

Free publication of the Australian Region

NA TODAY

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about the magazine

Editor - Tim Butterfield. Vettor - Kris Anderson. Vettor - Kitty Ikin.

The NA Today Magazine is a free publication of the Australian Region. It welcomes letters from all readers. Letters can be your own story, experience strength and hope, or a response to any article that has appeared in the NA Today, or, can simply be a viewpoint about an issue of concern in the NA Fellowship. Letters should be no more than 800 words, and we reserve the right to edit. All letters must include a name address, and phone number. First names and last initial will be used as the signature line unless the writer requests anonymity. The NA Today Magazine belongs to the members of Narcotics Anonymous. Its mission, therefore, is to provide each member with recovery and service information, as well as recovery-related entertainment, which speaks to current issues and events relevant to each of our members, region-wide. In keeping with this mission, the magazine is open to articles and features written by members from around Australia, as well as current service and convention information. Foremost, the magazine is dedicated to the celebration of our message of recovery—"that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

The NA Today Magazine presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous, The NA Today Magazine, or the Narcotics Anonymous Regional Service Committee

The NA Today Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on NA matters, cartoons, ideas etc to:

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one history of the basic text

The coming of the Basic Text changed NA forever. Getting the book out was a marathon effort that took six years of blood, sweat and tears and split the fellowship in half.

It saw teams of addicts working seven days and nights in one go on the text, guided by group conscience to find words they could all agree on that caught the spirit of NA recovery. It saw addicts digging into their own pockets, even selling their motorbikes to help fund the basic text. It saw amazing personality conflicts and dramas, finished chapters stolen, NA's printer going bankrupt and thousands of seventh tradition money lost and gone.

Let's go back to the late 1970s. Fleetwood Mac and Bob Seeger are getting the elbow from the Sex Pistols. NA was enjoying nearly 20 years of growth in the US and starting to spread its wings worldwide. But it lacked a 'big book' like AA.

NA's founder, Jimmy K, the man who designed the NA logo and made that crucial decision to use the word 'addiction' in the first step was office manager of the WSO and was seen as the man who'd write the book. Since the early 1970s, the pressure from the wider fellowship had been growing, but all that had been compiled was a bunch of personal stories.

That changed in 1977 when an addict from Atlanta, Georgia by the name of Bo S. turned up at the WSC in Houston and started rabbiting on about the need for a 'big book'. He learned that nearly everyone in the fellowship also wanted an NA book, but that they all expected somebody else to actually do the work.

Bo, a relative newcomer with a couple of years up, believed he could get the thing done in the spirit of 'I can't, we can'. He discussed his vision with some more experienced NA members, gained their broad support (plus a good measure of scepticism), and left the convention as a man on a mission.

A former activist in the heady days of the 1960s Vietnam War protests, Bo knows all about using large numbers of people to get things done. Within days he started writing his thoughts in a notebook and talking to others about getting them to write theirs too.

It soon becomes clear that Bo's idea is to write the book by using a mass of people, the addicts in the fellowship. He has little confidence in the idea

of a small committee doing the job. For months he bangs on about his vision to anyone who will listen at meetings, at coffee, everywhere and gradually started winning people over to the idea.

He gained a few recruits around the Atlanta fellowship; people like Motorcycle Ed, who began to believe they might be able to make the book happen if they all worked hard at it.

The following year, 1978, Bo comes back to the WSC. He's nervous because he has no official position at world level related to literature development. He talks about the reluctance of the average member to become involved in this area. But he reckons that if members tried it, they might find it wasn't so hard after all.

He calls on 'literature minded' members to become part of a network of people working on the book. He invites the power of the network, the collective, asking members volunteering to make their names and addresses known to others working on the book. Slowly his drive, determination and willingness to follow things through starts to win people over and he gets elected WSC literature committee chair.

Bo went back home, sat down at his typewriter and spent months cranking out endless letters and making scores of phone calls right across the country. He decided to set up a literature conference in Wichita as a way to get the job started. Meanwhile, thanks to Bo's efforts, area literature committees start springing up around the country.

The two-day Wichita meeting happens in October, with Bo cracking the whip, keeping members working long hours and never allowing much slack time. A total of 40 members attend, with seven workshops discussing how the job would be done and writing up minutes of their discussion. This forms the basis of a Literature Committee handbook that is a blueprint for the basic text.

The year 1980 began with Bo calling for a literature conference "to compose our basic text. We feel we'll need 30 days." As it turned out it does take 30 days and nights to compose it by committee, but in smaller sessions. He offers to present a manuscript to the 1981 WSC. And he's not too far off.

Work begins in earnest at the 10th WSC in Wichita, with carloads of people heading off to Lincoln, Nebraska for the literature conference that runs from September 8th through to the 14th. A total of 35 people turn up

and Bo brings along the material he had written, along with letters and personal stories from hundreds of people. There are about 800 pages of people to work through.

Bo's book about the writing of the basic text is worth quoting. "From the moment the early arrivals gazed into the empty hall in the Federal Building, it was apparent that this was the time and place for the fulfillment of a dream. Men and women, who had little or no acquaintance to one another, embraced each other readily, eager to enjoy what each had to share."

