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# The New/Old

# NAWay

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## How Anonymi was Born

I remember sitting on the floor of the house of the rising sun in Marietta Ga with *Gina Helguerra* and *MC Ed* in the spring of 1981, We were talking about autonomy of a Fellowship...our Fellowship the one we'd committed our lives and recoveries and service to. We were talking about the autonomy of primary purpose, the difference of philosophy, between ours and the other (much larger & more accepted one). We were regretful that many of the 'leaders', the oldtimers, those involved in vast worldwide service to this fledgling Fellowship seemed so very determined to keep it a fledgling Fellowship. We noticed that they seemed to think that our program was just a back door into the real thing. They introduced themselves as Addict/Alcoholics and took every opportunity to tell new folks about the Other Fellowship of which they were also members...

But we were sharing with each other a new vision... Autonomy of a fellowship, dedication to the truth of powerlessness over the problem exclusive of the symptom. We were talking about a Narcotics Anonymous that didn't exist yet. We'd met each other involved in the 'Literature Movement', we helped each other recover more fully, we 'called' each other on the lies that were so very intertwined into our recovery philosophy, by necessity because before we'd met each other we each were the only one (or one of the very few) who believed that NA was something different and special and true. After we'd met each other it could never be the same -we weren't alone anymore, as we'd been before alone amidst a world of treatment-acceptable Addict/Alcoholics

We formed a group. We called that group Anonymi. We met and helped the book and the 1st 13 pamphlets and Narcotics Anonymous itself get a foothold in autonomy.

We still meet-and you're probably part of us. If you refused to compromise the 12 Traditions for any expedient concept, if you seek the truth. If it will never be the same for you because of what you believe, and who you met in service... real service Anonymi .



## **THE CLUBHOUSE OF THE RISING SUN**

### **1st East Coast Convention Experience**

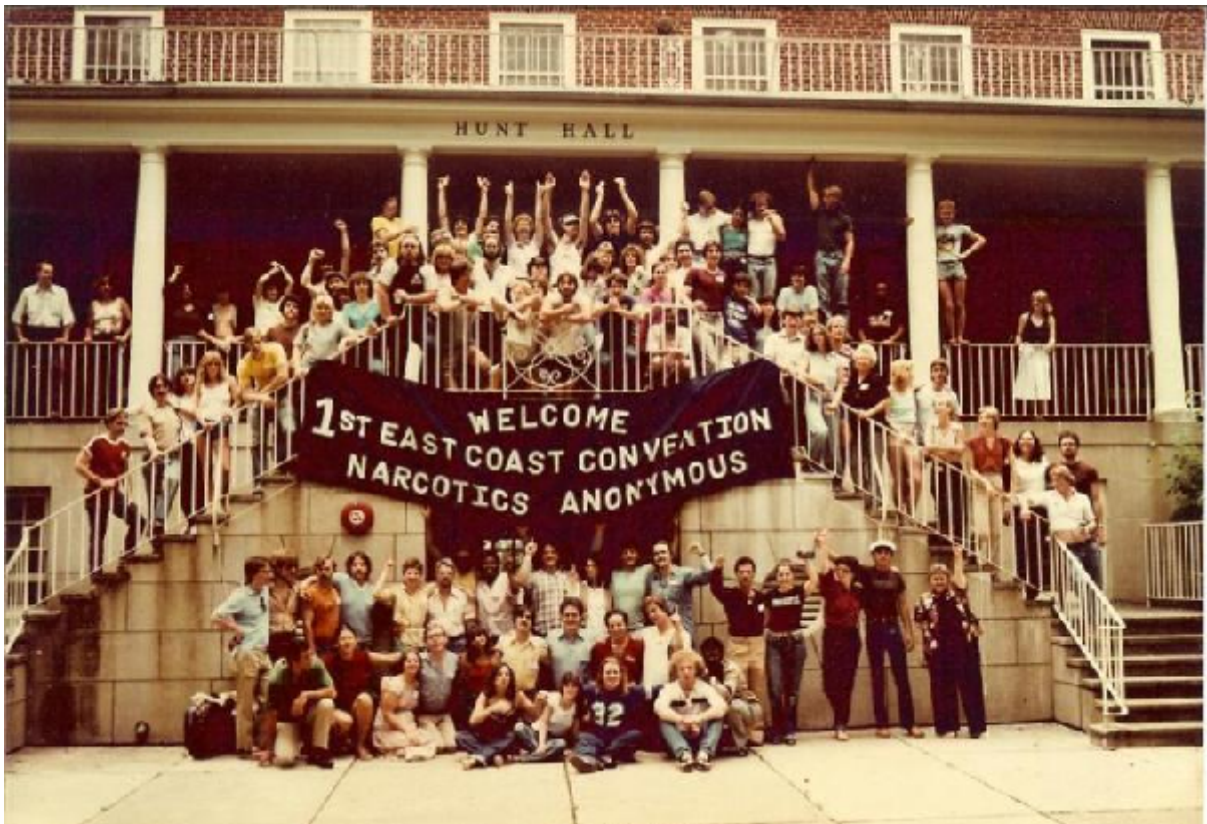
In 1979 I was a recovering addict who lived in Levittown in Bucks County. An NA meeting was started on Pond Street and later to Mill Street in Bristol, Pa. There was another NA meeting that was started in Doylestown around the same time. We did not know about each other. It took us several months to find out where Philadelphia NA Intergroup was (insert chuckle here). We finally found out Philadelphia Area Service was in Norristown. We knew we needed to join Area so we could get on the meeting list and addicts would know where to go. We were also hoping to get literature. We use to copy literature at the library so we could have something to hand out to newcomers. Within a year NA in Bucks started to grow. There were 2 meetings in Hulmville, 2 in Doylestown, 1 in Bristol, and 1 in Morrisville. We all attended Area Service. Most of the meetings I attended at home were 10 to 15 people. It was usually the same people at every meeting. In the

