

THE CONNECTION

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Vol. three

EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE WORLDWIDE
OF AND BY THE MEMBERSHIP OF COCAINE ANONYMOUS

Fall 1988

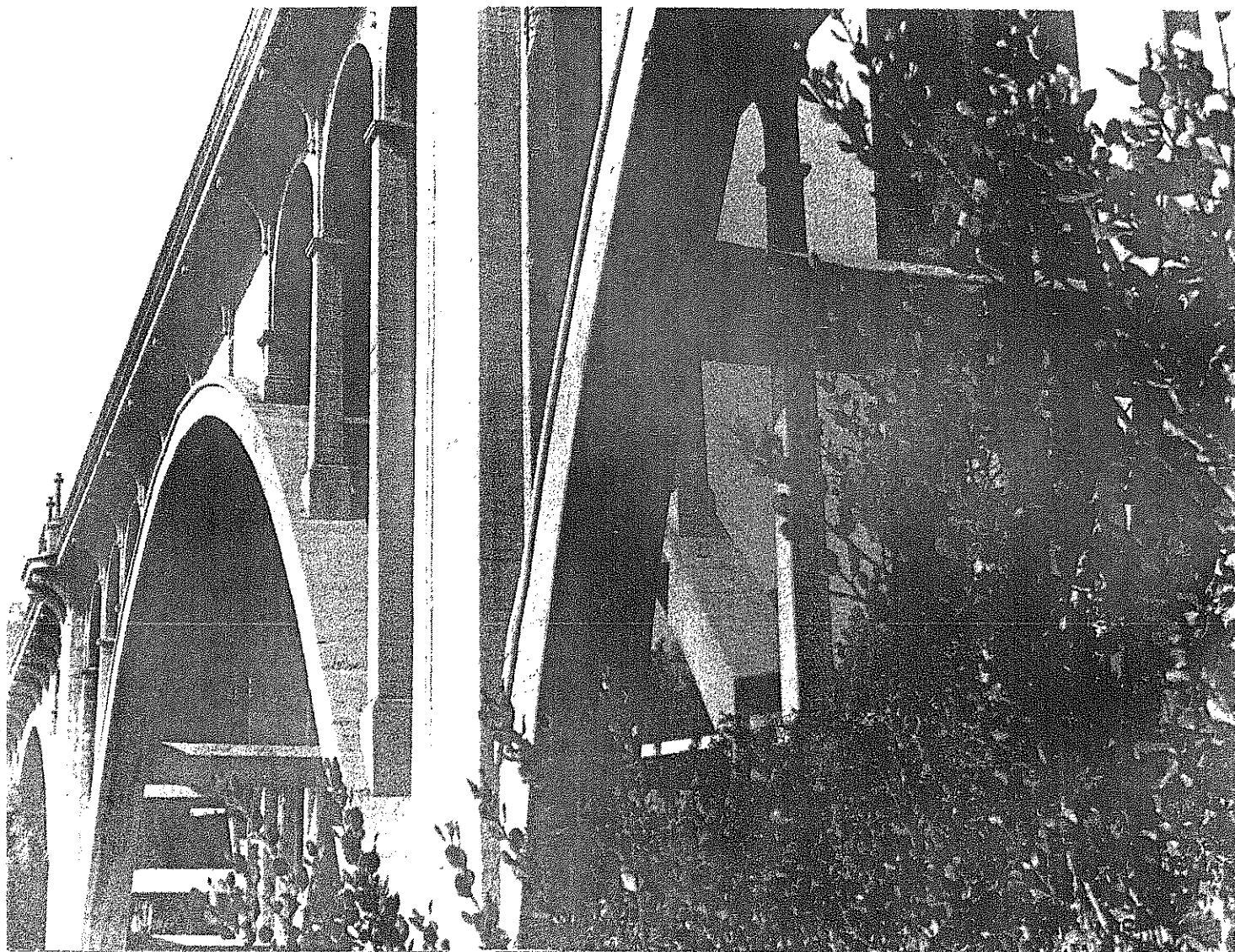


Photo by S.M., Pasadena, CA

SURRENDER

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From the Editor. . . .

Hi again, I'm still Susie and still acting as Editor of The Connection (and proud to be of service). Two issues in a row. So far, so good.

I would like to apologize for the fact that most of this issue of Cocaine Anonymous World Service's nationwide magazine is from submissions from California, Southern California, particularly the San Gabriel Valley. This is where I live, and as anyone in this area can tell you, I am constantly taking up meeting time announcing The Connection's need for submission material. I simply had very few submissions from elsewhere to use.

