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## Her "Allergies" Mysteriously Disappeared

For a while, I thought I had the longevity record for smoking (44 years), but I have since met a few others in Nicotine Anonymous who have smoked as long as 50 to 55 years.

As I remember it, the first cigarette I ever smoked was on a summer afternoon the year I was 12. My friend and I hid behind her house and smoked a whole pack between us. That experience must have deterred me for a while, as I did not smoke again until my last year in high school. It was the early 1940s, and my best friend taught me how to inhale, so that I would look more like our most admired and glamorous movie stars. I became hooked on nicotine at the same time I was becoming dependent on alcohol.

Twenty years later, when the Surgeon General made his famous announcement, my conscience was jogged, and I tried to stop, or at least cut down—with no success. My four children nagged me to stop, but as they grew older, one by one they themselves began to smoke, and their voices ceased.

I suffered from chronic bronchitis from the time I began smoking. Because of my denial and rationalization, I never made the connection. It was after I had pneumonia that I decided menthol cigarettes would be better for my health! I called the

doctor for antibiotics because respiratory illnesses were interfering with my smoking, and I had to be well enough to smoke. What Insanity!

When I stopped drinking in another Twelve Step program in 1966, my health improved after four or five years, and I believed I could continue to smoke. The truth was that the improvement lulled me into thinking I was cured, as I had no idea what good health felt like.

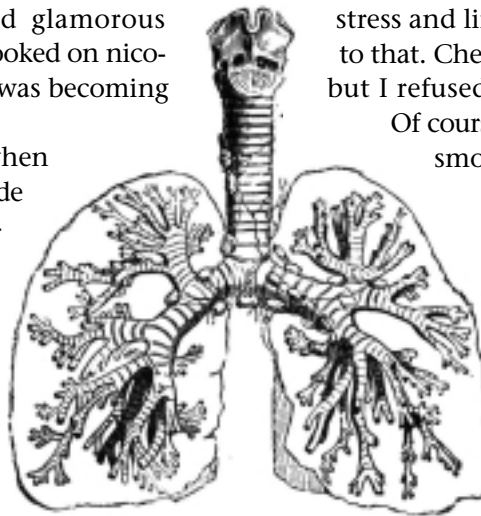
Four years ago, I was feeling worse again and suffering almost continuous colds and fevers. As I was going through extreme stress and life changes, I put it down to that. Chest x-rays showed scarring, but I refused treatment of any kind.

Of course, I struggled to continue smoking heavily, as usual.

Shortly thereafter, I moved to San Francisco from the East Coast. I then blamed my "allergies" on the new types of trees, plants, and pollens here. More x-rays showed problems, but I managed to find a doctor who prescribed anti-

histamines for my allergies. He warned me that other medications would eventually have to be found as my body became immune to each one.

Even though I was extremely frightened



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<info@nicotine-anonymous.org>

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Your trusted servants,  
Donna E., *Publisher*  
Catherine C., *Editor*  
Joe S., *Subscriptions*

## Our Preamble

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to live our lives free of nicotine. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may be free from this powerful addiction. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using nicotine. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine.

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# The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over nicotine—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## *The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted here with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.*

# From the Chair . . .

Kent B., Phoenix, Arizona

It's that time of the year again, with the annual Nicotine Anonymous World Services Conference fast approaching (April 19–21 in New York City), that I reassess my personal commitment . . . to attend or not to attend? Most years the struggle is minor: to reschedule other plans, divert some money from some other use, maybe face the inevitable question from that never-been-a-smoker friend, "Why would anyone want to spend an entire weekend around people talking about nicotine?" And, other years the debate has become more classical: is God's will to prevail over my self-will, or is helping others to triumph over laziness? After all, there is a law of physics that states a body at rest will tend to remain at rest unless some force moves it. Will I really miss anything if I just stayed home this year?

At my first conference, when I had less than a year's clean time, the fellowship resolved to change its very name from Smokers Anonymous to Nicotine Anonymous. (As I recall, I argued both sides of the question with equal passion!) At my next conference I wept during the Friday Gratitude Meeting; overwhelmed by how much shared joy flowed throughout that room. Only a year later, I was given the gift of service, when our World Services treasurer pounded on a table and pleaded for financial support to keep the fellowship from dying. I decided then and there that I, myself, should do something to prevent that from ever happen-

ing. Then there was the conference where I heard a first: the Saturday banquet speaker, a lifetime nicotine user, laughing out loud, and everyone laughing along, including me. The pain and discomfort of those early days of letting go had finally become the miracle others had told me was possible. . . . I would

***The pain and discomfort of those early days of letting go had finally become the miracle others had told me was possible. . . .***

begin to see that being a recovering addict could actually be a gift, not some curse. It gave me the very something I had been seeking all my life—a spiritual basis for healthy, happy living.

