JAN/FEB 2008

My Last Night

I was scared, afraid that dark forces were out to get me. Huddled up on my bed, I cried as I scanned the shadows for the slightest hint of movement. And then, as the first rays of bright sun poked through the dusty, closed Venetian blinds hanging in my bedroom window, I had a revelation, a true spiritual epiphany. It was me. I was the dark force…and I needed to be stopped if I was to survive.

I heard my mother rustle to life from her room across the hall from mine and knew what I had to do. It took every once of willpower and courage I had left to call her name. My voice was small and cracking. She entered my bedroom still dressed in her nightgown. "Ed, what is it?" Her voice was fearful. "Mom, I need help. I'm…I'm hooked on cocaine and booze. I can't stop and I don't know what to do. I need you to help me. Please help me."

There was a long pause. I looked into her eyes as if I was a small child who had skinned my knee. I needed her. "Stay right there," she finally said, softly. She turned, leaving me sitting on my bed still dazed from last night's heavy using. I heard her open one of her dresser drawers. It sounded like she was rummaging around for something. For what, I had no idea.

My mother returned holding something in her hands. "Here, I want you to have these," she said. I held out my hands and took possession of a large unfamiliar coin and a small red leather bound book. "These were your grandfather's. Look at them." I did as I was told. The book was the New Testament. On the inside an inscription read "To Ed, Rejoice!" I was named after him and he had passed away when I was ten years old. I idolized him. The inscription was dated 1977, the year I was born. Choked up, I looked at the coin.

The coin was a seven years of sobriety marker from Alcoholics Anonymous. There was an inscription on one side reading, "To Thine Own Self Be True." I looked up to my mother who at this point had started to cry. "Your grandfather got sober when you were born," she said. "He did it for you." I felt tears forming in my eyes. She went on. "You keep this coin and you return the favor. You need to help yourself, Ed. No one else can do it for you."

One year later I was as far from that dark smelly bedroom in Philadelphia as I could be. Standing in front of a podium facing over three hundred people, I addressed the crowd assembled on a hot, sticky Monday night in Hollywood, California. "My name is Ed and I am an addict." "Hi Ed!" was the audience's reply. I recounted for the crowd the tale of the coin. And then, I looked down at my mother seated in the front row. Her face was beaming. "Mom, I've waited a whole year to say this to you. You gave me something and told me I needed to help myself. Now tonight, I want to thank you for helping me become my own man. If it wasn't for your love and support, I wouldn't be able to give you this."

I dug in my pocket and retrieved a shimmering silver one year Narcotics Anonymous coin, my first. As I left the podium to hand the coin to my mother, the audience erupted into joyous applause that thundered through the darkened auditorium. Staring into my mom's eyes I saw a familiar look. It was the same one I had seen exactly a year before: one of love. This, my first year of recovery, was for my mom. The years to come are for me, one day at a time.

Ed M.

LIVING vs. SURVIVING

After having been around the rooms and working my program for a few years, it has become apparent to me that there is a pretty big difference between living and surviving today. It seems like surviving, also known as getting by, is very dissatisfying on a spiritual level. When I was using, especially at the end, my days were mere survival. I used to not feel. I used to disconnect from others and any kind of spirituality. I used to stay in my own world, with my own rules and the illusion of control regardless of the expense. That's what I always did, and I really didn't know a better way.

Since getting clean, I have started reaching out to others and to spirituality. The path of my recovery has shown me that there is much more fulfillment in living life as an active participant than "getting by". Yeah, we say that getting through another day without using is enough, but the story behind the story is that we learn and grow during that one day clean. We may not like it, it may not be pleasant, but we do learn and grow.

What I am beginning to see more and more every day is that I have certain tasks now that I must do to stay in living and out of survival. Those include working my program, revealing myself to others, cultivating my spirituality, and experiencing the world as it is, with an open mind, looking always for new ways to grow.

Eric S.

My Disease is Always with Me!

