

THE CONNECTION

\$1⁰⁰

vol. two

SHARING WORLDWIDE RECOVERY

number 2

YOU NEVER PROMISED ME A ROSE GARDEN

How one recovering addict found a new freedom and learned how to be happy with what he had.

Look, I'll be honest with you. I didn't join the Fellowship to get sober. Or to grow spiritually and find God. Or to learn how to accept life on life's terms. Yet, I am now nearing my 4th year of sobriety, I pray regularly and, even though I'm not always aware of it myself, most of the people who were here when I came into the program will tell you I've grown, as in: "Boy! He's not as big a jerk as he used to be!" What happened?

God, grant me the money to gratify my every impulse, the property to impress everyone I meet, and the prestige to cover up my complete lack of self-worth. Amen. If I had been a praying man most of my life (and believe me, I wasn't), that would have been my daily prayer. I was sure

I went to my first CA meeting because I had nowhere else to go

that if I could only find the right ingredients — the right job, the right car, the right clothes, the right woman — I could create happiness for myself and get rid of all the "less than" and "not part of" feelings that had plagued me as far back as I could remember.

I tried. Boy, did I try! I moved to L.A., the land of my dreams, and got into "show biz." I made lots of money, bought myself lots of nice things . . . and was so depressed I wanted to die. I know it's no

use trying to tell you material success doesn't fix anything. Those who've had success already know, and those who haven't never believe it wouldn't have been different for them. So, suffice to say that success not only didn't fix me, it deprived me of my one hope for happiness. I could no longer say "if only I had _____, I'd be happy."

Of course, I didn't stop to analyze it

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Chicago Holds CA Conference

Chicago's 2nd Annual CA Conference is scheduled to be held just outside O'Hare International Airport at the Sheraton International, May 1st. Entitled *Unity*, the three-day event promises to be every bit as exciting and rewarding as last year's convention.

A complete Weekend Package (including registration, Saturday Night Banquet, the dance afterwards and Sunday brunch) is only \$44. Hotel accommodations run \$55 for both single or double per room per night.

For further information, call Ellen at (312) 537-0712, Chris at (312) 784-3333 or Cindy at (312) 520-0548. Don't miss out!

SPONSORING OTHERS

My Twelve Step program has become the foundation for my very existence, that same existence which was manipulated and driven deep into the depths of drug addiction, far beyond my control and understanding. The need to fill myself with your acceptance was an exhausting, debilitating, tedious tribulation in my life, seeking approval via a processed substance that would sometimes, albeit rarely, put me in a place of perfect balance. Today, I no longer have to worship at the feet of false prophets.

For me, one of the greatest gifts of this program has been sponsoring others. It has provided that magical ingredient in my sobriety and lifted my self-esteem far beyond my wildest expectation. Imagine having another human being impressed by the way I choose to live my life today! Imagine them wanting to improve their lives based on *my* experience and knowledge of trudging through life clean and sober, using the very tools *I've* learned to use in these rooms! The chemistry between me and my babies clearly results in a win-win situation . . . quite a bit different from my past life as a practicing addict. As their sponsor, I believe my job is to express to them only what I see as viable choices in their lives. By the same token, it is *not* my job to make their decisions for them, for I cannot interfere with whatever lessons God holds for any of us. I must be a neutral party, a channel for God, and love them unconditionally no matter which direction they choose to take.

Over the past year, I have seen many

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Published by Cocaine Anonymous
P.O. Box 1367
Culver City, CA 90232
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No Matter What!

We don't drink. And we don't use. No matter what.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? It is. No matter how bad we feel, no matter how much money we owe, no matter how many months it's been since we've had a relationship, no matter where we're living, no matter how long we've been out of work, no matter who dies around us, no matter how bad it gets . . . no matter how many *no matter hows* . . . we don't pick up that first drink and we don't do that first line, no matter what. *No matter what!*

Sometimes our Sobriety is the *only* thing we have. Lose that and what have we got? Nothing.