A NAWS conference is about recovery. In 2000 we witnessed a recovery miracle. A local member after years of struggling following a full relapse, dragged himself into our conference still using, and within hours had committed to start recovery again, one day at a time. He's

been nicotine-free ever since that day.

It's about unity, cementing many old friendships and making scores of new acquaintances, guaranteed with every conference registration. For most everyone who attends, it's also about service, actually participating with others in action, doing something important to thousands of recovering nicotine addicts all around the world, and offering hope to millions of others who still suffer because they haven't yet found what we've found.

The conference delegates this year will decide two proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Nicotine Anonymous. The first addresses the complete gender neutrality of our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The second, if approved, would make it possible for a World Services Conference to be held outside the United States sometime in the future. Of special significance will be another action to publish a second edition of *Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*, adding greater emphasis on "nicotine" and less on "smoking."

Of course, I am expected to attend this conference because I'll have official duties to fulfill as the Active Chair. But I still would not want to miss one single miracle (at least one is guaranteed with every registration), or any newcomer or old-timer, or one minute of vital discussion about carrying the message. So I'll be there. I hope you will join me for "Life, Liberty & Recovery."

# Register Now!

## NICA WORLD SERVICES CONFERENCE XVII

### "Life, Liberty and Recovery"

Brooklyn Heights, New York  
April 19-21, 2002



#### Conference Highlights:

Delegates will vote on important issues and choose the 2004 conference site. Speakers will be featured throughout the weekend, from the inspirational gratitude meeting on Friday night, to the Saturday night banquet, and on through Sunday morning brunch. Marathon recovery meetings will run simultaneously with the business meetings.

#### Come Early or Stay After

Join us for the post-conference trip to the Statue of Liberty or just enjoy your day sight-seeing around the city.

*You must contact the Marriott to make your own hotel reservation. Mention the Nicotine Anonymous Conference: New York Marriott Brooklyn, 333 Adams St., Brooklyn, NY 11201, 800-228-9290 or 718-246-7000. Rooms are \$149 a night. The cutoff date for the special room rate is 3/29/02. The suggested mode of transportation from the airport is by taxi.*

**See the NYMAI web site for more information: [www.gate1.net/nynai](http://www.gate1.net/nynai)**

## Plan to attend in 2002!



### 2002 World Services Conference Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Registration (\$25 through March 22, \$30 thereafter) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday night banquet/speaker (\$55/person) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate number of meals you are paying for:

Cornish Hen [# of people \_\_\_\_\_]

NY Strip Steak [# of people \_\_\_\_\_]

For special dietary needs contact John O. at

631-269-7633 or JohnONicA@aol.com

Sunday brunch/speaker (\$33/person)[# \_\_\_\_\_] \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Will you be a delegate?  Yes  No

If yes, indicate Group/Intergroup \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Delegates must register no later than 30 days prior to the conference** with the Secretary of World Services, 419 Main St., PMB #370, Huntington Beach, CA 92648 or via e-mail at [Info@nicotine-anonymous.org](mailto:Info@nicotine-anonymous.org). Registration must include name, address, phone number and the Group/Intergroup you will represent.

#### Mail payment and registration to:

Kathy B-G  
18 Clinton Avenue  
Merrick, NY 11566

# Outreach Corner

Jeff C., Fountain Valley, California

**W**elcome back to my corner! I am looking forward to the conference in April in New York and hope to see many of you there! As I am rushed for time this quarter I am going to provide you with a list of items previously compiled that I hope helps you with your local outreach efforts.

