

THE CONNECTION

vol. two

SHARING WORLDWIDE RECOVERY

\$1.00

number 3

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST ADDICTED TO COCAINE

*The story of a young girl's addiction to cocaine
and the phone call that turned her life around*

Gingerly, I scooped some cocaine out of the little brown glass bottle using the tiny spoon hinged to its cap. I laid out three lines on the mirror, making each one long and fat. Crouching so no inquisitive neighbor across the street could see, I snorted one of the lines. Then I went back to my drawing, a picture of a junkyard behind a chain-link fence.

I loved to draw while I was high on cocaine. I felt competent, swift, unfailing. I could draw for hours and never experience fear of failure or feel my energy lag or my attention wander. Coke unleashed the righteous passion that life's drudgeries and my own fears silenced.

*I woke up each morning with just
one thing on my mind...cocaine*

A distressingly short time later I went back to the mirror. I did the next line, and repeated my inspired return to the drawing. This went on until I was so wired I needed a beer. It was morning, time to get ready to go to work. I steeled myself for the voyage into the outside world. I thought of calling in sick, but I'd already done that twice this week. I slammed down another beer, wishing the alcohol would overpower the coke even temporarily. Then I smoked a ciga-

rette. It was torture to go to work because I still had some cocaine left and I really wanted to stay home. I brushed my teeth, hoping to conceal the cigarette and beer smell. When I got into my car, I checked my nostrils in the rear-view mirror to see if there was any white powder there.

If I was lucky I would be able to stay at work long enough to come down from

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Dear Cocaine,

*Do you know where my
husband is?*

*I never dreamt that I could
miss anyone as much as I miss
him. He is my best friend. Inside
me is an empty place that cries for
the most Special, Sweet and Kind
man I have ever known.*

*He was perfect in my eyes. And
I believe he loved me more than I
could love anything. However,
today has love is somewhere else. I
know he can't help himself. He is
lost, I think.*

*Will I ever stop missing and
wanting him?*

*An Addict's Wife
P.S. If you see him, will you tell
him I miss him?*

WORLD SERVICES CA CONVENTION SAN FRANCISCO

Cocaine Anonymous' 3rd Annual World Services Convention kicks off this Fourth of July Weekend at the plush Ramada Renaissance Hotel, just three blocks away from San Francisco's renowned Union Square. Scheduled events on Friday, July 3, include:

12:00 Noon Registration

5:00 p.m. Beginners Meeting

Theresa J., San Francisco

Adelina A., San Francisco

Amy G., San Francisco

Jed H., San Francisco

7:00 p.m. Welcome Meeting

Jennifer R., New York

9:30 p.m. Dance

Zazu Pitts Memorial Orchestra

Scheduled events on Saturday, July 4, include:

8:00 a.m. Womens Meeting

Michelle B., San Diego

8:00 p.m. Mens Meeting

Jeffrey M., San Francisco

9:00 a.m. Sponsorship Workshop

Lynn B., Menlo Park

Irwin C., San Francisco

Art F., San Diego

9:00 a.m. Nutrition Workshop

Lynn E., Oakland

10:00 a.m. Relapse Workshop

Gill A., San Francisco

Paula H., San Francisco

10:45 a.m. Meditation Workshop

Pat B., San Francisco

10:45 a.m. Sex in Sobriety

Geri G., San Francisco

Lloyd G., San Francisco

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Editor
Bruce M.
Art Director
Sandy S.
Typesetting
Paul F. & Company
Staff
Richard L.

Lest We Forget

Once upon a time there was this chick named Henny Penny who offered to bake a loaf of bread.

“Will you get me some flour?” she asked the duck. He was too busy swimming in the pond. “Will you find me some yeast?” she asked the pig. He was too busy wallowing in the mud. “Will you help me stir?” she asked the cat who ignored her and went back to sleep.

Well, you know what happened. When Henny Penny finished baking the bread, *everybody* wanted a piece of it.

I see that sort of thing happening a lot in Cocaine Anonymous these days. We're only too happy to participate from the podium and tell everybody how grateful we are to be clean and sober today, but volunteer for clean-up after the meeting . . . *Come on. You've got to be kidding! Me?*

How quickly we forget all the times we got down on our hands and knees in search of that last little particle of cocaine.

I can't put any money in the basket today. I'm broke.

How quickly we forget how much our using cost us and all the things we were willing to do to support our daily quest for drugs.

I can't be a GSR. I really don't have the time.

How quickly we forget all the hours we spent waiting for our connection.

