

# Sanity

September 2008

Newsletter of the New Jersey Region

## Narcotics Anonymous

*The following information was obtained from **Miracles Happen, The Birth of Narcotics Anonymous in Words and Pictures (revised), published by Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Incorporated, and is a overview of the early history of Narcotics Anonymous. The book is dedicated to the memory of Jimmy K., whose 'efforts live on among the members of the Fellowship of NA'.***

### In the Beginning...

Today, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is alive and well worldwide through the efforts of a few dedicated drug addicts, seeking help. The use of drugs precedes recorded history.

The use of opium became epidemic in nineteenth century Europe and spread to America as well. In 1803 the active ingredient in opium was isolated and named morphine after Morpheus, the Greek God of dreams and sleep. It came to be used as a common medical aid. Over the next century, hundreds of thousands of people became addicted to this potent drug. In America, during the Civil War morphine was used as a medicinal pain killer, addicting an estimated 400,000 soldiers.

Post-Civil War, it was estimated that there were 300,000 opiate-dependent people in the United States by 1900. In addition to veterans being addicted, odd as it may seem, the remainder of the addicted population were mostly well-to-do white women.

During this period of American history the country was growing rapidly with the arrival of immigrants from Europe and Asia. As the population rapidly grew, so did the urban tenements and slums. As unemployment and poverty increased, the poor turned to alcohol and narcotics. With a large number of poor addicts, criminal activity, dereliction, and despair increased.

### Rules / Laws / Regulations

Drug-related laws have been documented from the beginning of written history. By 1776, opium

use was made a capital offence in China. There were Opium Wars in England during the 1800's. The first United States drug law was enacted in San Francisco in 1875. The Federal Opium Commission was established in 1903 and by 1914 there were twenty-seven city and state laws barring opium smoking. Through the years numerous states established dozens of anti-drug legislations.

### Seeking Help

With the large number of individuals caught in the grips of addiction, there were some who sought help to stop using: some tried hospitals; some tried religion; others were institutionalized. In the 1930's there was a growing fellowship called Alcoholics Anonymous, with the purpose of people helping each other to stop drinking. It was very common for drug addicts to also be drunks, so many of the attendees of AA meetings were also drug addicts.

AA's relevance to the development of Narcotics Anonymous has never been in question. Without Alcoholics Anonymous, there would be no NA. Future NA members learned from AA that there can be recovery from the disease of addiction.

### ... and so it began ...

On February 16, 1947, a man named Houston S formed the Narco Group, a group of inmates and patients at the Federal Narcotics Farm in Lexington Kentucky. One of the inmates who benefited from the Narco Group was a man named Danny C, who was discharged in 1947 and returned home to New York. Danny, with the help of Dorothy B and Rae L, was instrumental in starting a group called Narcotics Anonymous in the New York City prison system in 1948. Danny relapsed and returned to Lexington, but later returned to New York to continue his work with addicts.

The first NA meeting held outside of prison there was at the YMCA in New York City in 1950. This group fashioned itself after Alcoholics Anonymous, but developed their own Thirteen Steps. These are as follows with the current Steps in italics:

# The Original Thirteen Steps

1. Admit the use of narcotics made my life seem more tolerable, but the drug had become an undesirable power over my life.  
***We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.***
2. Came to realize that to face life without drugs I must develop an inner strength.  
***We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.***
3. Made a decision to face the suffering of withdrawal.  
***We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.***
4. Learn to accept my fears without drugs.  
***We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.***
5. Find someone who has progressed this far and who is able to assist me.  
***We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.***
6. Admit to Him the nature and depth of my addiction.  
***We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.***
7. Realize the seriousness of my shortcomings as I know them and accept the responsibility of facing them.  
***We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.***
8. Admit before a group of NA members these shortcomings and explain how I am trying to overcome them.  
***We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.***
9. List for my own understanding all the persons I have hurt.  
***We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.***
10. Take a daily inventory of my actions and admit to myself those which are contrary to good conscience.  
***We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.***
11. Realize that to maintain freedom from drugs I must share with others the experience from which I have benefited.  
***We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.***

12. Determine a purpose in life and try with all the spiritual and physical power within me to move toward its fulfillment.

***Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.***

13. GOD HELP ME.

This early version of NA had a structure similar to that of the Salvation Army. The chaplain of this group, Father Daniel E, a New York City Priest, developed pamphlets aimed at helping addicts. They worked to help rehabilitate addicts by helping them find jobs and housing. It was more of a social service for addicts seeking recovery. This version of NA had considerable success and survived into the 1960's in New York, Cleveland, and other areas where it was sponsored by the Salvation Army.