Nobody said it was going to be easy. As our lead story in this month's edition of *The Connection* states, "You Never Promised Me A Rose Garden." No, indeed. The longer we stick around, it seems, the narrower the road becomes. Suddenly, we're forced to face character defects we never thought existed. Feelings we never allowed ourselves to feel suddenly start to well up inside. Suddenly, we're *accountable* for our actions.

That's the bad news. The good news is that we're far better equipped to deal with the reality of sober living today than we were when we first got clean and sober . . . thanks to a loving God, the 12 Steps of Recovery, and the Fellowship of the program.

So, stick around. It does get better. As long as we don't drink and we don't use. No matter what.

The Editor

3RD ANNUAL COCAINE ANONYMOUS WORLD SERVICES CONVENTION TO BE HELD IN SAN FRANCISCO

Cocaine Anonymous' 3rd Annual World Services Convention will be held at the Ramada Renaissance Hotel, just three blocks away from San Francisco's renowned Union Square, this Fourth of July Weekend.

In addition to the usual Saturday night banquet, dance and round the clock marathon meetings, there will be workshops on the following subjects: Sponsorship, Nutrition, Flareups & Relapse, Relationships, Adult Children of Alcoholics & Addicts, Fun & Laughter in Sobriety, Service, Sex & Sobriety and both the Fourth and the Ninth Steps.

Early registration (before June 15th) is \$20, Saturday Night Banquet & Main Speaker is \$25, and Sunday Morning Brunch is \$10. Make checks payable to C.A. World Services and send to P.O. Box 4802, Mountain View, CA 94040.

Reservations can be made by calling the Ramada Renaissance Hotel direct at (415) 392-8000.

Don't delay. Make your plans now. See the celebrated Golden Gate Bridge. Visit the famous Fisherman's Wharf. Ride the cable cars. And you'll leave your heart in San Francisco, too.

MEETING DIRECTORY

Cocaine Anonymous World Directories, listing over 500 meetings in the United States and Canada, are now available from the World Services Office. Send \$2.00 to Cocaine Anonymous World Services, P.O. Box 1367, Culver City, CA 90232 for your copy today.

Any additions or corrections to meetings already listed should be brought to the attention of Neil B. before June 1st.

3rd East Coast CA Convention

"A Long Spiritual Line" is the theme for the Third Annual East Coast Cocaine Anonymous Convention slated for Memorial Day Weekend on 550 acres in the foothills of the Berkshires. The four-day, three-night convention will be held at the Holiday Hills Conference Center in Pauling, New York, May 22-25.

Package prices of \$215 for deluxe rooms, \$185 for a standard room, include all meals, sports and social activities, T-shirts and complete use of the conference center facilities for the weekend. Prices are per person based on double occupancy, single occupancy unavailable.

Reservations before April 30th are suggested, as space is limited. Make checks payable to C.A. Conference Committee and mail to Jack Perry, 203 Southport Woods Drive, Southport, CT 06490. Any questions? Call Amy (203) 259-6671 or Jack (203) 255-0552.

Worth Repeating

The following remarks, heard at meetings around town, are worth repeating.

"We're just like other people . . . only *more so*."

"It's not hip to slip."

"We never do the things we're *supposed* to do compulsively. Like writing . . . or praying . . . or working in steps."

"We tend to get ourselves out of trouble by getting ourselves into *more* trouble!"

"Disassociation is denying we have a problem . . . then denying we denied it!"

"I was so cool I drove around in the summer with my windows rolled up so you'd think I had air-conditioning."

"Defects of character are merely assets turned around."

SURRENDER IS THE FIRST STEP

I got involved in the program about 13 months ago after an insane year of living with a dealer. I tried not doing coke, doing it, throwing it away, hiding it, leaving, staying. Of course, the only thing that happened was that I became an addict, too. Finally, the money was gone, all friends were alienated and the roadtrip to rehabilitation was complete. My partner went in, but I stayed out and partied because *he* had the problem not me.