Maybe it's time we remember what it was like and begin to walk the way we talk. Don't wait for the Henny Pennys to do all the work for you. Raise your hand. Volunteer. Get involved.

The Editor

A LETTER TO AN OLD FRIEND

It was really good to hear from you. From the tone of your letter, however, it doesn't sound like much has worked out for you since we last spoke. And that's unfortunate. I'd really hoped *this* time you might have found the happiness you so desperately seek.

One of the things I've learned over the past couple of years is that even though we move to different places with different people doing different things we're still taking *us* with us. And that until we straighten *ourselves* out all the expectations in the world are going to result in the same sad conclusion. And that's the insanity of it all. We keep doing the same things over and over and over again, each time expecting a different result. “I'm only going to do one line this time.” “This time I'm not going to let myself be taken advantage of.” “I'm not happy here in Los Angeles. I'll move somewhere else. This time it'll be different.”

And it never is. It's like chasing that first high. It's never as good as that first time but we keep trying. We keep chasing it. We drink more, we snort more, we keep chasing the same dream, doing the same things. And then we wonder why it wasn't different *this* time.

You say your life doesn't have any meaning to it . . . when are you going to stop doing it your way and try it *our* way? Your way doesn't work. It's as simple as that. If it *was* working for you, you wouldn't be writing me the kind of letter you did . . . you wouldn't be reaching out for help. Except you still want to do it on *your* terms, by *your* rules. It doesn't work that way. You have to be willing for us to love you until you can love yourself. Stop looking at Cocaine Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous as if they're something to be ashamed of. This is *not* 1940. If you had cancer and you learned of a place where you could go that didn't cost you anything except the willingness to show up that would help you *arrest* your condition, wouldn't you go? Of course, you would. Well, alcoholism and addiction are every much the

same as cancer or diabetes or any other disease you can think of. You can't cure them but you *can* keep them under control. You *can* recover. If you want to. That's the secret. If you want to. If you want to with all you heart, more than anything else in the world.

Addiction is a disease. It's *not* a moral issue. We addicts are not “bad” people trying to be “good.” We're sick people trying to get better. That's all. No big deal. And we get better by working the 12 Steps of Recovery and finding a Sponsor and going to meetings every day and supporting each other. The two words I hear more than anything else are “me, too.” I couldn't stop using even though I knew it was killing me. Me, too. I wake up in the morning and all I want to do is stay under the covers and hide out from the rest of the world. Me, too. I don't feel as good as other people. Me, too. I always do everything wrong. Me, too. Nobody ever liked me. Me, too. I'm lonely. Me, too.

What a relief it is when we find other people who have lived their lives the way we lived ours and felt the same kind of feelings we felt. We're not alone! There are literally *millions* of people just like us. Wow! I never knew. I thought I was the only one.

We've got a disease. Break it down into two different words — “dis” and “ease” with “dis” meaning “lack of.” We lack “ease.” And so we drink and use to get out of our own skins. Anything to be anybody but *us*. Anything to be comfortable and not have to *feel*. And for a while it works. We get stoned and we escape. We live life in the fast lane where everything's exciting and fun and for a while we're *somebody*. I loved that life. You know I did. I loved sitting with you in the kitchen and doing coke and smoking joints and drinking beer. I loved being in the hot tub surrounded by naked women any time I wanted. I loved that life. Except it stopped working. I wasn't as much fun as it used to be. It was great while it was happening but it stopped being great when it ended. I just couldn't

get as high as I once did. I couldn't get as loaded. It wasn't exciting any more. And the last nine months I'd just as soon forget. I don't think I've ever been as lonely as I was then. Or depressed. Or unhappy.

