My father was a very successful businessman and my mother a homemaker. My sister was the golden child, a high achiever, which in the material world we lived, counted for everything. Me on the other hand, well I was focused on sports, something I was exceptionally good at.

At twelve years old the perfect world I lived in was shattered as I was woken up whilst dreaming of my mother. I said 'why did you wake me up? I was dreaming of my mother'. It was then that the woman who I thought was my mother asked me how I knew. Knew what I thought? She said 'knew that I was adopted'. I had always felt apart from the family unit but hearing that confirmed it. From that point my life went pear-shaped and I rebelled.

I quickly found drugs and alcohol within my peer-group which allowed me to live in a fantasy world away from the pain of life. At thirteen I found my drug of choice. It came in a double O cap as grey rocks. To sustain my using I'd started moving dope, selling pot to buy smack. I kept my using under control so I thought, though was often in trouble for fighting at school. I continued to achieve in my sporting pursuits but didn't want to train because drugs had become a priority.

At sixteen I was expelled from school for hitting a couple of the teachers. My parents didn't want me on the dole so they paid me to go to the beach. By now I was using at any opportunity. Not long after this, my adopted mother was tragically killed in a car accident. I realised that I had loved this woman. It broke my heart and from that point my whole world changed. I resented everyone and everything including myself. I got kicked off the footy team and stopped boxing. My favourite pastimes were picking fights at the pub, chasing girls or scoring dope.

When I was nineteen, my father found me shooting dope at home. He left for work returning half an hour later with a pair of detectives. They put me in Long Bay. I was unable to get bail as I'd threatened my father. When I was released it was recommended that I go on Methadone which I did. The jacks raided my fathers place finding a gram of heroin so when I went to Court I was jailed for a year. While I was in there my girlfriend overdosed and died. My father appeared and said 'here's a thousand dollars – don't come home'. I had my 21st birthday in prison, the first of many birthdays celebrated inside.

The following sixteen years were a blur. I spent most of my life in maximum security as society didn't seem too happy with me rob-

bing banks and chemists or cultivating dope and supplying heroin. All of this was to support a raging and relentless habit. Isn't it amazing how that small paragraph covers nearly two decades of violence and misery? I'd become institutionalised, being much more comfortable in goal than out. I knew no other way.

I was sick of being in goal and had heard of these places called rehabs. In 1995 I applied for parole and was released (in handcuffs) to a treatment centre. In the eight months that I was there, I used and used, mainly on weekends. They knew I was using as they said as much! Thank God for bodgie urines. I graduated and left rehab instantly returning to the old ways using and selling heroin. I was miserable. I rang my parole officer and asked them to put me back in goal to which he said 'you're doing well!' Yeah right mate! I was eventually caught in an undercover sting, again, and to cut a long story short, I volunteered to go back to rehab via a detox unit and it was there that I was first introduced to Narcotics Anonymous. This time I was determined to do it 'right'. That was on the 11th of August 1997. I have never used again to this day.

There was a hitch though. Even though I had made the decision to stop using I still had Court hanging over my head and it looked as though I was going to go away for another ten years. On the day I stood before the Judge in the committal hearing it was revealed that all evidence had been lost. The Crown witnesses never appeared and all charges were dismissed (there is a God!).

I walked out of that court a free man, clean and with my new life ahead of me. I moved into a unit with a couple of guys from NA and did two meetings a day sometimes more when I could. I'd been involved in service since I had been in rehab as they'd taken us to an NA convention where I became the dishwasher for the weekend. I joined Friday Night Surfers as a group member which is still my home-group today.

At three years clean I'd got my own lease on a unit and the phone on in my name. No minor feat as with a past like mine. I was still catching buses to meetings, sometimes with 60 convention shirts to sell. I had a couple of serious relationships but at four years clean, decided to move to Cairns with my then partner. This was

a real challenge as there weren't many meetings up there, so I started one. I got my licence back and started voting. I was truly becoming a productive member of society!

I moved back to the Gold Coast after splitting with my partner who's still my friend today. I bought a car that I eventually sold to buy a ute so that I could start a lawn maintenance business; big stuff for me as I had never had a 'real' job before this.