Out of a sense of duty I attended Al-Anon meetings and didn't like them. At a break one evening I switched meetings and went to CA to sit by my friend. Suddenly, things became clear. This is where I belonged. These people made sense. They knew what life in the fast lane was like. They understood the guilt, the pain, the sadness of seeing your friends get hooked and knowing deep down inside their habit is your bread and butter. I'll never forget the feeling of relief I felt when I heard someone *else* talk about seeing cops, and picking up crumbs in the carpet. I had watched the man I loved go through this and thought he had been the only one. I also realized, inevitably, what was in store for me if I continued to use.

At first, it was hard. I missed the rushes, the excitement of making the runs, the action, the calls, the people and restaurants. One night I was with some of my new friends and I was incredibly depressed; I felt like I'd never make it, never be able to stay clean. They asked me if we could say a prayer. I didn't want to. I was insulted. Here I wanted sympathy and *they wanted to pray!* But I was too depressed to refuse. We said the prayer, Psalm 31, and it expressed what I felt exactly . . .

My life is spent with grief and my years with sighing. My strength is failing and my body is consumed.

I was dumbfounded.

And Psalm 5 . . . *Into Thy hand I commit my Spirit.*

This was the birth of recovery for me.

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By Bob Gorrell, 1986. The Richmond News Leader by permission of the North America Syndicate, Inc.

NEWSFRONT

PLAYBOY MAG'S REPORT ON ADDICTION

The following article is composed of excerpts from a special report on drugs by Lawrence Gonzales, entitled *Addiction and Rehabilitation*, in Playboy's May, 1987 Issue. Reproduced by Special Permission of Playboy Magazine. Copyright © 1987 by PLAYBOY -- The Editor.

WHAT IS ADDICTION?

IN THE WORLD of science and medicine, ideas about what addiction is and what should be done about it have changed dramatically in the past ten years. Researchers now agree that addiction — whether to cocaine, heroin, amphetamines or some other chemical substance — is a single disease. According to much of the latest evidence, addicts will switch drugs when their choice is not available and will even display addictive behavior with drugs thought to be non-addictive (such as marijuana and over-the-counter diet pills). That fact is extremely important in the way we think about drugs and addiction, because it means that the chemical is not the problem; it is the individual's reaction to it that causes the difficulty.

In addition, there is a difference between physical dependence and addictive disease. A normal person *can* be given enough morphine to become physically dependent on it. (Yes, certain drugs, in and of themselves, can pro-

duce physical dependence.) He may even suffer withdrawal symptoms afterward. But he will not hit the street looking for drugs once he's taken off the morphine. Only an addict will do that.

What, then, is an addict?

An addict, exposed to the same amount of morphine (or to any mood-altering drug, such as cocaine or marijuana), will compulsively attempt to repeat and even to intensify the feeling produced by drugs — *no matter what the consequences*. The key to diagnosis of addictive disease is in the observation that the patient persists in using drugs in spite of the consequences. His failure to adapt is our clue that he suffers from a real disease (as opposed to moral bankruptcy, which was once thought to be the case with alcoholics).

In other words, simply taking away cocaine or marijuana — even if it could be done — would not solve the problem of drug addiction. At treatment centers across the country, we learned this: If his

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CONCEIVED IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR, HIS WORLD CRUMBLER AROUND HIM

*The story of a young addict who went from
high school to high school getting high.*

My name is Kramer and I'm an addict and an alcoholic. Recently I heard a man refer to himself as a "Cocaine Alcoholic." I liked that because it seemed to fit me, as well.

I was conceived in a drunken stupor, which gave me a genetic predisposition to this disease. In fact, I developed my first bad attitude the day I was born—my father was away on business, as was his pattern, a pattern that continued through my upbringing. He was never there for me as a child. Consequently, I withdrew and became a loner. I spend the next twenty-five years of my life running from myself.

Early on, I was sexually assaulted, which hurt me very much. I have just now started to undo some of the damage. Part of the reason I turned to drugs and alcohol was to get away from myself. Around the time I turned six, I discov-

*I tried to control my using
by not buying large quantities*

ered what chemicals could do for me. If I were to act sick, my mother would give me some cough syrup, which was composed of codeine, alcohol and sugar. I liked the way it made me feel. As a result, I was frequently sick.