Two trustees offered background and perspective, including a discussion of the historical context of the work within the growing fellowship. The focus is kept on the first ten chapters, with the personal stories left for later.

Bo's book again. "Ten working chapters were established: Who is an addict? What is the NA programme? Why are we here? How it works? What can I do? The twelve traditions of NA, Recovery and Relapse, We do recover, Just for Today, and More Will Be Revealed. Members felt that this would help marry existing literature with the new.

"After the headings were agreed on, the material was sorted into the different chapter headings by content. When it became clear that this was nearing completion, a new workshop was opened to establish topic outlines for each chapter. When the sorting was complete and the topic outlines were finished, material under each topic heading was separated by clipping and pasting up in order by group conscience."

The committee also added material to the cut and paste input when there was an abrupt change of subject or when the subject needed expanding. It was typed up in book form to constitute a rough draft for literature committees to work on."

The six-day schedule was grueling. Bo had people working nearly round the clock, in teams some days and some nights. Often they just kept working, grabbing some rest then getting back to it. God seems to be hovering over the process: food just seems to show up when people need it. And a few members with more time and a little money kick in a lot. One local member sells his Harley and uses the money to help defray costs.

Bo and other literature committee people visit the smaller work groups, offering ideas, helping with concepts and organisation. They spend time reading and helping compile the work each group assembled. For those

who were there, it is a spiritual experience, a work of harmony, purpose and openness.

When it is over, copies are made of the material assembled for each chapter from Two through Ten, and mailed to different literature committees across the country. These committees in eight cities have volunteered to retype the pasted-up and hand-written material to make it presentable and readable. They are asked to bring their individual chapter as close to completion as they can.

Meanwhile work on chapter one is going well. Bo comments that 'it is gradually yielding to our efforts.' But the mountain is far from climbed and another writing workshop is scheduled. This goes ahead at the campus of Memphis State University in the first week of February 1981. The initial 30 participants from nine states are treated to gallons of coffee, long hours of work and lots of hugs. After some discussion, work assignments are given out and everyone gets busy. Each day they hold a progress meeting to review what's been done and plan ahead.

At the second day's progress meeting, Bo makes what turned out to be a provident decision. He asks everybody to call back to their home area and get one member of their local committee to accept calls every day and to pass on the information from those calls to others. He also asks them to get the home groups to gather money to help pay for things the writers need, such as paper, envelopes, coffee etc.

As the Memphis workshop proceeds, the appeal for money broadens. They ask for money, lots of it, to help publish the draft and mail it out to the fellowship. The huge amount of financial support that is received is testimony to the bridges that the project builds with people right across the fellowship. It is not clear whether Elvis is part of the project, but he is glimpsed in the building at one point.

Meanwhile, they figure out that the best process is working on one chapter at a time, in two groups with each taking a different section of the chapter. Then they start working. It is a huge task. Reading each sentence, each line, each paragraph and discussing, discussing, discussing. Sometimes it flows; other times it doesn't.

Each chapter gets discussed every day at the progress meeting, and everyone gets the chance to offer their opinion on it. Slowly, as concerns are addressed one after the other, the work begins to go more smoothly, with fewer reservations voiced about each chapter. Pretty soon chapter one seems okay. Then three and four were put to rest.

As the week in Memphis goes on they became more confident that they can get the job done. By day six, one and two were done. Two days later, everything except seven and ten was done. The personal stories had been reviewed. Two days later the work is at an end.

Meanwhile, in response to the lines of communication established, money for printing is pouring in from area committees, groups and individuals. The first draft of the basic text is written. A total of 1200 review copies are printed, painstakingly assembled by the exhausted Memphis crew and mailed out to the fellowship.

The first copy goes to Jimmy K "in sincere gratitude for all his years of help and selfless devotion to NA". Bo is handed the second copy.

The review form is instantly immortalised by the name applied because of its colour, a light grey. The Grey Form becomes a prized document that many hold dear to their hearts. The work comes to an end; well, almost. Things will get a lot weirder before they get better.

Meanwhile the punishing schedule of recent months and years have taken their toll on the people behind the project. Bo comes home from Memphis to an empty house. The power had been cut off and his wife had moved into her parents house with the kids. His marriage is over.

The communal writing of the Basic text also shows that NA is reaching a new level of energy and commitment. Clearly this is seen as quite threatening to some of the more laid-back members, including some of NA's founders.

Bo later writes to the fellowship how the book is now ready for publication and will appear by May of that year. Just one more writing session at Santa Monica in April will be needed to finish the job.

A group of about 35 people attend, with the Californians showing reluctance to working all night. People with a lot of clean time turn up; it is clear that the project was now being taken a lot more seriously. Things get quite technical and a lot of improvements made. But they're still not there yet.

As an example of the personality conflicts and undercurrents now swirling around the work, the first five chapters at 'second edit' stage and seen as complete, are stolen and never recovered. This is a cruel blow, one that causes suspicion and anger in a body of people that hadn't had these emotions as they worked.