The sun is shining. I feel good. I'm having a great morning and I'm feeling very confident about myself and my new found life in recovery. Then I see "her." The girl in the parking lot who is rummaging through clothes in a suitcase in the back of her car. Their car is her home. Her few possessions in that suitcase are all she has. Her clothes are baggy and dirty, her hair is a mess, yet somehow she managed to apply some make-up to her blemished face. This girl is sick and tired, but she cannot stop. This girl is an addict with a habit, bigger than she is. This girl is me.

My first thought when I see her, is "thank God" I don't have to live like that anymore! If not for the grace of God, there go I!
I drive away, leaving the thought of the girl and my old life behind. Five minutes down the road, listen-ing to "Bad to the Bone", thinking I'm all cool, my head (disease) tells me ... "Yeah, it sure would be nice to use, wouldn't it? I wouldn't have to feel anything, deal with nothing. That girl's pants were so baggy and I want to be skinny again. Yep, a nice little run would do it. It wasn't that bad out there!"

I'm a sick pup. I have this disease that always wants me back. It doesn't care if I've been clean a few years. It lies to me and it will con me right back to the streets, prison or death if I let it. Thank God I know I have choices today. Thank God I admit I'm powerless over my addiction and that my life is unmanageable. Thanks to my H.P. for giving me my life back through Narcotics Anonymous. I never have to be like the girl I saw today in the parking lot, if I don't choose to. The "disease" of addiction may always try to get me, only thanks to N.A.; I know it's a deceiver, liar, cheat and killer! So "just for today" I'll stick to my recovery and stick it to my disease.

—Anonymous

my mind finally opened

"Don't quit before the miracle happens!"
"There are no coincidences."
"Any clean addict is a miracle."

I used to hear these things in meetings and they made no sense to me. I heard people share about God. My head would spin around. I spat on the floor. What did I care about God? How was God going to help me? How is prayer useful? I did not understand God or spirituality. My mind was closed. My non-existent faith played a huge role in my relapse. I am grateful to say that today that has changed.

When I came back, I hit such a huge spiritual bottom. I had to do something, so I turned my will and my life over to the care of NA. Left on my own, I would surely use. My faith grew slowly. I started to heal physically first. Mentally, I felt like I was lagging behind. Spiritually, I had nowhere to go but up. I started to see people differently. My mind finally started to open. My Higher Power had been talking to me the entire time. Finally I was listening.

You see, when I first got clean I did not have to take those suggestions that mentioned God or a Higher Power. I could do this myself. I found self-sufficiency is truly a lie. I had to be totally beaten before I would become willing. Now I see miracles in my life. I see miracles in other people's lives. Faith has not removed my fear, but it has toned it down. Just a little.

I do pray now. I do see it as a useful tool. I feared God for a long time. I then realized that I should have been dead years ago. He was, in fact, looking out for me when I could not do it for myself.

Coincidences kept on happening. I started to trust people again. I finally admitted that there was a Higher Power. I also admitted I was not it. I had to stop playing God. Life is easier when I have faith. I don't want anyone to think I have a huge amount of faith. It changes day to day. Sometimes I have huge amounts of faith. Sometimes all I have is a little mustard seed.

I started to learn it is really not the quantity of faith a person has, but rather it is the quality of that faith. On some days my faith is simply that if I do not use, I will not get high. For me, "just for today" has been working, and for that I am truly grateful.

Nancy D.

WHO IS AN ADDICT?

I am an addict, and I am powerless over my addiction. The many and varied faces of addiction appear in all the facets of my life. Everything I "use" to "fix" the what "I feel" inside of me becomes my addiction. A different face for a different play.

Drugs in the form of alcohol, PCP, toluene, heroin, weed, uppers, downers, and pills, produce dramatic changes in the way I "feel". These are obvious ways to fix me. Some aren't so easily noticed. Such as materialism, prestige, sex, power, food, and emotional drama. The list is long. And all the paths are the means to a dead end.