I started to experiment with grass just before high school. With the cry from the Sixties still ringing in my ears, I knew that pot wasn't harmful. I bounced from high school to high school, putting new meaning into the word *high*. And then I went to military school in the Southwest in an effort to clean up. It failed miserably. People, places and things never did work to help me stay straight. By the time I finished military school, I had been introduced to the needle. I liked the immediate rush that came from shooting up. And that was the start of a love affair that lasted ten years.

The rest of my story is fairly typical. I tried college and failed after the second year. I tried geographics and ran all over the Southwest, even Mexico. I tried bartending. I tried building motorcycles. Within a few years, I had built a championship roadracer and become partners in a shop. But I don't deal with success too well, so I moved on to other things. I even tried marriage for a while, but how could I handle loving someone else when I couldn't even love myself? Our marriage was doomed from the start. A few months later, it was over.

When I turned twenty-five, I inherited some money, and I set out to finally make something of myself by opening a nightclub. I mean, what else would any self-respecting addict-alcoholic who'd had a lot of hands-on experience as a bartender do? Unfortunately, like so many things in my life up until then, that didn't fix it. After struggling through a divorce and a fledgling business beset with economic strife, I decided to seek help through AA and go to meetings for ninety days. I didn't get a Big Book, I didn't call my sponsor and I finally just quit going to meetings. My business flourished and I shut the door on the program. I stayed straight for almost six months.

But this is a progressive disease I have. What started with one drink one night turned into two the next night and so on. By the third day I was back to my customary beer for breakfast and cocaine for lunch.

My last year out there was miserable. I tried to control my using by not buying cocaine in large quantities; instead, I would go back to the dealers again and again the same night. Eventually, I was closed down by my landlord. I owed him over fifteen grand. I also owed money to the city, county, state and, last but not least, the IRS. I tried to re-open the club

but I wasn't able to. I was destitute. So, I went to work in a motorcycle shop. And then I tried another job. And then another. I switched jobs repeatedly, always trying to find something that would fix me. Here I was almost twenty-eight, and I was back living with my parents. At that point, they were the only people willing to tolerate me. I found out later my mother had to watch her pocketbook around me; she was that frightened of what I would do.

One night I was invited to a friend's wedding; I had the right connections. That was the only reason I was invited. I wound up by myself that night....sweating, shaking, feeling very ill from all the cocaine I'd consumed. It had stopped working for me. For the first time I found myself on my knees in tears, praying for help.

I swore I'd never do any more coke again.

A few days later, my mother was sent off to an alcoholism treatment center. When our family went to visit her, I was so desperate to turn my life around the treatment center looked good to me. Even some of the counselors told me I would benefit from treatment. I stayed straight the next thirty days. On my own. But I was angry, very angry. I had this disease of addiction and I didn't like it. A week later, I returned to the treatment center and checked myself in.

From my previous exposure to AA, I figured I would waltz right through the center in no time. But it didn't work out that way. I stayed through my twenty-eighth birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. For a while, I thought I was going to end up coloring Easter eggs there.

But I did learn a lot about this disease. And I was able to pick up some tools there. I felt like I'd been almost reborn. Then the staff had the nerve to suggest a half-way house to me. A *half-way house!* This was awful. Wasn't I fixed yet? Wasn't I cured? Reluctantly, I went.

What happened there was the miracle of recovery. I lived, worked and played with other addicts. And, for the very first time, I made real friends. I went to meetings every day. One requirement of the house was that each patient hold down a forty-hour-a-week job. The simpler, the better. I wound up working

in a health food lunch counter, peeling avocados and making sandwiches. The rest of the crew were all people from the program. It was like working at a meeting, eight hours a day.

At my first outside AA meeting, I sat next to an old wino wearing someone else's clothes. I had on a silk jacket. I felt out of place. The following week, I was taken to a CA meeting. When they read the section from the newcomer pamphlet, "Who Is An Addict", I knew I was home, at last:

"I only use on weekends," or

"It hardly ever interferes with work," or

"I can quit, it's only psychologically addicting, right?" or

"I only snort, I don't base or shoot," or

"It's this marriage that's messing me up."