The material has to be recreated, leading to another literature workshop. Meanwhile a new literature committee chair replaces Bo, leading to a huge personality conflict. At the workshop in Warren, Ohio, the new chair is Roger T. The work goes smoothly, but Roger and Bo are clashing.

At one point during the week, Roger gets so mad at Bo, as he later confessed that he would have shot him if he'd had a gun at the time. But by the end of that conference, chapters one, two, three and eight seem to be in final form. But yet another workshop is needed to finish the job. Bo's May deadline is not going to be met.

The third workshop of that year was tacked on the end of the 11th World Convention held in Florida in September 1981 as the Springbok tour rag-es across New Zealand.

Beginning the day after the convention ended, there are as many as 50 people involved at a time. The formula is now well established. They work in small committees, refining the material as they go. As usual, they have group conscience meetings twice a day.

Minutes from the time read: "Beth gave an update on chapter four workshop. As it stands now the First and Second Steps are completed. Roland, also on the committee, said it wouldn't be long before the chapter was completed. Tricia reports that chapter five is ready for proofing, and she needs someone to help with this. Joe feels chapter seven is almost finished."

In the end, the Florida heat and the long hours wears the committee members down. They are running out of creative steam. But Bo can sense how close they are to finishing the job, and works tirelessly to calm conflicts, to help them breast the tape. Finally, remarkably, in September 1981, NA had a draft of its recovery book.

It ain't over. Two more years will pass before the fellowship will have the book in its hot little hands. Along the way, Roger disappears with the final draft, having promised to type it up, and the book had to be reconstructed.

That's just the start of the problems. The book gets sent to a dodgy printer who goes bankrupt, costing the fellowship around \$15,000.

Meanwhile there is a conflict over some rewrites by Jimmy K. of the discussions about traditions four and nine. These are seen by many newer

members of the fellowship as tampering without consultation and became hugely controversial.

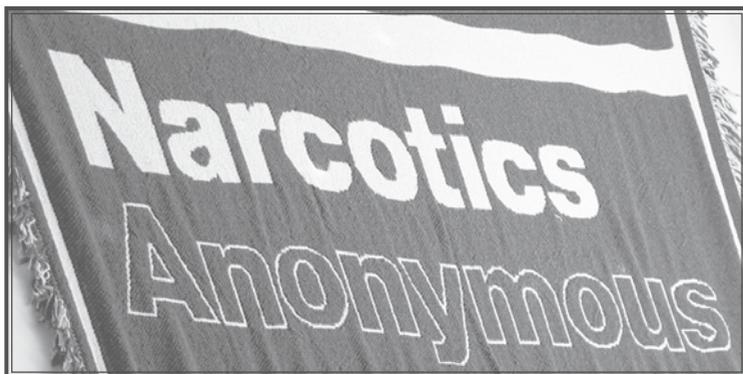
Jimmy K ends up being relieved of his duties as office manager a really sad ending for the only continuously active member then alive who had been part of NA's birth.

But despite all the conflicts and difficulties, Jimmy is there on Wednesday, April 26, 1983, when the first edition rolls off the printing press, months behind schedule. He carries the first dozen boxes of the book in his old pick-up truck. Over the following several days five thousand copies are printed.

It has been an extraordinary six years. The hard work, knowledge, efficiency, and dedication of those 'literature-minded' people finally pay off. It has been an initiative that will help carry the message in a whole new way to a whole lot more people, changing the face of NA forever.

Authors Note:

This article was written by Redmer Y from New Zealand, but in his words, much of what is contained in it comes from Bob Stone's 1997 self-published book, My Years With NA. For nine years, Bob, a non-addict, served NA as the executive director of the World Service Office. Bob died in 1996. The other main source was Bo S's self-published book on the writing of the BT. Maybe a bit of Miracles Happen in there too.



everyone's right to belief

One of the biggest hurdles I had with the 12 steps was not the powerlessness of the first step, the fear of self-reflection in the fourth step, nor the looming terror of the ninth step. No, it was all that airy-fairy higher power business scattered throughout the rest of the steps. Various pious-but-well-meaning members trumpeted that if you don't get a loving higher power in your life, you'd use. What I did realise however was that as much as I found the whole need for a god/higher power/ Buddha/force outside myself/Easter bunny/whatever so intellectually lame and biologically ridiculous, I was somehow going to have to go with the flow. But how do I do that without abandoning my principles? Simple; ask my sponsor.

I was fortunate enough to have the late, great, much-loved and equally much-missed John L for my sponsor. He had his own belief system, and I was half-expecting a bit of proselytising. Instead, what I got was a fascinating discussion on the whole god/hp conundrum, and a crash course in understanding everyone's right to belief. He shared with me what worked for him, and gave me some much appreciated guidance and information. Most importantly, he told me to be true to myself and not censor myself. But it has nothing to do with gods or higher powers. I simply don't believe in these things. And I don't believe in miracles. And what is spirituality anyway?