I am hoping that submissions from across the nation (and from other countries) will come pouring in once The Connection starts really filtering its way into all the meetings. Hear that Chicago? New York? Arizona? San Francisco? Canada? Everyone? I want to be using your stuff!!!!



I need stories, poems, letters, quotes. Next issue is on "To the Newcomer," and the following issue is on "A New Life." But really I'll accept anything you write.

I also need black and white photos or drawings for the covers, and cartoons or graphics are welcome additions too.



If nothing else, announce The Connection in your meetings, and if you don't see it there, turn your literature person on to an order form.

I love you all. See ya next issue.

SURRENDER IS ACTION

Someone asked me if I could write something on surrender and I immediately thought, "no I won't. I don't know anything about it. What I think isn't important anyway, get someone who has more time than me, etc."

But I kept thinking you shouldn't turn down a twelve step request, and, after a bit, I surrendered, and I began writing what you are reading now. And that is my entire point: the moment you surrender your will, your Higher Power puts an action for you to take in your path.

Most often people think that when you surrender you cease action, you stop doing whatever you were doing, you become passive, you quit. But the truth is we actually do just the opposite. Once you surrender you go into action.

For example, what about the people you see around you who, in your eyes, really do a good job working their program and seem to have a little serenity? They have surrendered their will but does that mean they sit at home, watch T.V.? No way! They take action. They go to meetings; they get a sponsor and sponsor others; they spend time reading the big book; they work the

steps; they make friends in the program and actually call them; they accept commitments.

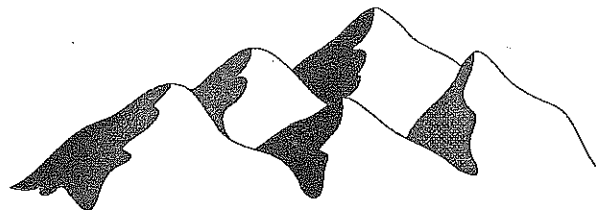
When you surrender you're giving your higher power responsibility for the results, good or bad, but to see positive results you have to be willing and ready to do the footwork.

If you have something you need to let go of, look and see if you are ignoring or overlooking the footwork that, often, is right in front of you. It works for me when I choose to do the footwork.

My personal experience has shown me that as messed up as drug addicts and alcoholics can be, we are definitely not passive people. The idea of rolling over and playing dead really doesn't appeal to our nature. Perhaps that's where some of us have had problems with surrendering, whether it be our addictions, our wills, or our character defects, because we think surrender is a passive action. I don't think it is, so remember:

When you surrender you go into action!

R. K.
South Pasadena, CA



Sunday Mountain Meeting

Like a weekly Sunday ritual I watch the people gather on the mountaintop in celebration of another day of life. Warm smiles are exchanged in gratitude for the common bond they share, tying them to a lifetime of friendships.

There is laughter despite the deadly earnestness of their malady. Like children, they play in glory from the miracles of saved lives and restored sanity.

Silence settles to hear the hearts of others share their experience, strength and hope. They risk exposing their innermost fears. Compassion and understanding fills their faces.

Beams of sunlight glisten through the mass of trees. In their words I hear the

voice of God connecting with love souls of their being. Some share their pain, others their joy., Uncovering the love that has been buried for so long, they know a new freedom and happiness. There are no regrets, for a lifetime of wreckage has been cleared.

I see broken relationships resolving. From the healing of pained hearts, weakened souls and changed attitudes serenity flows. Grateful to be part of this magnificent fellowship they gather and join hands in a circle. The power of their love, the spirit of their hope will carry them through until they meet again.

D.C.
Monrovia, CA

HE WAS ONE OF US

There he was, so many tubes running through his body, hooked up to equipment I can't even name. I told the young intern in charge that Chuck had been doing cocaine and drinking most of his life, but more so in recent months. I was hoping, in vain, that the truth would help the doctors to make him well but the doctor was not at all optimistic about Chuck's chances.

It all happened suddenly. It wasn't an overdose or anything so dramatic. No seizure or "fishtailing" on the floor. Chuck simply caught a cold one day that didn't go away.