CA really had my number. For a while, I'd only used on weekends. For a while, it hadn't interfered with work. For a while, I'd only snorted. For a while, I could quit anytime I wanted to, except I couldn't. This was for me. I kept coming to meetings, and one day I became one of the regulars. When I got out of the half-way house, I tried to return to selling motorcycles, but I was fired in three weeks because I was too honest. Today, I am grateful for that honesty. The program can play hell with lying.

I went back to where I'm from, long enough to gather what was left of my belongings. I was about six months clean at the time, and I went a little crazy. So I got another sponsor, worked the steps and returned to the place where I am currently living. Within weeks, I was back at work peeling avocados again which, you'll pardon the pun, gave me an opportunity to get in touch with my peelings.

I started to grow. My nightclub had been located next to a health food place very similar to the one I was working in, so I started to write amends to people to tell them what I was doing. When my club had been in full swing, I would laugh at the kids who worked next door. Now, I'm one of those kids. I learned a little humility there.

I used every tool the program has to offer

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SHE WAS LOST UNTIL SHE FOUND THAT SHE COULD LOVE HERSELF

Speedballs propelled her into a life of hell that continued on for the next five years.

Cocaine came into my life about six years ago. A friend asked me if I wanted to try some. I was living with another girl at the time. I brought it home and we tried it. At the time I didn't know that this would be the beginning of a life of hell for both of us for the next five years.

It started with a \$20 bag a day. Shooting in my arms. After a month of two I decided I didn't like how I had to chase after the cocaine, so I started doing cocaine and heroin together. Speedballs made me feel good. For a while everything was okay but then things started getting really bad. I was on welfare because I couldn't find work and I didn't know how I was going to get the money to buy my drugs. So, I started sleeping with older men to support what had quickly become a habit as my need for cocaine got worse. I seemed to live for that hit.

And then I had a coke dealer move in with me, so I got cocaine whenever I wanted it and he had a place to sell his drugs and do other things. My life began to get totally out of control. I was doing anything and everything just to have that shot of coke. I lost my self-respect and the respect of my family and my friends. My relationship started to fall apart. I got so depressed I set my apartment on fire one night and just sat there and watched it burn. I really don't know what kind of state I was in, I felt like I was going crazy. I don't know why but I called the police and told them what I had done. I guess they thought I was crazy, too. They took me to jail and I was put under a very high bond. Somehow, my boyfriend and my mother managed to get me out. The first day home I got high again because I thought I was going to jail for a long time anyway.

As time went on my mother found out she had cancer. I tried to get myself together but I couldn't no matter how hard I tried. I kept drinking and drug-

ging. Mother died on Sept. 19, 1984.

I was really lost now. I had nothing and no one to turn to for support. The drinking and drugging went on. About a year later, I decided I had to do something to keep myself from going to jail. I went out and got a job. It was only temporary, but it slowed down my cocaine use even though I continued to drink. I didn't go to jail, but I did get four years probation. I knew I had to do right but I just couldn't. I started using cocaine again until it progressed to just about every day. My boyfriend and I were fighting more and more and doing more drugs than ever before. And then I had a moment of clarity. I had grown tired of running from place to place with no sense of responsibility whatsoever. I really liked my job and I didn't want to lose it. So, I went and got treatment.

After thirty days I was really happy. I thought things were finally going to be different for me. I was really set on staying clean and sober. I did everything I was told to do for aftercare, but it wasn't enough. As soon as something I couldn't deal with occurred about two weeks later, I was out there again, one more time, right where I started.

This went on for a month. I knew what I had to do if I really wanted sobriety as much as I said I did, so I went to outpatient treatment and *listened*, reached out and got involved in my sobriety. Not just going to meetings but really getting honest with myself. Changing my attitude towards people, places and things and mainly myself.

With the help of a Higher Power whom I choose to call God and the program and the belief that *I am somebody*, I can have a good clean life if I want to. And today, I want to. I have learned how to love myself and for that I love others around me even more.