Sometimes I do things for people who are less fortunate than me because I can afford to. This to me is not spiritual; it's merely an obligation I have to my fellow man. I believe we are collectively the real power in step three and frankly I find it somewhat depressing that so many of us will not take credit for the good we do. For instance, the general consensus in our fellowship is that if I were to walk out of the rooms tomorrow and start shooting heroin like a demon, then that's my will. However, if I were to then make it back to the rooms, somehow that's the work of some invisible, inexplicable entity who is so benevolent it wants to save my thieving, manipulative, junkie arse while some poor kid is dying a long, slow painful death from leukemia in the kids' hospital on the other side of town. So, if you take offence at me standing in a meet-

ing and saying I think the whole idea of a god is preposterous, then deal with it, because at the last census in Australia, 15.3% of people said they didn't buy any religion whatsoever. I'm betting there might even be a few addicts in that figure, and I believe they have as much right to be in our rooms as anyone.

Henry E. Sydney



(Cartoon sourced from 2nd annual NSW convention poster 1985)

so you think you can date?

One of the suggested things you hear in NA is to stay out of relationships for at least 12 months. Based on the personal experiences of many members, the questions must be asked...is that long enough? So how do you know if you're ready for a relationship? Just take this simple quiz.

1. Is your idea of the perfect person someone who...

- a) You can see yourself sharing your life with (sigh)
- b) Won't bring up your defects...ever.
- c) Someone to use with.

2. Does your support network consist of...

- a) A group of fellow recovering addicts
- b) The above plus a great sponsor
- c) Your dog/cat/plant/computer

3. There's someone you really like. Do you...

- a) Talk to your sponsor about whether you're ready for a relationship
- b) Try and get them sleep with you. It's been ages.
- c) Ask a mate to ask them if they like you

4. On your first date do you...

- a) Tell them how faaabulous you are...over and over
- b) Tell them, in great detail, why all your exes are f*!#ed units.
- c) Try and find out what you've got in common

5. Now you're "going steady", do you...

- a) Mostly enjoy the time spent together
- b) Mostly resent the time spent together
- c) What time spent together? I've got to live my own life!

6. You've had an argument with your partner. Do you...

- a) Threaten to use/kill yourself/kill them
- b) Storm off in a huff but come back an hour later ready to talk
- c) Try and work out what's your stuff and what's theirs and how to solve the problem

7. Your partner wants the two of you to move in together. Do you...

- a) Run screaming for the hills
- b) Discuss with them whether or not you both feel ready for this change and what it means for the relationship
- c) Say "OK but I'm not paying for your Foxtel"

8. Sadly it hasn't worked out. Do you...

- a) Trash their stuff and scrawl "DIE" on the wall
- b) Try to behave with respect and dignity
- c) Climb a mountain and scream "Why God? Why?" into the wind

How You Scored

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Q1. a=3 b=2 c=1 | Q2. a=2 b=3 c=1 | Q3. a=3 b=1 c=2 |
| Q4. a=2 b=1 c=3 | Q 5. a=3 b=1 c=2 | Q6. a=1 b=2 c=3 |
| Q7. a=1 b=3 c=2 | Q8. a=1 b=3 c=2 | |

What does it all mean?

8 - 11 Hmmm...if I were you I'd go back to some serious step work and quite possibly therapy.

12 - 15 Nearly there! Maybe a bit more effort in the sharing, caring part of your program would be a good idea.

16 - 19 Yeah, looks good. Either you're ready to start a relationship or you've been lying.

20 - 24 You're ready! May the force be with you.

Over 24 Only possible if you chose c. at question 7. (Just because you're in love doesn't mean you've lost your mind!)

BTW the author takes no responsibility for failed relationships embarked on as a result of this quiz.

if you are in the middle you can't fall off the edge

This article is dedicated to all those NA members who don't know how to or are not willing to trust.

Before coming to NA, I felt lonely, miserable, disgusting and worthless. I lived most of my life degrading myself to make money for drugs. I would say anything to anyone to get what I wanted and would go along with whatever you were saying for your approval. But as soon as you turned your back, I'd be bagging you and betraying you. So obviously I had a life without trust and honesty.

Since coming to NA, things have changed. You can disagree with people in the rooms and put your opinion across without it being a huge drama. You can share your story and help a newcomer because they have been through the same things that you have.

If there are people in the rooms you don't like, it's OK, because you don't have to like everyone. But on the other hand, show them the basic respect for trying to fix up their lives.

NA is not a competition of who can do what for whom, or who can do it better. It's not about how much time you have up or what car you drive. Older cleaner members are there to show you the way if you want to be shown, and new members are there because they are desperate like you once were.

When I first came to NA I thought I had nothing to offer and couldn't believe that people wanted to take time out to know me. At first I didn't really trust it and thought it was all about impressing. But thank God the fog lifted and the penny dropped. Everyone in the rooms has been through some sort of hell and they are all trying to stay clean one day at a time and make something of themselves. No one is here to judge harshly or get anything out of you.

There always seems to be a group of people who hang on the edge of NA, be critical and divisive, then they end up isolated and never seem to make it in the long run. I think it is because they haven't learned to trust.