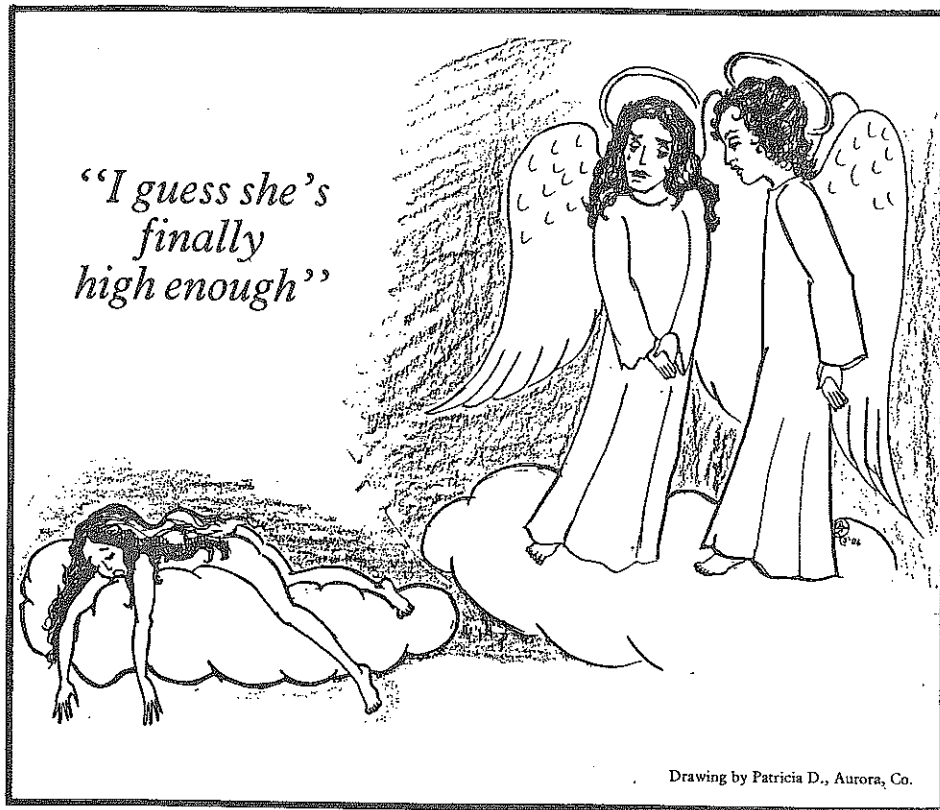
Do you know that it's been almost four years since I had a drink or did a line of cocaine? Is that a miracle or what? Funny thing is, I haven't made a dime since last June, I haven't slept with anybody since December, I have no idea where my career is headed, I haven't bought myself any toys since I don't even remember and . . . get this, I have never felt as much at peace with myself as I do now . . . I have never been as happy as I am now because it's okay. I am not my job. I am not my money. I am not my relationships. I'm *me*, and that's enough. I'm happy to be me, because that's who I am.

So, stop being paranoid and worrying about anybody seeing you go to a meeting and just go, for crying out loud. You cannot save your ass and your face at the same time!

And stop thinking we're some sort of "holy roller" outfit; CA is not a religious group. We don't sit around and worship God like they do in churches. Hell, churches could learn a lot from us! What we've got going for us is something I don't think they'll ever have. The only God I knew before I found the program was a judgmental God who rewarded me when I was good and punished me when I was bad. That's what I learned in church. Except I didn't always get rewarded when I was good and that confused me. And I didn't always get punished when I did something bad, and that made me feel guilty. Either way I felt uncomfortable, and that's the disease.

You've already taken the First Step. You've admitted that you're powerless over alcohol and all other mind-altering drugs, that your life is unmanageable. Okay. Now, let's look at the Second Step where we came to believe that only a Power Greater Than Ourselves could relieve us of our insanity. Surely, there must be *some* power somewhere in the universe that's more powerful than us. I mean, who makes the waves in the ocean? Who makes the sun come up in the morning? Who makes it rain?

How come *I* got sober and you didn't?



Drawing by Patricia D., Aurora, Co.

Am I a better person that you are? Am I stronger? Do I have more will power than you have? Did I know somebody you didn't? Forget it! I have the will power of a knat. I'm not stronger than anybody. I don't know anybody you can't get to know.

All I did was learn to *trust*, which is something you'll have to learn if you're ever going to find any sort of happiness wherever you are. I came into the program and I began to trust the group as a whole. I learned to use the group as my Higher Power, as that Power Greater than myself. After all, *they* were able to stay sober one day at a time. Maybe I could, too. Maybe I wasn't different after all. Maybe those Promises they talked about could come true for me if only I stuck around a little longer.

I love you, dear friend. You're a very special person in the life. No matter what you do, no matter where you are, I'll always love you. But you don't ever have to feel the way you do ever again. If you don't want to.

As they wrote in The Big Book, if you want what we have and are willing to go to *any* length to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps . . .

I hope you do.

Anonymous

POWERLESS!

There comes a time
In everyone's life
When we must admit
We all have some fright.

We come here for treatment
To seek some help
And the first thing we did
Was say to ourselves:

I have no power
Over drugs that I do
I only wish now
Before that I knew

The things that they hurt
Like my body and mind
Now the only answer
Is to give it some time

With the friends that I make
Which I think are just great
I hope that together
We can stay sober and straight.