It was four days after my 25th birthday. I was hung over from a week of excessive partying when the telephone call came. Chuck was admitted to Cedars Sinai ICU unit with pneumococcal pneumonia and something called endocarditis (inflammation of the heart lining- caused by, in layman's terms, ingestion of too many drugs). I rushed over to the hospital just in time to see Chuck before he lost consciousness. As he spoke to me, he began to slip away mentally. He no longer knew who or where he was, and fell to the floor before me unconscious. There, seven days of pain and desperation began.

I was afraid for me and more for him. I had no idea how to get through this. My solution, as with any addict was to get loaded throughout the whole ordeal, so, while Chuck was upstairs dying, that is exactly what I did. Chuck's end became my bottom.

Chuck died on November 10, 1985 at 06:00 as a result of drugs and alcohol, it was our 5th wedding anniversary. Chuck was thirty years old.

I was so out of touch with my emo-

Chuck's end became my bottom.

tions that I wasn't able to cry or allow myself to feel any of the pain. And for nine months I was off and running out of my mind. I smoked crack every day and began to loose myself, my interest in the world around me, and, eventually, nearly my life. It all caught up with me and I landed in the very same hospital where Chuck had died. I could no longer run and hide, as the reality of the direction and course of my life became painfully clear.

Two days later I checked into a rehab for a "rest," not intending to get off drugs. I thought I was crazy and so I checked into the "mental health care" unit. A day later I was told that in fact I wasn't nuts but that I did have a serious drug problem. What a concept! It had never occurred to me before. I had always believed that drugs were simply a way of life, and so wheels began to turn. On the advice of the doctors, I was moved to the chemical dependency unit, where I was introduced to the twelve steps and twelve traditions of Cocaine Anonymous.

I knew all too well that I had no choice but to learn to live sober or to die...a painful reality for me. At first, I believed that the meetings and "God" stood squarely in my way, and that I could not be sober if I needed "God" or the meetings. However, the meetings were a requirement of my hospital program and I had to go. I remember walking into my first meeting believing I didn't need to be there, but once there something unbelievable happened to me. It was like there was something in the air, an aura of love and hope, and I heard my story as the speaker began to tell her own story. I knew at once that I was on my way home.

As for God, eventually a real understanding of his presence in my life has come to bloom. At first, however, I just couldn't accept the notion. People told me to 'act as if' and to find something, anything, that was greater than myself. In the beginning, nature was the catalyst to my understanding of God. For a long time I called my Higher Power 'G'ardens 'O'ver 'D'irt, as I believed nature to be a great power. Today my understanding of God has developed well beyond just nature and we've actually become good friends. I believe that through my understanding of a Higher Power, through praying, and through those meetings (which I now love), it is my privilege to be alive, my privilege to be of service, and my joy to be sober.

Sobriety, for me today, however, is so much more than just not drinking and drugging. Sobriety is the promises touching my life and the love I awakened to. When Chuck died, I believed that a part of me died too. I felt no love, no hope and no reason to be on this earth. Today that is not my reality. Today I am alive in my soul, in my heart and in spirit. Today I live a full life ever mindful that this short time we have is



so precious, so easy to take for granted. Today I practice the principles and steps of this great program to the best of my ability and find rewards in doing so. Today I have the gift of love and the capacity to love others. My life has its ups and downs, mostly these days it is in between. I don't have to live in the ex-

Today I believe that Chuck died so I could live.

tremes any longer. Centered is good. Today I pray, not for things, but for inner gifts, and my prayers are always answered.

Today I believe that Chuck died so I could live. I believe his soul is with me in this journey, giving me hope and strength. I know he'd smile for me if he could, and so instead I smile for him.

Today not a day goes by where I don't think of Chuck and say to myself "I made it...one more day."

K.M.

Los Angeles, CA

QUOTABLES

Surrender continues into sobriety. Whenever I do anything obsessively, I bottom out and must surrender.

Surrender is giving up control (we're powerless remember?). When I give up trying to control people, places and situations I can accept whatever life has in store for me.

When every other door is closed and I feel I have to get out, then I'll try the door of surrender.

CHECKING IN ON:

"SURRENDER"

As I look back on my life my memories of it brings me to the realization that it has been a process, a learning process, allowing me to surrender my life to a power greater than myself. I call this higher power God. Many times in the past I would consciously push God out of my life to pursue my own worldly desires. When I was finally tired of running in the fast lane I could not allow God to come into my life because of the guilt created from my running anyway and operating on self-will. It was a circular nightmare caused by the denial of my addiction and my 'self.' It was not until this denial was broken that I could finally surrender. Throwing myself into an empty void doesn't really appeal to me today. A caring and loving God is patiently waiting for each of us to surrender our lives to him--serenity will follow.