I refuse to be one of the ones sitting on the outside not trusting anyone and feeling miserable, while the others are in the centre of NA feeling alive. I choose to be in the centre, I choose to trust, to stay clean and have faith.

Dave H. Canberra



remember

All too often I am blasé about the things that I hear in NA meetings, sometimes yawning, sometimes judging. All too often missing the opportunity to experience unity with my fellow addict. My aloof and jaded self can totally undervalue other addicts and underestimate the awesome beast which is the disease of addiction. I can be unperturbed by the life experience of people who are just like me. I become a mercenary for the disease of addiction. As soon as I have the first one, the relentless obsession and compulsion begin. I become incapable of anything other than living to use and using to live.

I personally become desensitised to the facts of my own life. Violence, perpetual sickness, thieving, homelessness, overdosing, locked wards, self harm, rotting teeth, and all things sugar and spice. These symptoms of my addiction do not even include the emotional and spiritual anguish that annihilated my capacity to connect to anything alive, dead or otherwise. When I had reached no man's land in my using, I honestly did not believe it could get worse, but I discovered there are no limits to the disease's potential destructive power.

In recovery my symptoms are very different. I am unlearning and clearing much of the debris left over from my active addiction. I am discovering that is everyone was to paint a picture of what being clean looks like there would not be two the same. I am free of the obsession and compulsion to use most of the time and by going to meetings, am exposed to the healing power of one addict helping another. Herein lies my reason for writing this.

Close up and from a distance I get to witness broken people mending. I am able to watch reality mess with people not just a bit but a whole lot. I see them lose the plot, spin out, freak out, wig out, then truly emerge stronger, wiser, kinder and more beautiful than before they were thrust into life on life's terms. It is the experience of others that is an integral part of me feeling safe.

I am truly inspired when I can appreciate the price that each and every one of us has paid to be in a meeting. My friends alone astonish me with their courage to live clean. Some of the life experience they have shared with me leave me baffled at how they can do anything at all. Yet here they are, not just alive but living their dreams once presumed well out of their reach, learning to love and be loved. Sometimes I can miss the very thing that has awakened my spirit. People are real, they lived the horror and the scars are all too real. They are not just another “f...g here we go again or yeah right”. And it is real power that somehow places us together clean or with the third tradition.

It is my panacea for the aches and pains of complacency which brings me to the most grey of places. Every meeting I attend is a possible ‘inspiration smorgasbord’. I hope I remember this when I am intolerant of my beloved fellowship. The members of NA wherever I am are the catalyst for my life force returning and the reason I can live outside myself and within the world.

Cirbur. Sydney

the two Jimmys

I wonder why religious institutions can't start the day in a gentler, more inviting manner. I find no greater intrusion than the demanding clatter of church bells or the call to Morning Prayer. Both are uninvited and at a time designed clearly for sleep and no other purpose. I am sure attendance at such establishments would be greatly enhanced if they started around 11am with cakes and some gentle relaxing music to welcome the day.

It is January 1975 and the city of Penang, Malaysia is coming to life. This dawn is like every other dawn in this city. It starts with

the call to prayer and an attempt to drive me from the warmth of my bed. Well, petulance is my specialty and I can hold my breath a lot longer than anyone else, so I pull up the sheets and will not budge. I love the raw exposure that life on the streets of an Asian city provides. With the knowledge that whole families live outside my hotel door, eating, sleeping and washing in the small realm they call home. No insulation or saccharin coating, just life at its best and worst.

This morning will have the same outcome as yesterday and everyday for many months now. The calls to prayer will win and I will be driven from bed to face another day of an existence built on loss of choice and a narcissistic belief that the world was designed as my plaything and that consequence was something other people had to live with. My day will start with one destination on my mind. The same destination that sees me start every morning, the place that provides relief from the rigors of my life. This place is Jimmy's and the opium dens of Chulia St.

Jimmy Wong always sat at the entrance to Chulia St. He looked like he had already seen his 80th birthday. Maybe it was a certain weathering process that a man in Jimmy's profession undertakes. Whatever it was, Jimmy looked very old. His father and his grandfather had probably sat in the same position. This was Jimmy's domain and he was clearly positioned so nothing and nobody could pass unnoticed. He sat under a brilliantly colored beach umbrella dressed as if he was sitting on Malibu beach. Everyday he wore the same bright Hawaiian shirt and the accompanying straw hat and reflective glasses. I suspect he had seen a copy of the then recently released Beach Boys' album and decided to model his dress on them. It looked very out of place but I was not about to bring this to his attention, so I remained steadfast with my compliments.

Chulia St felt like the oldest Street in Penang. It was a labyrinth of burrows and doors which inevitably led to a small darkened room stained with decades of opium smoke. I scoured the walls of these dens longing to find the initials of Somerset Maugham or some other great character of significance to reinforce a belief that

my life would one day also be of significance. Bruce from Bankstown and a John from Brixton had left a mark but I suspected they were not figures of historical substance. My days always started with a trip to see Jimmy and a visit to my favorite darkened room. The essential tools of the trade were pipe, floor and wooden pillow and the maitre de for the day would be Jimmy. I always received the same greeting. "What you want Mr. Paul?" I want to be removed from self were my thoughts and Jimmy was the person who could do that.