Bob S., Chicago

SHE WAS AN ADDICT BEFORE SHE EVER TOOK ANY DRUGS

She always thought there was something wrong with her, that she was “different” from other people.

I think I was an addict before I ever started taking drugs. As a child, I craved candy . . . anything sweet. When I was four, I ate a bottle of orange-flavored pills the doctor had prescribed for my mother's morning sickness. I even stole her favorite mints.

I was also addicted to books — fiction. I read and read and then I fantasized. I didn't like my own life; I wanted someone else's. I wanted to be a character in one of my books where everything is happy ever after. I was not a happy child. I worried a lot. I now know that a lot of that had to do with my parents and their lack of support and nurturing. I never felt accepted. It didn't help that we moved around throughout my childhood and I was always the new kid on the block. I remember always thinking that there was something wrong with me, that I was different from other people. It became my secret.

When I finally had my first drug, I was a prime candidate for full blown addiction. The first time I smoked hash, I loved it. We were living in Paris and I was fourteen and miserable. Taking drugs was the cool thing to do and I desperately wanted to be “cool.” If I could be cool, I thought, everyone would accept me. So I smoked dope and took acid and still felt different from my peers. I tried to pretend I was one of them, but it didn't work. They knew I wasn't; worse, I knew.

My teen-age years were spent taking drugs and more drugs . . . anything that would keep me from facing myself. I didn't feel comfortable if I wasn't high. I was scared, always scared. Even the men I knew I went through like drugs. I thought they would save me. If they loved me, I thought, I could love myself.

When I was eighteen, I moved to New York and was introduced to cocaine. I

wanted to be a model, and the cocaine made me feel beautiful and powerful. In the beginning, it was fun. I was in the proverbial fast lane of city life and I thought *this is it*. This is what I've been looking for all my life. I belonged. As long as I didn't let my fear show, I was accepted. And that was easy as long as I stuffed myself with substances.

Gradually, the drugs began to assume more and more importance. I got involved with a coke dealer and our relationship became abusive and destructive. I was as addicted to him as I was to his drugs and I couldn't leave him no matter what he did to me. I lost interest in modeling. My main purpose in life, it seemed, was to get high. I had two cocaine-induced convulsions and I became skeletal, but it never occurred to me that I had a problem with drugs. There was something wrong with me and the only way I knew how to handle it was to hide it.

At times there were moments of clarity where I would see what I was doing to myself. It was in one of these moments that I finally gave up. I remember lying on my bed, thinking how my life was always going to be a constant search for coke. I was physically, emotionally and spiritually broken. I went into a rehab and spent five weeks going to meetings and learning about the program. It took another eight months before I finally surrendered.

It's been over two years since I've had a drug or a drink. Recovery has been a difficult process for me. I never expected sobriety to be as hard as it's been. Dealing with my feelings, dealing with life on life's terms are things I just never did. I use every tool I can get my hands on to help me get better. I see a therapist, go to meetings, exercise, meditate, pray, talk

to my sponsor, anything. My biggest obstacle is low self-esteem, not an uncommon affliction for addicts. I hated myself for years and it's hard changing those old tapes I've carried around so long. Often, I still feel defective, damaged, not good enough. But I'm free of all mind-altering substances and I force myself to deal with all those feelings. I work through them. I don't cover them up. Sometimes, I feel like an adolescent going through an identity crisis. In a sense I am, and that's all right.

The bottom line is that I'm clean and sober today. And, one day at a time, with the tools I now have, I'm starting to become someone I'll be able to love. To me that is the greatest gift of all.

Lisa S., Stamford, CT

LEAVING OLD TAPES BEHIND

You've probably noticed that there are several different factions working within the framework of Cocaine Anonymous. I don't consider this good or bad, right or wrong, or something out of the ordinary in an organization this size, with people of such diversified backgrounds and personalities. In fact, I believe these differences are what make the miracle of what happens in CA possible.

Not that my actions always support my beliefs! My negative attitudes, based on old tapes from past experiences, often affect my relationship with people in present situations. When this happens, my mind has already told me that what they're saying isn't valid long before he or she has finished their thought. As a result, I cheat myself from gaining the wisdom of another person's experience. And it's *my* loss, no one else's!

If this continues over a period of time, I will become as one-dimensional in my recovery as I was in my addiction, so I must try to remind myself when I get into this “IT HAS TO BE MY WAY” attitude, that my way never ever worked!

Have I forgotten that I'm here today only through God's grace and the love you people have given me?