process of being part of Philadelphia NA Area Service we learned there was a meeting set up to discuss convention plans for the 1st East Coast Convention. I think the meeting was in Harrisburg. The convention Committee was looking for support. They needed people to register and they needed speakers/chair people for the convention. We offered encouragement and helped fill speaker and chair openings.

We tried to get as many addicts from Bucks to attend the convention. I rode up with 3 carloads of addicts. It was packed tight but that was ok because we usually went to meetings by the carload. We were excited. Nobody knew what an NA convention was. We also knew the NA World Literature Review Chair was going to be there and he was going to tell us about the progress of the NA Book. (That's another story)

Attending the convention blew our minds. Most of us only knew a few recovering addicts, but here at the convention were over 200 recovering addicts. The theme "NEVER ALONE" couldn't have been more apropos. Most of us experienced overwhelming feelings at the same time. We weren't alone in our struggle anymore. It was clear to this entire program worked. The recovery available to us on this large of a scale was overwhelming. We couldn't stop hugging each other. I might have received a thousand hugs that weekend. It was awesome. They mostly were of the crying kind. Tears of joy, relief, and understanding were constant throughout the convention. It was comforting knowing that other addicts were experiencing recovery. In the convention there was a variety of addicts from different areas. For some of us we had trouble getting support or trouble just keeping the doors open at some of our local meetings. This convention gave us a super shot of hope. We heard new messages of recovery. Some of us found sponsors. We made new friends.

After the convention it was like a tsunami of recovery heading back to the home groups. The meetings in the Philadelphia Area doubled in the next year. New ideas were flooding the area. (One disease one program, our terminology, how we identified ourselves, and we learned the NA Book was being written) The 1st East Coast Convention was the catalyst of bringing the East Coast of NA out of the stone age of recovery.



Lewisburg ,PA Bucknell University Hunt Hall June 27,28,29 1980

## Service, the NA Way

One of my earliest involvements in NA service was with the NA Way Magazine produced by my local fellowship. (Yes, this magazine was originally created by a local fellowship in the Eastern United States during the early 80s) I was about 5 months clean and had no high school diploma, no college degree and no job. But I was still asked to serve. One thing I could offer was that I was capable of typing fairly fast. I didn't think I was qualified to serve and I had no self-worth.

What I remember most is that people were always inviting me to these workshops. They told me they needed help editing and typing. Little did I know that each time I participated it was another day I had stayed clean. And had I felt like using, which there were many days like that, I stayed clean because I had a commitment; I had to be there. I didn't fill out any service resumes or applications, I just served because I was asked and I was willing. Now, please don't get me wrong, I understand there are some positions that

require a little more experience than others. But for the most part, willingness was all that was needed in the 80s.