I turned 20 years old in Penang. This is supposed to be the transition period when a boy becomes a man and squarely faces up to life and its responsibilities. At this juncture the chains of youth were resolutely in place and I was not amenable to becoming anything other than the number one customer for Jimmy Wong.

Jimmy died over 20 years ago and the dens of Chulia developed into a block of those high-rise apartments with plastic bathtubs which are supposed to pass as marble and give pretence of a better life for the residents. This was a time in my life when my using had still offered some rewards and not just the unrelenting pursuit of a reprieve which I could no longer accomplish. My time with Jimmy had acted as a turning point in my life but a different Jimmy would have a far greater impact on my future

Jimmy Kinnon founded Narcotics Anonymous in the early 1950's. He understood this disease and how the power of one addict helping another is without parallel. At this stage, in 1975, Jimmy Kinnon was heading towards 24 years of clean time. He was a man who would become an instrumental figure in my life. NA was very much in its formative years but the work being carried out by Jimmy K. would lay the foundations for its future in Australia and the foundations for my future. Addicts like me need a very structured set of steps and traditions to protect ourselves from ourselves. Jimmy understood this and laid a base that even the most ego driven, unaware and self important could not damage.

Recently I celebrated my 27 years clean date. I had been lucky enough to be introduced to this fellowship in its early days in

Australia. A group of people who were only months clean had become involved, they were aware of Jimmy's legacy and had contacted World Service Office. A strong support network existed in the States and literature, banners and information flowed into Australia to commence building the fellowship that exists today.

As I sit surveying my domain, if I gaze across the room I can see the basic text and I am immediately reminded of the impact Jimmy K has had on my life. I never met Jimmy K but without his work I would not have the life I have today. On the other side of my room is a half open cupboard and if I dig in to a secret corner I can find a still bright but very aged Hawaiian shirt. Tourists love a souvenir of their travels and in a moment designed to please Jimmy Wong I offered to purchase his Hawaiian shirt. It is important to let go of the past but my sponsor tells me that it is OK to hold on to a little piece of my past.

Jimmy Wong had represented the beginning of the end. My time there was the start of the end of an old way of life. Jimmy Kinnon had provided the tools to let go of the old way and to live a new existence. Without his knowledge there would no fellowship and no recovery

I know how important it is to look to the future and let go of the past but sometimes I think one secret corner in a half open cupboard is a good reminder of where I have come from.

Is that wrong?

Paul G. Sydney



some thoughts regarding our relationship with AA

This title is what World Service Bulletin number 13 is called. You can find it when you look in the World Service Board of Trustee Bulletins via the bulletins link on the www.na.org home page. This bulletin was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in November 1985 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It was revised during the 1995-1996 conference cycle.

I had never looked in the bulletins link before and probably never would have if I had not been told about it and the existence of other bulletins by a good friend who was on the board at the time it was written. I wrote this because I wanted to let others know about it. I found it very helpful. It's a great resource to answer many questions that are repeatedly asked over time. I was able to refer others to them rather than just rely on my own limited experience. I found it to be a clear, balanced and a reasonable piece of literature.

Working on the last regional convention, the programming committee wanted a message of unity to be read at the beginning of each of its meetings. They wanted something new, which personally interested me and was how all this came about for me. It interested me because when I first came to NA meetings the message was carried to me in a very clear way. "Recovery from addiction is possible if I stay clean".

This was our language and it was important to me for two reasons. First my using wasn't about one drug. I used lots of different drugs. When I first sat in meetings I heard people sharing about using other drugs from the ones I used. With time I also came to realise that using was a side effect. Addiction was really about feelings, thoughts and choices. And the other thing was as I kept coming to meetings I heard people sharing about drugs that weren't even invented when I was using.

Secondly, early in my recovery I had lived in a town with no NA and attended meetings of another fellowship. They were always friendly but I didn't really feel like I was home or it was my tribe or that I even belonged there.

In the early days there was the clarity statement. I am not sure for how long we have had the clarity statement but after reading the bulletin I could see where some of the text had come from. I personally can't remember at which convention the clarity statement was first introduced or how it came about, but from the first time I heard it, I loved it. For me it was clear and unifying but I later found out for others it felt hard, separat-ing and authoritative. This was one of the reasons the committee felt it needed something new.

The bulletin is 4 pages long so it turned out to be a great source of material to outline a script for a reading. The regional convention committee did just that. It was discussed and agonized over before they came up with something they were happy with and this was it;

"The one thing that we all share is the disease of addiction. With that single turn of phrase, the foundation of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship was laid. Anyone may join us, regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion. The Narcotics Anonymous message can be unintentionally blurred by using drug specific language such as sobriety, alcoholic, sober and junkie. Our message is carried by identifying simply and clearly as addicts and by using the words clean, clean time and recovery, which imply no particular substance. Our principles stand on their own. Let's carry our own message clearly. Together we can move forward in the spirit of NA Unity."