At seven years clean, through a series of unforeseen events I was reconnected with my sister whom I'd had no contact with for over 18 years. It was an amazing and emotional reunion. She wouldn't stop touching me and said that I had always been her big brother. I said that I wanted to speak to my father but only had a post office box to write to. Seven months later my father rang. I was lost for words, it was a dream coming true. I hadn't seen or spoken to him for over 15 years. We eventually met on neutral ground and for the first time in my life I felt his love and approval. He even gave me his phone number and address. We have remained in contact since, speaking regularly on the phone.

Two months after I turned ten years clean, I got a phone call. It was my father. I was at work and he asked when I would be home as had something important to tell me. I said "in two hours". I hung up and immediately thought the worst. When he called back he asked if I was sitting down, which I was. He said that he'd decided to buy me a place of my own to which I replied, "are you sure?" He said that it felt right. I was in shock and still can't believe it. I live in that place now with my pup and all my possessions. I've got a new ute and a successful business. So from the outside looking in, it's all pretty normal.

Thanks to NA and a Power greater than myself, my life has completely transformed from a career criminal who'd spent most of their adult life in gaol to a productive member of society. So I can say comfortably – Expect the Unexpected!

Ian U

The Twelve Traditions in Plain Language

1. It's not just about you, OK?
2. Dude: it's all about the H.P!
3. Welcome – if you want to stop using
4. What happens in the group conscience, stays in the group conscience (unless it screws everybody else up).
5. Besides NOT being a social, dating, investment, sex club or drug story exchange group, our wide range of services also only include hope to find a new way of living and freedom from using drugs
6. NA only buys recovery.
7. Group fund themselves.
8. To get a job with NA you gotta follow the 12 traditions.
9. Nobody is the boss of NA except the NA members.
10. The REAL spiritual guy is the one who's too dumb to care what everyone's arguing about.
11. We only sell recovery: your recovering is our best P.R.
12. Here your first name is "Anonymous" and your surname "Spiritual-Principles"



The Twelve Tidbits of NA

1. It's not old behaviour if you're still doing it.
2. If you want an image in NA, look around in the meetings at who you are trying to impress.
3. An addict is a person who wants to be held while they are isolating.
4. A treatment centre is where you go and pay to find out that NA meetings are free.
5. The idea that alcoholics, drug addicts, sex addicts, overeaters, smokers, etc, should all just go to NA Meetings because a disease, is a disease, is a disease, was started by a treatment centre that only had one van.
6. If USING is interfering with your work, you're probably a heavy USER. If work is interfering with your USING, you're probably an ADDICT.
7. I often obsessively pursue feeling good, no matter how bad it makes me feel.
8. When I was new, I didn't think I had any obsessions until I started thinking about it. Then it was all I could think about.
9. Newcomer: How do I know how many meetings I should attend each week? Old-timer: Gradually cut back until you USE. Then you'll know.
10. I would rather go through life CLEAN, believing I am an ADDICT, than go through life USING (HIGH), trying to convince myself that I am not an ADDICT.
11. Resentments are like stray cats: if you don't feed them, they'll go Away.
12. The good news is you get your emotions back; the bad news is you get your emotions back.

Fellowship Service Office Catalogue Promotions



Meet the mini's. These pocket rocket replicas of their bigger siblings are only 7.5x12 cm and can be purchased from FSO for just \$18.70 each.

These basic NA books are blank page writing journals. They come in brown or black and can be purchased from FSO



This oversized 112-page, four-colour coffee table book chronicles the birth of Narcotics Anonymous in words and pictures. The words: WSO's archives and Jimmy K's words tell the story of the struggles our founding members had in starting a fellowship for addicts. The pictures: Actual photos of the archival documents illustrate the story. From our first meeting sign-in sheet to our first pieces of literature, these high-quality reproductions allow us a glimpse into our roots. Price: \$66.00

*“Addiction is a disorder in its own
right*

*--- the addict may or may not have
had an imbalanced or disordered
personality before addiction ---
after addiction he certainly does.*

*The wish or desire to remove
the drugs from our lives may be
fulfilled one way or the other,
but cleanliness will be short lived if no
action is taken to alter or renew the
character disorder that is left.*

*A clean life is not just a substitute for
the old way, it should be a new way
based in the superiority of being clean
over any other way of life.”*

-----Jimmy K.

Is your world upside down?



NA National Helpline
1300 652 820

other information www.na.org.au