For the first time I felt like I belonged to something worthwhile. I felt like you all were my family. We all worked together to publish recovery in writing. This was very gratifying and I had some wonderful teachers, both men and women. I learned to write, I became a better reader, and I learned to edit. I would like to let you know that later in my recovery I worked a job as an editor, I finished high school and received a diploma, and I even attended college and received a degree. Did my service involvement have something to do with that, you bet! I no longer limit myself today, I am capable, I am willing and I am open to try something I have not done before.

Whenever I attend service functions today I always invite a newcomer, I don't care how many days clean they have. I welcome all! I make them feel special and let them know that we need their input. I invite them to my home and share my archives with them. The newcomers are our future; let us invite them to participate as we were once invited. It is imperative to the growth of NA.

Ps. I am blessed to still be in contact with many of the folks I served with on the NA Way, some 30 years later .

## **Service - Open Participatory Service Structure**

*“Service is a Spiritual Principle; it is through giving freely of ourselves that we receive. In NA we believe that service is an integral part of Recovery, and as a result we have created a “Open Participatory Service Structure” where the equal opportunity to service is a privilege of membership.*

*Service should be inclusive not exclusive; all NA members have something to offer and we actively strive to involve as many members as possible in our service efforts. Ultimately, it is a loving God working through our members that makes it possible for us to achieve our goals. God is non-exclusive!*

*Our service is for Addicts who still suffer; and we believe that the NA Group is the most important part of our Service Structure since it is the service unit in direct contact with the newcomer. All the other elements of*

*our Service Structure have been created to serve, support, and assist our Groups in the fulfillment of their primary purpose . “ < New Attitudes*

How is the current structure upholding these principles that wrote the Basic Text of Narcotics Anonymous through the principles of allowing all members who wanted to be involved in the writing process and the approval of the Book?

What does an Open Participatory Service Structure mean and how does it work? The article from the New Attitudes talks about that we all have an equal opportunity to be involved in service and it is a privilege of membership of being an NA member and explains it should be inclusive not exclusive and that we actively strive to involve as many members as possible in our service efforts. Is there any benefit to our members who choose to be involved in an open participatory structure where you have to be elected to the structure? If so what are the differences?

After over thirty one years clean I have taken inventory on the involvement in being part of the service structure from the Basic Text being written to 1989 when I last served at the World Service Level. I participated in the writing of the Basic Text as a newcomer when I was told that I could be involved in the writing of the Text and that I mattered. The benefits of this were I felt that I had something to offer and it helped me to be able to grow with the steps. My spirit came to life like never before. The miracle of being included in this open process helped me grow in leaps and bounds that lifted my spirit to want to help others. I wanted to serve others and help include all members in this process. I cannot explain the miracles that happened in my life because one member who passed away this year December 2011 cared enough to share this process with me that changed my whole life in such a positive manner that I have to share it with all recovery addicts that I come into contact with. This process gave me the equal opportunity to know what it was to be of service for the benefit of the still suffering addict that was looking for recovery that other wise may have never heard of Narcotics Anonymous. This involvement spiraled my recovery in leaps that would never had been possible without getting involved in service that was open that set no

boundary for involvement. It allowed me as a newcomer to be part of something greater than Myself. The miracle was being carried throughout the world of recovery because of this open participatory process that allowed all to be involved who wanted to be involved in the writing process. It

extended to all service committees at the time. We created areas, region's that were not in existence at the time. The book was the focal point of the open participatory process for all service to involve all members and groups of NA from the writing process to the input and review to approval of the Basic Text. All service would be possible because of this process that was inclusive instead of exclusive.

Through the Basic Text Narcotics Anonymous, NA grew by leaps and bounds. The excitement of carrying the message throughout the world to all suffering addicts was first felt at the group level. We wanted to get everyone involved in service so they would be able to feel what we had benefited from by being involved in the writing of the Basic Text. We got involved in Hospital & Institutions, Public Information, Helpline, Outreach, and formed other committees to help further the growth Of NA throughout the world. We involved every group of NA and all service was possible because the committee structure was accountable to the group structure through the traditions of NA. Every group was the most important part of structure we were part of, the inverted pyramid were the members were at the top of the structure then the Group, Area, Region and then World Services to follow. We felt like we were the most important part of service structure, at the member level there was nothing that we could not accomplish in service because of this openness that was felt in NA in the early days. Newcomers were involved from the start, giving back what We were freely given seemed to be the focal point of the day. In the area I am from we traveled from Pennsylvania to Maine to Florida to Milwaukee to Tennessee and every where in between, we even traveled to California to attend the World Service Conferences. We didn't see the difference until we attended the World Service Conference that there was a train of thought that did not believe in the Open Participatory Service Structure process. This is were we first heard of the Idealism of closed service structure and that you should give a vote of confidence to your RSR, Who should be able to make decisions for your Region that is why We elected them and sent them to the conference to be able to make decision that impacted the Fellowship a clear Violation of tradition 2 and 9.