Anyone can use this or change it or come up with their own message of unity. For me I feel a message like this is important. If I want to understand something I need to look at what the intention is or the motivation is behind what is said or done. I believe it was unity that was behind both the clarity statement and the message of unity. I feel Unity is important for carrying the message and it is our example that determines our strength's and our weaknesses.

If you are going to meetings of another fellowship that's your business but when we sit in a meeting of our fellowship lets carry our message.

Love all, serve all,
Marc P.

Member of Avalon Sunday literature discussion meeting.

another day at the office

I'm an addict and have been clean for eight years. I used to shoot up methadone in my neck. I came to Narcotics Anonymous through a weird set of circumstances and heard the message that I didn't have to live the way I was living. I decided to stay because people encouraged me to and now I live a different life full of the blessings that Recovery has given me.

These days I work in the Family Court of Australia. It's a challenge and I love it. Nobody there knows I used to be a junkie and I value my anonymity but the work is often confronting. Being sworn at is a regular occurrence. Getting into my place of work is like getting into an airport. We have CCTV, metal detectors, the whole kit and caboodle. A client has been murdered on the premises by another client. Most of the people I deal with are truly good people who wonder how on earth their life came to this. It's a feeling I am familiar with. When I deal with the Ice addicts, the wife beaters and the paedophiles I try to practice principles Recovery has taught me and treat them at face value, as I would treat anyone. Those days are tough but I am good at my job. I have learnt much in the rooms that helps me every day.

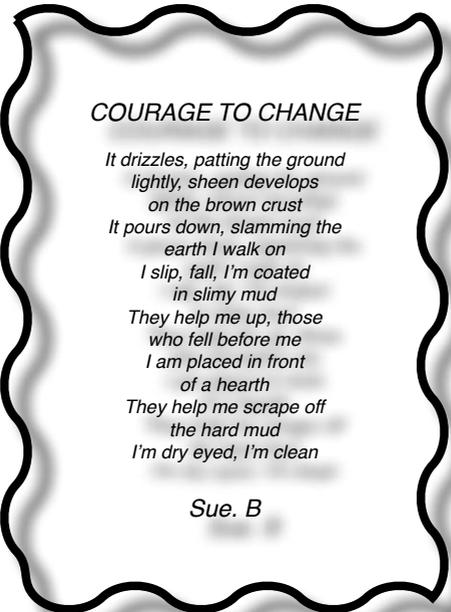
One day a while ago it had been one of those days. I called what I hoped would be my last ticket of the day and a woman approached my counter. I asked how I could help and she asked me to file a document, I could smell the alcohol on her breath. She was smashed. I perused the document and something about it was strange, she was filing it on behalf of her husband who was represented by a lawyer. For my own clarification I asked her why she was doing this and she shot back "because he couldn't organise a f@#! in a brothel ". As I filed the document I gently suggested she keep such comments to herself and she started to rant a bit. As I have said I value my anonymity but I thought it would be appropriate to enquire if she had ever sought help for her obvious problem. She calmed down a bit, I handed back her copies and was about to look up some helpline numbers for her when she told me to "get f@#%ed ". I'd had enough and suggested she leave, she did but I thought to myself that I had lost an opportunity to plant a seed.

About 3 months later I was at my home group, the biggest meeting in town and a woman got up to share her 60 days milestone. She looked familiar but I couldn't be sure. At her 90 day milestone I was pretty certain it was her and when she shared her 6 months I was certain because some of the things she said from the floor she had said to me that day at work.

I have never spoken to her to ask if she remembers that day. I suspect that it was in the midst of a fairly nasty rock bottom. What matters is, that she is in recovery. Somehow the seed was planted, not by me that day but somehow a loving higher power found the way.

It's a good job I have, tough at times, rewarding on a regular basis. It's a gift of Recovery and sometimes God throws in a little bonus.

Peace. Anon.



COURAGE TO CHANGE

*It drizzles, patting the ground
lightly, sheen develops
on the brown crust
It pours down, slamming the
earth I walk on
I slip, fall, I'm coated
in slimy mud
They help me up, those
who fell before me
I am placed in front
of a hearth
They help me scrape off
the hard mud
I'm dry eyed, I'm clean*

Sue. B

step nine as a whole

Dear NA

I am writing this letter to the entire population of past, present and future NA members. My name is Ron I, and I am an addict. I have been a member of NA since 1981. I have had the privilege of staying clean now for 22 years.

Even though a lot of you won't know me personally, I am writing to apologise to NA as a whole for the damage I have caused.

I have been a problem child all my life and spent many years in prison as a youth and in fact had my first injection in 1971 in Pentridge Prison in Victoria. I got clean in 1981, but had three relapses over five years because of my unwillingness to let go of old ideas.

To my shame and lack of humility, I stayed drug free but continued to act out on selfishness and greed. I stayed affiliated with crime and the criminal world I grew up in. To clear a few things up, 'I never recruited from the rooms', for the simple reason that I don't trust junkies. I did most crimes, trying to keep my dishonest life away from my family and NA as a whole.