M.L.O.
Monrovia, CA

I never could give up, give in or say uncle. I have to be beat up and hurting before I even think about it.

I went horseback riding at one of those rent-a-horse places. I picked the prettiest horse. Damn, if when I got on it that horse started acting really upset. I rode it a while on the trail, and the whole time it was bucking and acting weird. The horse threw me three times before I was willing to go back to the stables to get another one. I was dirty and bruised up.

I had finally surrendered. I just couldn't handle that horse no matter what.

Same way with my drinking and drugs. No different. I didn't want to give them up, not really, not the first time around. I had to go get another whipping before I was ready to surrender.

I'm very self-willed still, but now I've joined the winning side. I self-will myself to go to meetings no matter what, to be of service no matter what, to read the Big Book no matter what, to do the steps, to listen to my sponsor, and to make phone calls no matter what.

Every day I surrender to things I can't change, and do the things I can. I don't do this alone. I do this with the fellowship of C.A. (and A.A.) and my Higher Power. And I feel good most of the time!

C.M.
Monrovia, CA

DO IT ANYWAY

(paraphrased from something heard at a meeting)

People will sometimes disappoint you; don't disappoint them anyway.

People will frown; smile anyway.

People will not be on time; be on time anyway.

People will not take responsibility for their actions; be responsible anyway.

People will lie; be honest anyway.

People will try to provoke you to anger or to fight; be at peace anyway.

People will use your good nature against you; be good-natured anyway.

People will hurt those they love; love anyway.

People will shirk their share of work; do your work anyway.

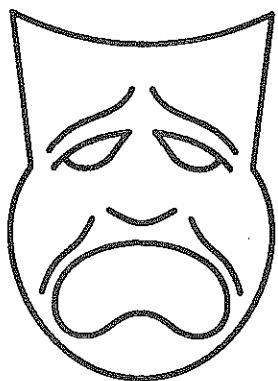
People will not always respond to kindness with kindness; be kind anyway.

People will not always be courteous; be courteous anyway.

People will kill and maim and hurt others; refrain from hurting anyway.

People will wallow in their problems; live in your solutions anyway.

People will use drugs and drink; don't drink or use anyway.



MY STORY...



My guts ached. I mean really ached. I hated it. I was laying in bed and the sun was coming up (again). I tried to close my eyes, but without even realizing it, they would be open again, staring vacantly at the light creeping through the blinds. "Please God, just let this end. I can't keep doing this. I can't stand this anymore. Let me die..." In my aching guts I knew I would it would never end. I knew I would be at it again, tomorrow, in a few days, maybe a week.

I never planned on becoming an addict. I had dreams like any other kid. I wanted to be something, maybe a writer. But it had all fallen apart. It was now just a distant dream I had, you know? Being normal, happy. Not living this miserable life, copping drugs, holing up in my house, my hands shaking as I raise the pipe to my mouth to desperately try to find that long-gone magic one more time, the misery of the paranoia, the heart-wrenching coming down. I hated it, but I knew I couldn't stop. Part of me didn't even want to.

I couldn't surrender. To this day I don't recall anything special about that last night before I called for help. It came after a particularly gruelling holiday season. I just picked up the phone one painful morning. I went to a meeting, and my secret could not be held in anymore (no one ever saw me when I really used-- I couldn't speak, I

I knew I couldn't stop. Part of me didn't even want to.

couldn't deal with being around anyone when I used). I cried. Maybe I cried because I found hope. Maybe because I thought there was no hope for me. But I did not leave. My surrender, then, was gradual, in stages. I was in excruciating emotional and spiritual pain; I came to the program; I did not use cocaine from that day forward. Later I gave up alcohol and the other drugs.

It is hard on me to remember those painful days and nights. I can't believe I lived that dismal existence for so long. Sometimes I get filled with regret that I wasted so much time. That I spent so many years living for the next hit, missing any chance for happy life. But my time out there was not too long; it was just exactly as long as it took for me to surrender. If I had come in one day sooner maybe I wouldn't have stayed.