Throughout my recovery, it seems, I

have always maintained an attitude of "open-mindedness," just so long as you would do what I wanted you to do, or at least did it the way I thought it should be done. If my point of view wasn't accepted, it seemed natural to point my finger at you behind your back, or just not show up. *But that's what I've done all my life!* Removing the drugs and alcohol certainly hasn't interfered with my ability to be immature and overly sensitive, when maturity and understanding were what was really called for.

Isn't it ironic how we travel in our little groups and take inventories of the people who had the willingness and courage to show up when asked to? These are the very same people who, in their willingness to serve, make decisions concerning CA. Not necessarily out of a desire to be a decision-maker, but simply because decisions need to be made. And then if someone turns out to be instrumental in making decisions, they're called controllers!

This is familiar territory to me; I spent my whole life on the sidelines always ready to point my finger at the risk-takers.

I don't consider this issue of "controlling" to be totally accurate. I've learned to look beneath the surface and see how my responsibility or lack of responsibility was a significant factor. I believe "controllers" can only control if we allow them to, that we let them by not showing up when the majority has the opportunity to speak out. If I allow my resentments, my fears, my negative tapes to stop me from participating in the present, then I've surrendered my chance to have a voice in the future!

We are all in this together. My sobriety is dependent upon your sobriety. My serenity is dependent on how well I learn to work with you. Which means I must learn to respect your right to express your opinions whether I agree with them or not.

My recovery began when the concepts of Honesty, Willingness and Open-mindedness were first introduced to me as a way of life for me to work toward. Today, I believe that if I continue to progress in that direction, *one day at a time*, my emotional sobriety can be more than I ever dreamed it could be!

Mike K., Chicago

"WHY NOT TRY CRACK?" - LAST WORDS HE RECALLS

Diagnosed as a hopeless schizophrenic, this young musician finally surrendered and got clean and sober

I was born into a middle-class family on the upper west side of Manhattan. All of my family are artists: my father is a writer, my mother is a dress designer, my brother and I are musicians, and my sister is a commercial artist and a writer.

I started doing drugs in my freshman year of high school. A friend gave me a joint to take home and try out. I was addicted immediately, and reefer became my drug-of-choice for the next ten years. I also took incredible amounts of hallucinogens and pills. I never did my homework. I just got stoned. Pot became my friend, my lover, and my job.

When I graduated from high school, I joined my brother's band and signed a recording contract. For the next four years I spent most of my time on the road and in recording studios. We toured throughout Europe (in particular France, where we had a good following) and across the States.

I loved the lifestyle. I loved going to all those different cities across the globe and staying high. It was great. Of course, I had no idea at the time what the future held for me.

The problem with my life at that point was that we'd work our butts off for six months at a time, then do hardly anything for the next six months. My drug usage became rampant when I had all that free time — I smoked tons of reefer — and the next thing I knew I was using heroin. I was too aware of the dangers of heroin to let myself become a full-fledged junkie, however, and I began using mescaline to kick the heroin. For some strange reason, it worked and I kicked the habit. I still smoked a lot of pot because, hey, it isn't addictive, right?

During all this time, I never got into Cocaine. I'd sniffed a few lines every now and then but I didn't feel anything; I

thought coke was an over-hyped, expensive waste of time.

Then one day I went to a friend's house to smoke some reefer. While I was there a friend of his arrived, and he was moving at the speed of light. Both of them knew what was going on. I didn't. What was happening was that he was cooking up a batch of freebase. When the pipe came to me I was instructed to "draw in slowly and deeply. Hold your breath for as long as you can, then exhale."

"Can I have another hit?" were my first words when I could finally speak.

The following year was pure insanity. I just shuttled between my friend's house and a coke dealer I knew from high school. Also, one of my favorite rock clubs in New York was a major coke spot, so I made friends with the dealers there. I was usually broke, though, so I had to wangle my way into getting credit. Pretty soon, I'd exhausted all my resources. That brought me to my first bottom. There was no way around it. I had a confess to my parents I owed a coke dealer seven hundred dollars. They paid off the debt, but only on the condition that I seek help.

I remembered hearing about Cocaine Anonymous somewhere, so I told them that I'd join the program. I told them I'd go to meetings every Friday night. But I wasn't ready to give up basing just yet. It was too damn good.

That summer, I barricaded myself in the living room and went completely crazy. I began to hallucinate even though the only drugs in my system were just marijuana and alcohol. I started hurling things from our twelfth-floor window. One object, a large cactus on a metal stand, went through a car roof. I could have killed somebody!