The committee structure at the World level started the Idealism of closed committee process one by one and you had to be elected to the World Committee structure at the member level, you could no longer just show up at a world literature committee and be involved in the writing process as we had written our Basic Text, newcomers were no longer welcomed at that level. The division had started the them and us syndrome. The idealism that the inverted pyramid was a fallacy had started at the world level. There was

a lack of trust that the members and groups could not make decisions because they did not have all the information that the world level servants had. Because they intentionally made the fellowship reports so cumbersome We did not have the time to send all the information out to the groups to be discussed and voted on at the group level and we were told that addicts would die if we did not take action immediately. A division between the world level and the fellowship had started . Groups felt that what they thought no longer mattered and why get involved in the process if your conscience was not going to be heard. Regional motions were put on the back burner at the world service conference, committee motion were heard first. Many of regional motions were not heard at all or were called out of order or tabled into committee were they died. The World Literature committee closed down the open participatory committee , to elected members only and hired the first professional writer without seeking input from the Groups of NA, which produce the white version of It Works How and Why which failed and caused controversy in the fellowship which led to the open conference again that produced the Chicago and LA drafts and after those drafts they closed down the literature committee once again. They also hired a professional writer to edit the Basic Text which produced the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Basic Text and the Fifth Edition Basic Text and the court case in the early nineties { ref. Wso inc vs. Dave Morehead} without direction from the fellowship. By now all the committee structure had closed down to only elected members or regional elected members to the world committee's. Every committee was overseen By a WSO departmental head. The Joint Administrative Committee made decisions without the fellowships knowledge . The World level had abanded the concept of Open Participatory Service Structure instead elected to follow the ideal of a closed service structure exclusive instead of inclusive. They elected the ideal of hired writers and limited the involvement of the fellowship of NA that produced our Basic Text for the sake of time and cost saving measures. Our literature started too be listed as a product instead of a recovery tool by the W.S.O. Inc . . . . It became the property of the W.S.O. Inc.

As a result of our literature becoming a product, our groups started printing our own literature for free for all those who wanted free literature and wanted to return to an Open Participatory Service Structure. We started hosting History Conferences to help educate addicts on our history and to take a look at our past. We left the known structure because of the violations of the twelve traditions and helped develop A.S.I.S. for NA, a structure that would be an Open Participatory Service Structure directly accountable to the groups they served .

## **Decisions on Recovery and Service**

I have been in NA for nearly 10 years now and have had many good and bad experiences. My main focus throughout has been sort of what I was taught as a kid by my father, which is to just make sure I'm doing what I need to for me, and don't worry about what everyone else is doing.

I believe that philosophy has made a simple program, even simpler for me. I see so many addicts more concerned with what everyone else is doing and what is "socially acceptable" in the fellowship, rather than what is right for them. Almost afraid of not being a part of, I can understand that! After all, I never felt a part of during my active addiction, why would I want to go back to that? I can remember when I came into the program I was asked if I wanted to go to an Area Service Meeting. I had a big part of me that wanted to go for that same reason that I wanted to feel a part of something bigger and get involved. I didn't really know what I would have been getting involved with, but after all, the other addicts were doing it so it must be good right? I asked my sponsor and he told me that I should wait before I just jump in. After some more time in the program, I belonged to a Home Group that didn't participate with the known service structure. The reason I was able to stay was simple. We had books, literature, pamphlets, meeting facilities and even a coffee pot! We met regularly every week. So I had everything I needed as a recovering addict to recover, not worrying about what everyone else was doing. After all, I came here to get well and to not go back to active addiction.

Today, we print our own literature, and we use only NA approved literature. Every addict's voice is important and I am grateful that I do have the opportunity to feel part of. Even though my Home Group is a small group, we belong to A.S.I.S. and I am a part of many other addicts' lives from across the globe.