As an addict, I am always searching for that certain "something". Something to fill the void. That hole I "feel" in my soul. Is it genetic...or environmental? Maybe a little too much on the radiation side? An evolutionary mutant? Or am I just out of my mind?

The questions don't really matter anymore. Whatever the "reasons", there is a solution. For me, as an addict, the solution is N.A. and its Twelve Steps of recovery. N.A. deals with addiction. No matter what face addiction wears; with the Twelve Steps, I can reclaim my life. With the Twelve Steps, addiction can be arrested and recovery is then possible.

I am an addict and I believe.

Raymond A.

The Greater Los Angeles Area H&I Committee Presents

Miracles Do Happen

Dec 22nd Thru Dec 25th 2007

Location: Harbor Light Center 809 East 5th Street
Opening meeting Saturday at 10:00 am
Dance Monday Dec 24th from 9:30 pm - 1:30 am
Donation $6, $3 recovery homes and people with court cards
Potluck Tuesday Dec 25th Contact: Donnie C 562 762-0131
Variety Show Tuesday Dec 25, 2007 Contact: Michael B 323 847-2157
For More Info Contact: Vice-Chair H & I Linda B.K. 323 756-2154

1 YEAR
James E 2/14/07
Leslie L 2/02/07
Merlin C 2/01/07
Wesley M 1/27/07
Tyra M 1/24/07
Mark T 1/22/07
Emmit L 1/17/07
Darren P 1/11/07
Rashid M 1/06/07

2 YEARS
Edris H 2/19/06
Cynthia M 2/13/06
Patricia T 2/11/06
Tina W 2/08/06
Lloyd W 1/31/06
Keica D 1/31/06
Trisha G 1/29/06
Don M 1/06/06

3 YEARS
Fredrick M 2/25/05
Donald C 2/23/05
Lorris J 2/23/05
Terri M 2/08/05
Keith R 2/08/05
Daryl W 2/02/05
Isaias A 2/02/05
Patrice G 1/23/05
Clyde B 1/15/05
Garnel C 1/12/05
April B 1/12/05
Linda M 1/10/05
Randall P 1/01/05

4 YEARS
Armmond G 2/17/04
Ronda B 2/24/04
Theresa A 2/08/04
Terry N 2/08/04
Sharon B 1/31/04
Anthony M 1/23/04
Darryl H 1/21/04
Tyra M 1/20/04
Samuel L 1/16/04
Denise L 1/07/04
Rodney N 1/01/04

5 YEARS
Shirley J 2/27/03
Ennis B 2/13/03
Barbara G 2/07/03
Maria G 2/07/03
Henry H 2/04/03
Patrice S 1/29/03
Patricia F 1/19/03
Javier C 1/17/03
Eric H 1/15/03
Frank T 1/15/03
Brenda G 1/13/03
Eddie B 1/06/03

6 YEARS
Taylor L 2/28/02
Marsha E 2/25/02
Oscar W 2/20/02
Rosa S 2/18/02
Tobias R 2/11/02
Leticia A 2/05/02
Melissa H 1/29/02
Charles B 1/25/02
Raheem R 1/23/02
Sheila H 1/19/02
Yvonne E 1/18/02

7 YEARS
Melvin G (last name addict) 2/26/01
Carmen D 2/24/01
Ernie W 2/14/01
Hillary P 2/12/01
Claudia E 2/05/01
Stanley W 2/05/01
Andre M 2/02/01
David W 1/24/01
Debra D 1/24/01
Pam M 1/19/01
Sabrina S 1/18/01
Linda R 1/17/01

8 YEARS
Antoinette D 2/19/00
Juan Carlos 2/19/00
Bea Z 2/16/00
Yvette J 2/10/00
Birdsong P 2/10/00
Robert T 2/10/00
Lee Mc 2/04/00
Sandra R 1/27/00
Alexander S 1/11/00
Ronald T 1/09/00