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RELAPSE IS A REALITY

Relapse is one of the most frightening and mysterious realities of our disease. The need to go back for more, despite the pain and consequences we will certainly encounter. Everyone recovering from an addiction is prone to relapse, regardless of the length of time one has remained chemical-free. Only 40% of recovering addicts continue long term recovery, leaving the remaining 60% to die a slow death. How frightening it is to see a recovering addict with a number of years clean and sober return to the nightmare he left behind. Not at all logical, but addiction has no logic, no compassion. It doesn't care. What it has is power. A power beyond our control.

It took five years of continual relapsing for me to really understand just how powerful my disease was. I never really took my addiction or its recovery as seriously, I later learned, as I should have. When I felt I could no longer cope with the feelings I was experiencing, which seemed to roll like a rollercoaster, I would give in to my compulsion. That was the way I *always* handled my feelings . . . I just wanted to be numb.

"I can always get back on track again," I thought, and for a long time it worked. For five years I continued like this and always managed to get back to the program. Of course, each time it got a little more difficult. This care-free attitude of mine almost cost me the gift God so freely gave me back each time . . . a fresh start and the program. Need I tell you of the day that came when I almost didn't make it back? I was living a nightmare, unable to return to the happiness and freedom God had given me so freely before. I was desperately trying to grab life again, as if I were drowning, and reaching for a hand that was fractions of an inch away; yet, with all the strength I could muster, I just could not reach the extended hand.

It was my Higher Power, a power far greater than myself, that saved me.

I will never forget that last day of my last relapse. I had been on a coke and

drinking binge for a week. I had slept a total of 15 hours the entire week. My body was so weak I could barely move. It took all the strength I had to get up and just get a glass of water. I lay on the couch, very sick, thinking of ways to end my life, to end this living nightmare. I had sweat pouring off my body, I was trembling, my nose was running. I had a 104-degree fever. I should have been in the hospital but I didn't have the strength to drive myself there and I was too ashamed to call anyone for help. *No more coke*, my body was telling me. *No more abuse. Please!* Drinking liquids and soaking in a tub of cold water, I managed to bring my fever down enough to sleep some of the night. In the morning, I looked in the mirror. What a sad, sad sight I saw. Talk about incomprehensible demoralization! I looked like hell! Pitiful is probably a better term. I began to cry aloud, desperate, asking God to please, please help me; I can not do this on my own. I want to live. *Help me stop!*

I went to the hospital that day. A few days later I was well enough to go back to a C.A. meeting. This time I had a different attitude. Days before I had wanted to die. Now, I was being given another chance. I knew C.A., A.A., and God were my only hope.

This time I *wanted* to be there. No one had to drop me off for this one. I honestly thought I'd never return to C.A. or A.A. Those five years of relapses were all worth the nightmare I lived for they gave me back both my life and a serious attitude toward my disease and its power. It was a lesson I had to learn the hard way, as I've had to learn virtually all my lessons.

If you are clean and sober now and wish to continue to recover, take recovery seriously. You have a gift. A God given gift. Don't return that gift because you just may not get it back. Is it really worth the risk? Think everything through before you pick up that fix, line, pill, or drink. It could very well cost you your life.

I have almost two years clean and sober now, the longest time I have ever had chemical-free. I treasure my sobriety and work hard to maintain it. I will not give this gift back to God again. I may not get it back.

Sue M., Orange, CA

LAST WORDS continued from page 5

That's when the cops were called. They surrounded the building and inflated air bags in case I decided to jump out the window. Finally, they broke into the apartment and took me away to a hospital in a strait jacket. There I was chained to a bed and shot up with a couple of hundred milligrams of Thorazine. They diagnosed me as schizophrenic.

With the help of psychiatry and Thorazine (which, I believe, has gotten a bum rap. Thorazine to schizophrenics is like insulin to a diabetic) schizophrenia can be controlled. After a couple of weeks of treatment, I was released from the hospital. When I got home, I thought to myself, "Well, I'm doing better now. I'm not walking around like a zombie. I'm not crying at every turn. *Why not try some crack?*"

Crack brought me to my knees faster and harder than any of my previous freebasing escapades. It was cheaper to buy and I could get it just around the corner. Crack utterly destroyed me. I had become a master liar, thief, a con-man. I lost it completely.

Then one day, when I was crashing after smoking ten or fifteen cracks, I had what I've come to believe was my Moment of Clarity. If I want to stop all this madness, I concluded, there is only one way to do it: Cocaine Anonymous. After all, drug addiction is an incurable illness and yet, here were people who were living life without drugs for days, for months, for years.

There were no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I decided to make my first *real* commitment to CA. I knew I had to go to meetings if I didn't want to die. And so I went.