I had to surrender alot in the first year. My whole identity was wrapped around getting high, partying, being 'cool.' I had started at thirteen. I had bought the first issue of High Times magazine. I had worn a marijuana leaf pin on my levi jacket through high school. But at twenty-six, I had to remember, I was drinking massively (doing deplorable things behind alcohol, but that's another story), scoring coke, and locking myself up in my house, hands trembling as I fixed up my pipe, and proceeded to become the monster of an addict which was the core of my entire existence. I had been living like a down and out drug addict for years, but it was still hard to let go of that 'cool' identity. I had nothing to replace it with. I had no idea how to live any other way.

When the pain gets great enough, I surrender and allow the changes to occur. That's how I got to the program, that's how I have dealt with problems and progress since. At thirty days around the program I realized I could not have 'sobriety' unless I quit doing all drugs. At thirty days of sobriety I accepted a commitment in a meeting. At six months I got a sponsor and began working the steps. But just to show how sick I really was, I confess that it was not until I had one year of sobriety that I realized that I could no longer work in a bar (it was torture). What a concept!

What a strange and wonderful thing life is clean and sober! It is full of adventure and mystery. There is frustration and joy. There is so much to do. Today I choose life. I choose to live! I no longer

lock myself away and live in shadows (crawling around on the carpet looking for non-existent bits of cocaine). I am no longer afraid. Today I have a Higher Power, and faith that he will take me through anything that happens, and that my life is only as good or bad as I want to perceive it. I am responsible. I can handle it.

I see sunrises now from the other side (getting up early, not staying up too, too late). I appreciate my family (I could not tolerate them when I was using). I have wonderful friends; the loneliness which I denied (who wants to share the drugs anyway?) is gone. I am learning to love (there is a beautiful person in my life today!). It is good to have the freedom not to use or drink.

If I sound corny or enthusiastic, it's

I no longer lock myself away and live in shadows (crawling around on the carpet looking for non-existent bits of cocaine)

because I am! I have been lifted from the very depths, the deepest pit. I have been given new life. I am willing to do the (so very) little this program asks, and in return I have happiness and freedom. What a deal! Life is in session. I am suited up and willing to participate. I have an instruction manual (the Big Book), and I am surrounded by supporters. Incidentally, I write now. I'm not famous or even very successful at it, but I am doing it. And I'm not giving up on that dream.

One thousand, three hundred, and fifteen days sober (today) and grateful. Thanks for letting me share.

S.S.
Arcadia, CA

POETRY

SPOTS

These are laundry days.
I'm cleaning up my dirty little ways.

Scrub, scrub, scrub that face
Till something clean, clean takes its ugly place.

Sort out the stainless parts to stay,
Throw out the worst parts or cut them away.

Kiss good-bye besmearing ways,
Stay inside on rainy days.

I wonder why I thought one stain
Would ruin, ruin the whole damn thing!

S.M.
Pasadena, CA

Cocaine, cocaine, oh, what a wicked thing!
Cocaine, cocaine, you use it once,
And soon you'll know it's pain!
You think you paid for it with money
But the price is much higher, honey...
You try to forget the past,
But when using, the time went by so fast.
And the highs never last...
Cocaine, cocaine, it took you to the dance
And it had a ball,
Left you standing against the wall,
Crying, feeling very small.
Cocaine, cocaine, it's not your friend
After all.