9 YEARS
Leah T 2/27/99
Carmen D 2/24/99
Carri M 2/19/99
Robert T 2/10/99
Rhonda J 2/09/99
James G 2/09/99
Mia 1/31/99
Elevelyn J 1/25/99
Colin C 1/20/99
Carolyn B 1/15/99
Jim G 1/11/99
Debra H 1/08/99
Veronica M 1/06/99
Marc N 1/04/99
Linda B.K 1/04/99
Carolyn B 1/03/99
Orlanda W 1/03/99

10 YEARS
Tommy S 2/10/98
Claudia M. 2/07/98
Bo H 2/05/98
Lewis H. 2/02/98
Gwen B 2/18/98
Freddie H 2/18/98
Shelly J 2/12/98
Camilla D 1/26/98
James L. 1/24/98
Tammy l. 1/23/98
Brenda J. 1/21/98
Lorna M . 1/20/98
Dwight N 1/14/98
Kenneth B. 1/16/98
Marva P. 1/09/98
Anthony T 1/08/98
Patrick J. 1/05/98
Sherry M 1/01/98

11 YEARS
Carl J. 2/26/97
George T. 2/21/97
Daniel R. 2/15/97
Michael P. 2/12/97
Maggie B. 2/12/97
John F. 2/11/97
Cece F. 2/11/97
Troy R. 2/07/97
Martha S . 2/03/97
Gerald T. 1/18/97
Yolanda M 1/14/97
Kevin B. 1/12/97
Joseph B 1/02/97

12 YEARS
James H. 2/29/96
Anthony W 2/27/96
Nate T. 2/21/96
Lewis S. 2/13/96
Margo M. 2/03/96
Jerry B 2/02/96
Rod P. 1/13/96
Albert T. 1/08/96
Lisa D. 1/03/96
Karen S. 1/02/96

13 YEARS
Earl L 2/28/95
Karen A. 2/03/95
Sheila K. 1/31/95
Frank S. 1/24/95
Dan O 1/22/95

13 YEARS
Sharron S 1/10/95

14 YEARS
Johnny B 2/21/94
Henry C. 2/13/94
Aaron A. 2/11/94
Sophia H 2/10/94
Robert E. 1/09/94
Sherry B. 1/03/94
Eleanor P. 1/02/94

15 YEARS
Lynette P. 2/19/93
Donald B 1/19/93
Dwayne P 1/15/93
Lisa H 1/11/93
Andrew R. 1/05/93
Shelly W. 1/04/93

16 YEARS
Lisa G. 1/22/92
Melissa P. 1/22/92
Toni B. 1/14/92
Darryl J 1/13/92
Akbar 1/08/92
Yolanda J 1/03/92

17 YEARS
Kim M 1/20/91
Veronica S 1/17/91
Everett G 1/14/91

18 YEARS
Faheem P. 1/05/90

19 YEARS
Gary J. 2/23/89

20 YEARS
Leonard L. 2/25/88
Yolanda F. 2/23/88
Lester L. 2/15/88
Rodney C 2/11/88
Veronica L. 1/19/88
Tracy D. 1/21/88

21 YEARS
Todd K . 2/17/87
Mitzi W. 1/31/87
Henry B. 1/13/87

22 YEARS
Ricardo M 2/25/86
Tyrone B. 1/24/86

25 YEARS
Clarence W. 2/04/83

Share the Wealth

the heartbeat presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The articles you see in this newsletter are written by NA members like yourself. You need not consider yourself a skilled writer. You don't have to know all the rules of grammar. We have an editorial team whose job it is to take care of those details. What we need is your unique perspective on the NA program. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. The articles and letters do not necessarily express the philosophy of NA as a whole nor does publication imply endorsement by NA, **the heartbeat**, or the Greater Los Angeles Area of Narcotics Anonymous. **the heartbeat** assumes no responsibility to return submitted material and does not guarantee that submissions will be published. **the heartbeat** reserves the right to edit any material submitted in accordance with our review policy. The policy includes but not limited to:

- Articles should be no longer than one page handwritten or typed.
- Use of NA language of recovery.
- No profanity
- No personal attacks directed towards NA members or NA as a whole.

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