I have a job in an office now and a recording contract pending, and I'm constantly surrounded by good friends.

I cannot say enough good things about Cocaine Anonymous and the people I've met there. CA is the light at the end of a ten-year-long tunnel of misery. Of course, all of the Twelve Steps are important to me, but I like the Third Step best. Turning it over. Knowing that there is a Higher Power I can turn my problems over to. That sure beats any drug I ever took.

Oliver, New York

the coke and feel halfway normal. My entry was always filled with paranoia. Most of the time I was trying to hide a bloody nose. I don't know why no one noticed my constant case of the sniffles. Frequently, I went to the ladies room to make sure I looked okay or to do a little coke if I had any. It never made me feel good, but I couldn't help thinking it might be different this time. In the stall, I pulled the bottle out of my front Levi pocket and snorted a little pile out of the spoon, flushing the toilet at the same time so no one would hear the "sniff" sound.

My boyfriend, Mark, sold coke so there was usually some around. At first he gave it to me, but when he saw how much I consumed he started to sell it to me wholesale. Sometimes he ran out, and when he did I phoned everyone I knew who might possibly be able to sell it to me. Once I even drove a hundred miles to buy some.

Things started to get worse. I couldn't do any art without cocaine. I woke up each morning around 6 a.m. with one thought on my mind. *Cocaine*. My art was slowly becoming soulless. I was only executing ideas I'd thought of months before. I wasn't even living to experience anything I might want to express. My only experiences revolved around white lines, pursuing them, doing them, and suffering after there were no more. I spent a lot of energy keeping my friends at a distance so they wouldn't guess what I was doing. That was one of the things I felt worse about later

I finally told everything to my friend, Annie, over the phone, between rivers of tears. She understood. She didn't make me feel guilty. She understood how hard it would be for me to quit, especially with a boyfriend who dealt cocaine. She also understood the allure of the drug, since she had used it herself at one time.

That phone call was a turning point. I needed so badly to come out with my terrible secret. Just knowing Annie was there helped me even if I didn't call her. All I had to do was think of her and the things she told me and I felt stronger.

She advised me to supplant sex, food, running, whatever it took for cocaine.

She told me not to get down on myself.

I also used cocaine hotlines. One counselor, Andy, helped me through several crises. Once in the early stages of abstinence, I called him after doing a line early in the day. *I couldn't understand how just one line had completely swept my sanity away!* I was sobbing, mystified at the effects of a tiny amount of this alien white stuff.

Andy set me straight, pointing out how powerful it was . . . that for me, total abstinence was the only course.

My intentions were the best. But I still had about two months of vacillation between being clean and backsliding ahead of me. That vacillation was very painful. Each time I did coke, the feelings of guilt were so potent that it took me days to get the good strong feeling back again.

One minute I felt good. The next minute an irrational, addictive desire for cocaine came over me. Nothing could touch that desire. When it hit, it was much stronger than all the honorable, good, strong feelings of abstinence. It took all the strength I could muster to get past those urges. I didn't want to call a friend for support because I wanted to call other people to score.

All I did during the first few months was dance, run, eat, go to work and talk to my friends. By that time I had told several more people so I started to develop a wonderful support network. I knew if I did any more coke I would fail my friends as well as myself.

Finally, I decided to attend a Cocaine Anonymous meeting, where I met different kinds of people and marveled at the fact that they were all there for the same problem as I was. A sweet, wholesome young man read Chapter 5 devotionally, as if we were in church. The main speaker was a hairdresser from a fancy section of the city. She told the story of her childhood, of being a spoiled brat and missing love from her family, having things but not enough love, then getting involved with coke and alcohol. Her partner in the hairdressing business just happened to be a dealer, who extended her \$6,000 worth of credit.

Later, a young black woman shared about the program. She was trim, very black, very street-looking. She sat

straight forward with her legs apart and her chest high. She looked wild and unafraid. It was quite a contrast to see this streetwise young woman talking about God and sobriety and abstinence, making jokes about about her prostitution and the 11 times she tried to kill herself but damn! she just kept smiling. Already I felt stronger. I began to remember the pleasures of being myself, of being heartfully lucid, free and healthy. I may be cursed with being emotional, but that's a lot easier to handle and cosmically justify that the nightmarish coldness and fear that accompanies cocaine.

I now enjoy relaxing on the beach, having meals with friends, massages, long talks on the phone, things I'd cut out of my life.

I just finished my first cocaine-free drawing in over a year, a pastel of dancers in a rock and roll club. At first I was full of fear. Little by little I'm beginning to believe in myself as an artist again.