I have run successful honest business and created great wealth and yet I was still addicted to crime and at the end of the day I am now serving 18 years in prison for investing in a conspiracy to import cocaine into Australia.

For this I sincerely apologise to all NA members. I am not asking for forgiveness or for people to like me. I am doing this as I feel I need to make amends to the programme that saved my life and gave me the ability to "I was wrong" and that "I need help".

Ron I.

from inside the belly of the beast

I can say I started using drugs out of depression. I'd just broken up with my first 'true love' and I was devastated. I was only 19 and the boat that I'd been sailing the high seas in, all of a sudden had a gaping hole in its side, and I sank into the depths of my own self pity.

I made an immature decision in my emotional state and instead of dry docking and fixing the hole, I plugged it with drugs and headed off full steam ahead into uncharted waters. A mutiny had taken place and there was a new captain aboard the SS Delusion.

I thought I had the answer to life and its problems. I was a pioneer, sailing into an exciting new world, where my worries were over. If you've ever watched Family Feud, I'd like to input here the sound of a wrong answer, Bup... Bowwww!!

What a wonderful thing hindsight is. "If only I had done this or that". But there is no magic wand; we are stuck with the consequences of our choices.

I used drugs to escape my emotions and in doing so inadvertently subjected my self to a learned behaviour, which buried itself in my psyche. I have managed on occasion to get myself off drugs, but whenever I've reached a point in my life when things took a turn for the worse, I've reverted to my learned behaviour, sought refuge and solace by putting myself back on board SS Delusion and once again sailed off into the foggy waters of forgetfulness.

Let me give you an idea of what we're dealing with here. I am 34 years old, single, white, male, never married, no children, and that is largely because I am currently an inmate at a prison farm in Queensland Australia. I am serving a sentence of 17 years for armed robbery of which I have served 13 years.

I was out on parole about 5 years ago and thinking that I had my addiction beaten. I found myself among a circle of users. I tried to res-

cue a 'damsel in distress' and apart from failing miserably, I relit the kindling of my own addiction, which soon turned into roaring inferno. I managed to incinerate the whole framework I had painstakingly reconstructed my life with; job, car, apartment, health, freedom... all gone.

The problem with the framework was that its foundation was built (excuse the old parable) on sand and not on rock. As such it did not weather the storm of temptation, which blew in from all directions.

I always thought that being unable to deal with my addiction was my own problem and to ask for help was weak. I realise now that not seeking out help is weak and that reaching out for help is a show of inner strength.

What I have found in NA is that I am certainly not alone and by talking about my addiction and gathering support I believe I will be able to put this disease into permanent remission.

Hi, my name is Marvin and I am an addict.



“an inside job”

19th Western Australian Area Convention
14th 15th 16th November, 2008
Masonic Hall, High Road Fremantle



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Contacts: Elleisha H 0430 548487
Robert G 0418 271188

Woonona Beach Surf Club

Kurraba Road, Woonona
(Opp Nicholson Park
5 mins walk from Woonona Rail)

Spirit of Unity

5, 6 & 7 December.

Tiona Park.
The Lakes Way,
Forster NSW.

Celebrating its
22nd year.

For details, see
www.na.org.au,
or call

Helen C
0412 005 506
or
Bill R
0428 299 916

PARADISE



FNCNA CONVENTION 2009

BYRON BAY

Please note, Byron Convention has changed dates and will be held on 27, 28 February and 1 March. Same venue, A&I hall Bangalow.

message from the na today committee

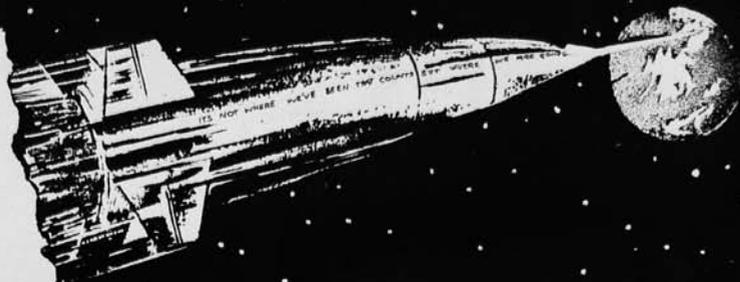
The NA Today Committee received a number of complaints after the publication of the last edition. There were several issues raised and the committee has taken them seriously. The NA Today Committee met with Admin Committee of the Regional Meeting in relation to these complaints. The outcomes were as follows. There will be a more stringent vetting process applied to articles that possibly pertain or could be identified by particular individuals. This decision will be developed into policy and written into the Regional Guidelines. There will also be more transparency of authorship. People who write into the magazine will need to supply their name, address and phone number. Their articles may be edited and unless they specifically request anonymity, their articles will be accompanied by their first name, initial of their surname and the town where they are from. In addition, the editor will be named on the inside cover of the magazine as will the vetting committee. We apologise for any upset caused and will endeavour not to repeat this mistake in the future. Thank you.



A bit of NA Australia's history. This advertisement is one side of the poster for the 2nd annual NSW convention. If you have any old NA materials you would like people to see. Send them to the address on the inside front cover. 

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