## Jimmy K

A few more years would have to pass before Narcotics Anonymous as it is known today would begin to grow in California. In February of 1950, Jimmy K found his way into the rooms of AA in North Hollywood, California. He had reached the point where he was unable to work and lived on pills and drinking. Jimmy gravitated to the other members of AA, who like himself, were also addicted to drugs. It occurred to Jimmy that the addicts easily found one another and he felt that addicts gathering together came fairly naturally.

One of the women from this AA group started a meeting at her house called HFD, or Habit Forming Drugs. Jimmy attended a few times, but found that they did not adhere to Traditions that Jimmy felt were essential to the survival of AA and would be essential to any group.

In 1951 and 1952, Jimmy was repeatedly approached about starting a group specifically for addicts, but he continually refused. However, Jimmy did contact Danny C from New York about it. Jimmy felt that Danny's approach was not exactly what he was looking for, but he did like the name, Narcotics Anonymous. In late 1952, while Jimmy was attending an AA meeting, he was once again approached to start a group for addicts. This time, one of the members offered her large living room for the meetings. They held a few meetings there and called it once again HFD, but this format was not fulfilling Jimmy's needs and he knew that there had to be a better way.

During this same time period, the head of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Narcotics Division contacted Jack P from AA and asked him if he would be willing to start something for addicts. Jack reluctantly agreed to help and started a meeting at Moorpark in 1953 even though he knew nothing about addiction. In the meantime,

Jimmy K heard of the meeting and started attending. Jack and Jimmy had known each other for quite some time and became close friends.

Authorities kept the meeting under surveillance because at that time addicts were viewed as criminals and it was illegal for them to gather together for any purpose.

## August 17, 1953

On August 17, 1953, a group called the Governing Committee voted to call their new group 'San Fernando Valley Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous'. Through Jimmy K's urging, they contacted AA's General Service Office and were informed that they could not use the name Alcoholics Anonymous.

They changed the name of the group to Narcotics Anonymous. The group developed bylaws and worked on development of the Twelve Traditions of NA, which were based on those of AA. They developed a piece of literature in booklet form, which was later altered greatly and was used to pass the message of recovery.

In the 1950's, there was an underground of radicals known as the 'Beat Generation', who had an enthusiasm for marijuana and amphetamine use. These 'Beatniks' were the forerunners of the 'Hippy Generation', whose mantra was: 'turn on, tune in, and drop out'. Marijuana had a reputation of being 'the weed with roots in Hell' that led to use of other drugs. In addition, there became an increasing use of mind and mood altering drugs among the youth.

During this time, there was also an increased flow of heroin coming into the United States and drug abuse became a national problem.

In 1966 the Narcotics Addict Rehabilitation Act was passed. With the act came a new direction for treatment possibilities and a rise in therapeutic communities, promising hope to the addict seeking recovery.

During the last half of the 1950's, NA groups had sprung up across America and learned of the importance of abiding by the Traditions in order to flourish. There was a true re-birth of NA in 1959 when the development of literature began. Sylvia and Jimmy wrote 'Who is an Addict?', 'What Can I Do?', 'What is the NA Program?', 'Why Are We Here?' and 'Recovery and Relapse' during 1960, followed by 'We Do Recover' the following year. This information was compiled into what became the Little White Booklet.

Jimmy K's telephone served as the first NA Hotline. He obtained a Post Office box where he received mail from addicts, professionals, and other interested parties.

In Seattle, Washington, the early 1960's, AA members helped NA get into correctional facilities to carry the message of recovery. In 1962, the

Walla Walla penitentiary allowed inmates to start their own NA meetings and paroled inmates helped start regular meetings in Seattle in 1963.

During that same year, there were four meetings a week, additional literature was developed and members started talking about forming a service body. A Board of Trustees was formed with four members with the goal to provide guidance to the fellowship and develop new literature.

By 1966, California had ten weekly meetings and the Little White Booklet was revised to add personal stories.

By 1967, there were thirteen meetings and talk began about creating an office to handle the matters of literature and communication throughout the fellowship. The Voice of NA was published in February 1968 and offered a promise of a more unified fellowship.



Jimmy K designed the NA symbol, with a diamond inside a circle with the letters NA in the middle. He added and four lines representing directional markings indicating that NA was a worldwide fellowship. This logo to the left is the logo used in the first NA literature.

The service structure was established in 1969 and was called the Parent General Service Organization (GSO). They met with Group Service Representatives (GSR's) monthly. Public Information began development and Phonline committees were forming.

The use of drugs remained constant into the decade of the 1970's. The use of LSD declined and marijuana was more widely used. By 1980, there were an estimated 16 to 30 million marijuana smokers in the United States. Returning Veterans from Viet Nam brought with them drug addiction habits.