I'm starting to feel rich inside, more like my old self. I have a great feeling that there are more and more resources inside of me.

When I was doing cocaine this rich, full feeling was almost completely gone. What an insidious acid to eat up something that wonderful without my realizing . . . leaving me without this inner wealth . . . as a drug addict.

And that's the story of my addiction to cocaine and how I came out of it, with the help of a program of recovery and some wonderful friends

Tanya W., Oakland, CA

The Connection needs your help! We need your letters and your news items and your cartoons and, most important, your stories of recovery for our newsletter. send all written material, typed and double-spaced, to The Editor, c/o The Connection, Cocaine Anonymous, P.O. Box 1367, Culver City, CA 90232. Your anonymity will be respected. Only your first name and the initial of your last name, along with your city and state, will be used in conjunction with your contribution. And don't forget to subscribe. We need the money.

WORD SEARCH

CONVENTION continued from page 1

Circle the words listed below in the diagram and find the hidden message with the unused letters.

1. ADDICTION
2. ALCOHOLIC
3. ALONE
4. ANONYMOUS
5. BIG BOOK
6. BILL W.
7. BIRTHDAY
8. BOOZE
9. CLEAN
10. COCAINE
11. COFFEE
12. COMMITMENT
13. COURAGE
14. DETOX
15. DR. BOB
16. DRUG ADDICT
17. FAITH
18. FEAR
19. FREE
20. GOD
21. HIGHER POWER
22. HOPE

ALCOHOLIC D O N Y M T T
 D C O C A I N E N O L A O R R C
 I N M F P R A Y E R D D L A E I
 M Y M R K S E L F H S O D R W D
 E T I **E V O L** U T I S I T S O D
 D S T E E O C R W N T N I E P A
 I E M E E T I N G I E V M X R G
 T N E S O B E R O D P E E O E U
 A O N A Y G A N L K S N R T H R
 T H T I A F S L T O N T S E G D
 I A T R E P I I T O E O C D I Y
 O M U A O W L L I B W R O N H T
 N O R N Y E T T E G C Y F I S I
 C A S H B N C N R I O D F M H L
 E E T O E I A P D B M S E N A I
 R Y O S D D O L I F E E E E R M
 S Z E D R B O B I L R H O P E U
 E R A N O N Y M O U S T D O G H

23. HONESTY
24. HUMILITY
25. INVENTORY
26. LIFE
27. LOVE
28. MEDITATION
29. MEETING
30. NEWCOMER
31. OLDTIMERS
32. OPENMIND
33. PRAYER
34. RESENT
35. SELF
36. SHARE
37. SLIP
38. SOBER
39. SPONSOR
40. STEPS
41. THY WILL
42. TIRED
43. TRADITIONS
44. WISDOM

Eileen L., Los Angeles

- 12:00 Noon Young People
Chris S., Larkspur
- 12:30 p.m. Adult Children Addicts
Peter F., So. San Francisco
Mimi F., San Francisco
- 12:30 p.m. 4th Step Workshop
Rich M., Oakland
- 1:30 p.m. Lesbian & Gay Meeting
Skip B., San Francisco
- 2:15 p.m. 9th Step Workshop
Bob C., Deer Park
- 3:30 p.m. Relationship Workshop
Robin G., San Rafael
Ken M., San Rafael
Betty W.P., Fairfax
Fenn P., Fairfax
- 3:45 p.m. Service Workshop
Lucy S., San Francisco
Bob L., San Francisco
Jim V., So. San Francisco
- 4:00 p.m. Fun in Sobriety
Tony M., Beverly Hills
Lisa M., San Francisco
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner Banquet
- 8:15 p.m. Main Speaker
Randy C., Sausalito
- 10:30 p.m. Dance
Live Disk Jockey

On Sunday, July 5, scheduled events conclude with:

- 9:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 10:00 a.m. Spiritual Meeting
Tomi S., Emeryville
- 11:00 a.m. Closing Ceremonies

In addition, there will be a 48-hour Marathon Meeting 'round the clock.

Check one:

- \$10 1 Year Subscription \$25 3 Year Subscription
 \$20 2 Year Subscription \$100 Lifetime Subscription

Make all checks or money orders payable to Cocaine Anonymous, World Services and mail to Cocaine Anonymous, CA Connection Newsletter, P.O. Box 1367, Culver City, CA 90232. Your newsletter will be mailed to you in a sealed envelope to protect your anonymity. All contributions are tax-deductible.

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