Bonita M., Connecticut

them. I didn't have to. I had discovered cocaine.

Flash forward about 6 years (I can hear the signs of relief. "Thank God he's not going to bore us with his drugalogue!") to the Summer of '83. I had no job, no car, no money, no women, and very few friends. I had centered my entire life around cocaine, and now I could no longer afford it. I went to my first Cocaine Anonymous meeting simply because I had absolutely nowhere else to go.

I just wanted to meet some people (okay, *women*) who would pay attention to me even if I couldn't offer them drugs. Of course, I did meet women, lots of women but, more importantly (more important than women?), I met a group of people who seemed to have everything I wanted. They were "hip, slick and cool." Some of them were very successful. They looked good, they talked good and they *accepted* me! (In retrospect, I realize that most of them were only in their first year; at the time, anyone with as much as four *months* of sobriety was an oldtimer to me!) To me, these people *were* the program and so I happily joined what was in actuality a kind of fellowship within the fellowship, feeling for the very first time in my life that I truly belonged and that, having said goodbye to drugs, all I had to do was re-acquire the material things I had lost and I could live hiply, slickly and coolly ever after.

I wasn't rewarded for working the program by getting what I wanted.

It didn't work out that way. First of all, I was a long way from success. My career was dead and the wreckage of my past seemed insurmountable to me. It was going to be a long time before I could hope to impress my new friends and not feel "less than." *Less than?* Why were those old feelings coming back? Well, as the fog began to lift in my first year, I started to realize that the people I had been so attracted to as a newcomer weren't nearly as together as I had thought. They always seemed to be chasing after something to fix them, and it didn't seem to be working for them any

better in their sobriety than it had for me when I was using. Since I didn't have the wherewithal to compete with them in the "Looking Good Olympics," (not that they seemed to be all that happy, however) and because I got my ass kicked in my very first "boy meets girl on C.A. Campus" relationship, I soon became open to some viable alternatives in my life.

I don't remember when I first heard The Promises. I had always thought that such expressions of A.A. philosophy were a sort of "sour grapes" manifesto, meant to comfort those who had not yet grabbed the brass ring in life. However, that description now seemed to fit me to a "T", and the first time I really *listened* to the Promises I was ready to believe.

For the promises to come true I had to change my attitudes.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. That sounded great, as I had never even known an *old* freedom or an *old* happiness.

We will not regret the past or wish to shut the door on it. That sounded good, too. I really wanted to stop kicking myself.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. At the time all I could comprehend was the possibility of getting a good night's sleep. *Inner* peace was almost too much to hope for.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. this was like promising me the moon!

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Since it has never worked for me, I would be happy to get rid of it.

Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. I was disappointed that it said "fear of economic insecurity," not just "economic insecurity" itself. Still, if I was going to be broke it would be nice to learn how to live with it.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

As someone who was born with his foot in his mouth, I found this very attractive.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? Hell, Yes! I was being promised a complete overhaul! Not just a brand new ball game — different *rules!*

What I heard in The Promises was a chance to feel okay about myself, even if I never gained any material success or prestige again. Since it seemed like prestige and success just weren't in the cards for me, it wasn't difficult to decide to pursue these loftier goals.

Of course, there was a catch. For these promises to come true I had to change a lot of my attitudes and behavior. After all, self seeking was hardly going to slip away while I scurried from meeting to meeting trying to look good, get laid, and be invited to all the hip parties. Reluctantly, (because every instinct I had cried out against it) I began to pass up the big social meetings. I started talking to male newcomers instead of female newcomers. I looked for ways to be of service. I even committed myself to an indefinite period of celibacy. I wasn't getting laid, anyway, so why not stop trying and pay attention to what was being said in meetings? Hmmm. I started to allow more and more of my impulses to go ungratified, to not seek constant ego gratification, to actually keep my mouth shut at a sharing meeting occasionally. Slowly, I started taking the *program*, not just the fellowship, seriously. And do you know what happened?