Treatment facilities hired recovering addicts as staff and counselors with NA emerging as a viable Twelve Step program for addicts.

## Growth

On November 5, 1971, the first Narcotics Anonymous convention was held at La Miranda Country Club with almost 200 people in attendance. The conventions grew through the years and began to make a profit. At the Fourth World Convention a motion was approved to incorporate the World Service Office of NA and Jack B was elected as the first President of the board.

Spanish translation of the Little White Booklet and Who, What, How, & Why began in 1976. The World Service Office Bylaws were drafted by the end of October and work began on the World Directory of NA Meetings. Significant growth had taken place with 38 meetings being held.

# The Basic Text

In 1977, Bo S. undertook the task of development of the 'NA Big Book'. He spent six months talking to people about the book and gathering support. He held Friday night book meetings that drew from twenty-five to eighty people. Bo was eventually elected as Literature Committee Chairperson and the committee moved forward to develop the book that became called Narcotics Anonymous and is affectionately known as The Basic Text.

During the summer of 1978 the German translation of the Little White Booklet was approved by the trustees and a translation program began. Narcotics Anonymous had become a worldwide fellowship of recovering addicts.

## NA in NJ

The first recollection of an NA meeting in New Jersey was in the Ironbound section of Newark in 1961. It was raided by the police because at that time it was illegal for addicts to gather due to what was called the Ruckerfeller Law. Because of this, it was difficult to get NA 'off the ground'.

In the mid-1970's addicts from Atlantic City were traveling to Philadelphia for NA meetings. They decided to get NA going in Atlantic City in approximately 1975.

By 1981 there were eleven meetings in New Jersey. In 1982, a meeting started in Neptune and later moved to Eatontown. This Group is still in existence today.

Prior to 1984, the Region that serviced New Jersey was called the Mid-Atlantic Region and it covered the states from Maine to Ohio to Virginia. The entire State of New Jersey had only six Area Services. They were Cape Atlantic Area, Central Jersey Area, Capital Area, Original Area, Hudson Area and Northeast Area. Trusted Servants had to travel to other states to get to Regional meetings.

On June 9, 1984, addicts from New Jersey formed their own Region and called it New Jersey Region. That same year, a group of volunteers held a meeting in Nutley and developed a project that they called Unity Overnight, which eventually turned into the first convention and was held in 1986 in Asbury Park at the Berkeley Carteret Hotel.

At the convention, World Service changes to the Fellowship were discussed to allow Narcotics Anonymous to stand on its own rather than being in the shadow of Alcoholic Anonymous. This World Service information was the major topic of discussion at the first convention, helping to open the door to Narcotics Anonymous standing as a Fellowship on its own and giving NA its own

language and literature. The convention carried the message, fulfilled its purpose and NA grew in New Jersey as a result. Addicts from all over the country attended.

The first convention was an overwhelming Success in Asbury Park and shortly thereafter meetings were started in that City with meetings throughout the County soon following.

The second convention was plagued with a series of misfortunes. With pleasant and unpleasant experiences under their belt, the committee decided to continue with a positive attitude. They formed a Convention Corporation and a Board of Trustees and a third convention was once again successfully held in Asbury Park.

After the third convention, again in Asbury Park, North New Jersey decided to break away from New Jersey Region and became the North New Jersey Region.

By the 1980's recovering addicts were able to attend meetings daily, but had to travel to do so. It was not uncommon to have a car full of addicts drive a great distance to attend a meeting. Knowing the value of the Fellowship and the benefits of working the Steps kept people coming back. There are a lot of recovering addicts still attending meetings on a regular basis whose recovery roots had their beginnings in the 1980's.

Meetings grew in number in from about 10 in the mid-to-late 1970's to 402 in 1989. Currently in 2008 there are 735 meetings in the Statewide Meeting Directory, twelve of which are bilingual.

Narcotics Anonymous has grown tremendously from its humble beginnings to a worldwide fellowship of recovering addicts with new meetings opening up regularly.

*In seeking information on the history on NA in New Jersey, local members of the Fellowship shared their memories. I would like to thank Eve E. and Jimmy W. for their time and input regarding the history of NA in New Jersey. If any information is not exactly accurate, keep in mind that it came from addicts!*

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Please put 'Sanity' in the subject line.

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Sanity is published every two months as a service of the New Jersey Region for its Groups and Members. Input and articles are welcome on all recovery related topics.

**Opinions expressed here are those of individual addicts, not NA as a whole.**

Issues of SANITY can be downloaded from the NJ Statewide Website at [www.nani.org](http://www.nani.org)

**Words of Wisdom:**

Give back what was so freely given to you.