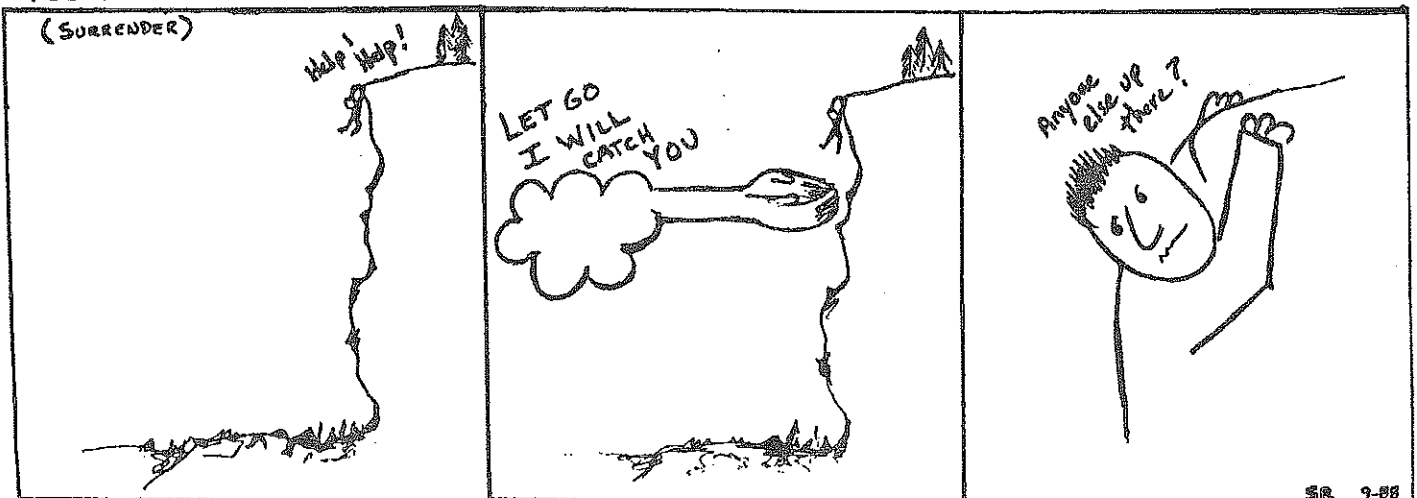
J.C.
Milwaukee, WI

He's chipping away at me,
Like some artist at his stone.
Knocking off pieces of me!
(or so I think)
Here a chunk of strife I will not miss,
but there! A part of me I cannot risk!
I need that for my life!
Then with that ambition or pride or lust is gone
I see that it was not part of me,
Just attached, that's all.
(Though when along the way it was ajoined
I don't recall)
And as these things are chipped off
One by one
I find beneath the 'coutrements
Someone I knew not,
Not at all.
And I am pleased each time.
Why can't I believe
That God is not taking
Just revealing to me.

S.M.
Pasadena, CA

TOO SOBER

(SURRENDER)



SR 9-88

QUOTES

When you think about surrender, think about the Japanese and the Germans. They surrendered, and now they prosper.

Surrender is not quitting, it's joining the winners.

Surrender is letting go of something that is no longer working. Faith is believing it will be replaced by something that will.

Mine was a gradual surrender. I let go in stages. First the coke, then the alcohol, last the pot.

**WINTER EDITION'S THEME
"TO THE NEWCOMER",
SPRING'S EDITION
"A NEW LIFE"**

Please send your stories, letters, poems, and quotes to:

**The Connection
P.O. Box 1367
Culver City, CA 90232**

For Myself (My Pledge)

I will live for today,
Start out fresh and true.
I won't worry about tomorrow
For today, do what I must do.

I won't worry about the past,
But utilize it if I must
To help my fellow addicts
Gain their needed trust.

I will attend weekly meetings,
Continuing to learn and grow,
Taking it by the minute or hour
It does not matter how slow.

From all varieties of drugs
I will continue to abstain;
I will keep searching my soul
My sobriety I'll maintain.

I will find me a sponsor
Who has been where I've been,
With honesty and sincerity
One on which I can depend.

I will give my support
To those fighting on my side.
I won't cherish false hope,
I'll let God be my guide.

I will walk a straight line
I won't go where I once went;
I will live a new way of life
Where my time is well spent.

I will work on my twelve steps,
Taking care of commitments

I'll stop blaming someone else,
And I won't hold resentments.

I'll worship (my) God every day,
This is something I must do,
Give control to my Higher Power,
I have faith, he'll see me through.

I will try to help my family,
And to assist all my friends;
If they do not want my help
I will leave it in God's hands.

I'll respect all the children
Help them learn and go far.
Teach them to be themselves
And the best at what they are.

I will live one day at a time,
Seeking only one thing
To have God ruling my life,
and accepting him as my king.

I will continue to keep,
Only if I continue to give.
For me in my new life
It's the only way to live.

I won't deceive anyone,
Just keep a sturdy stride,
Growing in faith and trust
For the Lord is my pride.

I will keep my pledge
First bettering myself,
There is nothing I can't do,
With my Higher Power's help.

Michael E.
Hacienda Heights, CA

Please send some copies. For my:

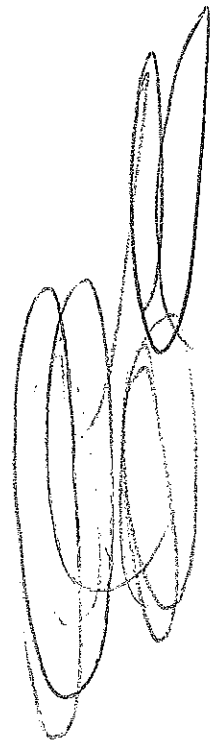
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