Not much. At least, not at first. I got horny. I talked to a lot of boring newcomers. I was sure I was missing out on a lot of great parties. I still didn't have a job or a car or a relationship, and the hip, slick, and cool crowd didn't even seem to notice that I wasn't around as much, anymore. Strangely enough, though . . . I found I really didn't care. I was getting . . . dare to say it . . . some actual *self-esteem*. I started to feel like I was . . . okay. *Without* a job, or a car, or a relationship.

I started to take pleasure in small accomplishments. I learned to avoid comparing my insides to other people's outsides as much. I found I could feel pride in each tiny step I took in recovery.

Like balancing a checkbook, or paying off traffic warrants, even taking out the garbage. These were things I could not bring myself to do before I got sober. Slowly, I could see myself making progress. And I saw that I *was* being taken care of — I didn't have much, but all my absolute needs were being met. For the first time, I started to look to God, rather than people and things, as my source of comfort.

Today, a lot of miracles have taken place in my life. I have succeeded in clearing away a lot of the wreckage of my past, and I have resumed my career. I met a wonderful woman (on a blind date) and got married. Yes, I even got a car.

Ironically, however, my recent material success has come with some emotional discomfort and confirmed what I came to believe when I listened to the Promises for the first time . . . I wasn't rewarded for working the program by getting what I wanted. I was rewarded when I learned to be happy with what I had.

Lee A., Los Angeles

SPONSORING Continued from page 1

signs of God's handiwork between me and my girls. Isn't it ironic that almost every time I'm working with another, I find exactly what I need to do or hear for *myself*? For the most part, my rate of recovery has been in direct proportion with my willingness to work with other recovering addicts. I have learned that when I step out of myself and reach my hand out to another, I become that woman receiving the self-acceptance and love I've been searching for the world over. It was inside of me all along but it could only be released through my relationship with God and my working with another human being. Today, I see that my babies have been directly responsible for the freedom my soul has to love. They have given me an intimacy in my life I never allowed anyone to touch before.

I know the importance my sponsor plays in *my* life, and that should give me an idea of the importance I play in my babies' lives. May God bless.

Shannon M., Beverly Hills

BROKEN DREAMS TRAGIC SCENES

My name is Aaron — alcoholic, addict, and grateful to have stayed sober these past two years, thanks to a loving God and the Miracle of the 12 Steps of Cocaine Anonymous.

I was born in Pittsburgh, PA. My parents separated when I was four years old, at which time my mother was committed to a mental institution and my father remarried. I became very confused. My life seemed so different from everyone else's but, thanks to some people who set out on a course of action that gave them the understanding they needed to sustain a life beyond their wildest dreams, I was able to maintain my own dreams of what life could be for me.

Unfortunately, I drank and used drugs to sustain those dreams. And I ended up in a mental hospital myself. That was not a part of my dreams. I had not planned to go there. I was so disconnected from the reality of what was going on around me that at thirty-five years of age I was depleted of all hope for any of my dreams. I had not arrived at my plateau of success. Millions were not in my bank account. The accolades of my peers were not ringing in my ears.

Baffled, I asked myself how this could have happened. How did I get here? What do I have to do to straighten out my life? I pressed forward for information.

What I found was the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous and, last but not least, a God of my understanding. For that I am truly grateful. I left the hospital with a new attitude, returned to work and began to attend meetings. Since then, I have met some wonderful people — people like Happy Howard, Harold T. and Powerless Darrell — as I saw CA grow in So. Central Los Angeles. My determination to achieve sobriety was inspired as I watched these three men bring their message to the care unit at Centinela Hospital every week. I got involved and became a GSR.

When they moved the meeting to Lonnie's, I met Shelly, Richard, Melodi, Vicki, Denise and a host of other people. The meeting has continued to grow, along with my own growth, which has given me hope for a sober existence. I wish this love, devotion and care for one another for anyone having a call for sober living. Thanks to Cocaine Anonymous, I understand that the Love, Joy and Peace I feel today is available to all who are willing to be of service, get involved and come to believe.

Aaron J., So. Central LA

SURRENDER Continued from page 3

I felt a tremendous release in my heart. I had surrendered and a giant gate had shut behind me and I was looking down a gloriously lit path leading to a staircase. The steps to recovery. I knew that all was possible, that I would never be alone now.