Today I have the opportunity to have my voice heard through this newsletter, and give something back to the fellowship as a whole. The ability to openly participate for the greater good is one more tool I have as a recovering addict to continue to do what I need to for myself, and also feel part of.

Being able to openly participate in service is as important for NA as the Steps are for a recovering addict. It ensures the continued growth of the

Fellowship. If an addict doesn't work Steps in their life, they remain stagnate and eventually fall back in to addictive behaviors. The life force that has been freely given back is somehow choked and starts to dissipate. The greater body of NA as a whole only grows through the voices of all addicts being heard as one. This is only possible by listening to the addicts and putting their voices into one clear message, through group conscience. . If a service structure fails to hear the addicts, then the life of the service structure will also stagnate and eventually die out and it will fail to uphold a strong, clear message to the fellowship as a whole, based on the Traditions.

As an addict being part of that strong, clear message of a service body gives me the ability to be a part of that greater good for the Fellowship, and strengthens my recovery as well.

Today, I can look back on these choices I made and am happy that I did follow the advice of my father, and my sponsor. I am now part of a service structure that encourages all addicts to participate. Not to just show up once a month in a room and discuss "Business", and who is and isn't following the rules set up by the World Service. That's what I would have been getting involved with as a new addict following what everyone else was doing.

## "Sweet Surrender"

### **PRACTICING THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR TRADITIONS**

**TRADITION TWO:** "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

Working the NA program helps us to form a relationship with a Higher Power. As we come to rely on this Power, living according to spiritual principles becomes a reality for us. We develop a personal conscience and become trustworthy in our interactions with others.

No longer operating from fear, we attach less importance to getting our way. We become less controlling and more willing to cooperate. It becomes easier to share our feelings openly and honestly, while being receptive and respectful to those of others. We learn when to yield in a conflict, laying aside our differences for the common good.

The spiritual principles of this tradition are surrender, faith, humility, open-mindedness, integrity, and anonymity.

### **A.S.I.S. Mission**

**Alternate Service Information Structure for Narcotics Anonymous is a point of collection for the informed group conscience of N.A. While we believe an attempt to reform N.A. service from within the existing structure might be beneficial, what we believe to be a more effective strategy is to provide a steady, reliable, non-political, and non-combative alternative for directly responsible service**

Visit our website at [www.anonymi.info](http://www.anonymi.info)

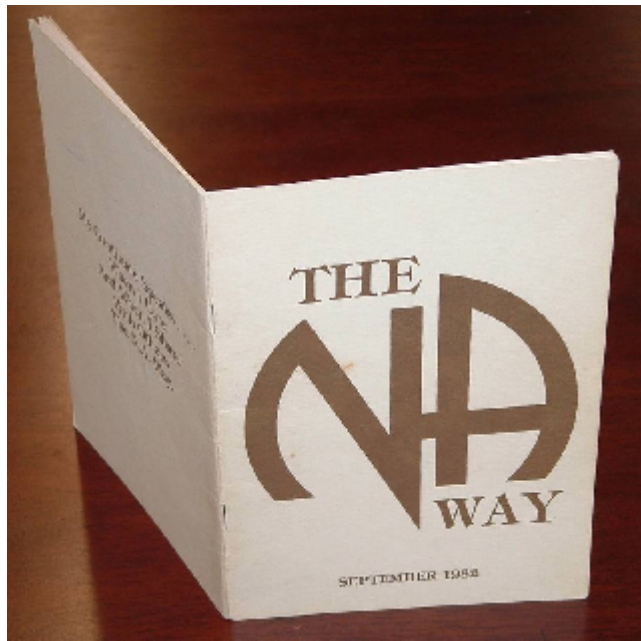
Dedicated to [true trusted service](#) for the NA Member, Group or committee who wants to effectively carry the NA message of total abstinence from all drugs and Recovery from Addiction to the addict who still suffers. We will be steady, reliable, non-political, and non-combative. We are guided by the [12 Traditions](#) of NA and [Directly responsible](#) to those NA Groups we serve.

## **Your Fellowship Magazine**

**Share...  
and be shared with...**

**Like it was when NA was new and young and  
life-or-death intense:  
You matter to us so we will tell you the truth as  
we know it with nothing held back.**

**“...so that no addict seeking recovery need ever die...”**



*We publish your input—the opinions presented are not necessarily those of the New/Old NA Way or Anonymi Foundation.*