This has made the difference in my life. That hole, that empty space I had always tried to fill with drugs and food and men was now going to heal. It hasn't been easy; growth and change are exhausting and very painful. Sometimes the demands of getting better are a pain in the butt. I can't be lazy any longer. I have to work at life. But I get so many rewards now. My life today is predictable, pretty orderly and fairly calm and the real surprise is that I am satisfied with it.

So this has been the essence of sobriety for me; a release of the Spirit, an acceptance of God in my life. This is what the program is to me, a group of people supporting each other, coming together to accept and understand the will of God in our lives. For if we trust in Him we shall never fail. Knock and the door shall be opened. Ask and you shall receive.

Debbie L., Seattle

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cocaine is taken away, the coke addict will become addicted to alcohol. If his alcohol is taken away, he'll come back a month or a year later addicted to Valium or Xanax. If his Valium is taken away, you'll find him somewhere down the line taking heroin. And if his heroin is taken away, he'll find morphine, Stadol, Demerol, codeine, Talwin, Percodan, Dilaudid . . . the list is endless. So is the problem, unless society learns this: Addiction is addiction is addiction. Until we leave off attacking individual chemicals and take up treating the disease, more and more people will suffer and die without ever understanding what hit them.

One of the most difficult jobs in treating addicts is to convince them that they cannot recover unless they avoid all mood-altering chemicals — forever. Cocaine addicts will want to be treated only for cocaine addiction: "Hey, I've never had a problem with drinking. Why hassle me about having a few beers?" Therapists hear it all the time: "How did this happen to me? I can't understand it. I never drank before." Or, even worse for the addict, "Hey, what's the problem if I smoke a joint after work? Grass isn't even addictive." That may be true, but it's not the drug, it's the person; and *any mood-altering drug* can reignite the inferno. Indeed, animal tests bear out that fact. No laboratory monkey, when offered a

particular drug, says, "No, thanks, I use only Peruvian flake." An animal addicted to cocaine will substitute alcohol if he's deprived of his coke. Substitute heroin; he'll become a junkie. Give him the choice of any drug and he'll choose cocaine. Cocaine appears to be most dangerous because it is most efficient in triggering the reward circuitry of the brain.

Becoming addicted is like being in a near-fatal car accident and having both legs cut off. In relative terms, it doesn't happen to many people. And it shouldn't discourage everyone else from driving. But for those unfortunate enough to be victims, there is no quick fix, only a lifetime of coping; and any advertisement that suggests otherwise is misleading people.

There is only one proven way to maintain abstinence: one day at a time for a lifetime. Drug treatment has become big business, but no one stays in business providing lifelong treatment. No one could afford it, and no insurance company would cover it. Not even the non-profit places offer unlimited treatment. And that is why, no matter where an addict goes for his initial treatment or detoxification, he will find the same thing: All roads lead to A.A. (or C.A. or N.A.). The reason is simple. It's free and it works.

in my first year by going to all sorts of meetings—AA, NA, ACA, SA, Al-Anon, every letter in the alphabet. The only group I can't qualify for is Gamblers Anonymous but, given my addictive behavior, I'll give you three-to-one odds I could pick *that* one up in no time! CA is my home because that is where I feel most a part of. I spent my life looking for some place to fit in; I found it in CA.

The first time I cleaned up, my sister got sober at the same time. She stuck it out; I had to do research. Today, I call her frequently. In fact, I spent last Christmas with her. It's great talking with her about things like relationships in sobriety or working the steps because her background is so similar to mine. The Fellowship works outside these rooms in wonderful ways.

Drugs and alcohol are no longer a viable option for me. Today, I want to live. I recently completed a very successful semester at college. I'm an English Major now, doing what I like. The program gave me the tools to stand on my own two feet. It also showed me exactly what "unconditional love" is. I lost my grandmother about six months ago, and it was the people from the program who got me through the pain.

CA works. That's why I keep coming back.

Kramer W., Phoenix

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