With the help of the membership I have been continually compiling this list of outreach ideas. Here is the list to date:

## Outreach Ideas

- Create more outreach literature; make it different from other literature so that it stands out for NicA members. Make it free.
- So that people may find us when they're already motivated to quit, plan special meetings and outreach events to coincide with the timing of other events (i.e., Great American Smoke Out Day).
- Suggest Outreach Reminders be incorporated into meeting formats.
- Cause NicA Web site to sort to top of major search engines for obvious searches—to be looked at following completion of redesign of Web site.
- Encourage, promote and support intergroup formation geographically.
- Research AA experiences with outreach and incorporate.
- Set up outreach tables at health fairs, county fairs, etc.
- Post literature and flyers at community bulletin boards, hospitals, drug stores, government health agencies, AA, Al-Anon, and other 12-step meeting places, government mass transit vehicles and stations, etc.
- Sponsor public message spots on public TV, radio, and press.
- Seek favorable articles in local and national newspapers and journals.
- Contact the the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, etc., to let them know we exist and will gladly welcome those who want or need ongoing support.
- Suggest to government and charitable foundations with stop smoking programs that they utilize NicA for aftercare.
- Do mailers to organizations like American Lung Association, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, etc, explaining to them our program and how to get in contact with us.
- Do searches on Internet, i.e., "Stop Smoking" and ask resulting found sites if they would like to create a link to NicA's.
  - Develop a program to inform your local medical community of NicA's presence and how to send referrals to NicA.
- Speak at Health Ed classes at high schools, or the appropriate college or medical school classes.
- Encourage Intergroup Outreach Coordinators.
- Join panels at Alcohol/Drug/Smoking cessation programs.
- Seek referrals from government sponsored "addiction" programs.
- Provide literature to be placed in professional waiting rooms (doctors, dentists, physiologists, counselors, clergymen, nutritionists, alternative health care practitioners; acupuncturists, hypnotists, etc.).
- Post flyers at places like gyms, other 12 step meeting areas, pharmacies, libraries, post offices, health food stores, laundromats.
- Have a section on your Web page with stories/testimonials; change them occasionally.
- Contact company Human Resources departments and suggest they use us for a resource.
- The Web site will contain periodic reports of committee activities.
- Distribute the pamphlet "Introducing Nicotine Anonymous" to high schools and colleges.
- Provide World Services support for starting new meetings where intergroups don't exist or lack resources.
- Produce and distribute bumper stickers.
- Send mass- and repetitive e-mails to appropriate organizations.
- Be sure there's a reference to Nicotine Anonymous in your local phone directory white pages under "Smoke" or "smoking."
- Forward NicA literature to authors who have written about Nicotine Anonymous or about quitting smoking and/or nicotine in general.



Hope this gives you some ideas. If you would like to implement any of these ideas on the World Services level, please let me know. If you have other ideas or comments regarding the current ideas please forward them to me.

**Step Twelve:** *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to nicotine users, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

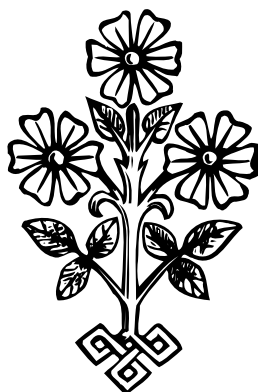
In Recovery, Unity, and Service,

Jeff C.,  
JcrandallAxaAdvisors@earthlink.net,  
714-378-0398

# NAWS Balance Sheet *as of September 30, 2001*

*Annette L, Long Beach, California*

	Sep 30, 01	Sep 30, 00	\$ Change	% Change
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Current Assets				
Checking/Savings				
1000 · Wells Fargo Checking	18,422.86	8,060.62	10,362.24	128.55%
1010 · Wells Fargo Prem Market	27,523.08	0.00	27,523.08	100.0%
1030 · Fulton Deposit Account	0.00	17,989.56	-17,989.56	-100.0%
1040 · Certificate of Deposit	0.00	21,021.91	-21,021.91	-100.0%
Total Checking/Savings	45,945.94	47,072.09	-1,126.15	-2.39%
Accounts Receivable				
1200 · Accounts Receivable	1,713.00	2,619.60	-906.60	-34.61%
1205 · Advances to Conference	1,510.26	0.00	1,510.26	100.0%
Total Accounts Receivable	3,223.26	2,619.60	603.66	23.04%
Other Current Assets				
1209 · Advance to Fulfillment	500.00	500.00	0.00	0.0%
1120 · Inventory Asset	9,969.99	7,915.55	2,054.44	25.95%
1499 · Undeposited Funds	1,189.76	0.00	1,189.76	100.0%
Total Other Current Assets	11,659.75	8,415.55	3,244.20	38.55%
Total Current Assets	60,828.95	58,107.24	2,721.71	4.68%
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>60,828.95</b>	<b>58,107.24</b>	<b>2,721.71</b>	<b>4.68%</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>				
Liabilities				
Current Liabilities				
Accounts Payable				
2000 · Accounts Payable	1,987.40	3,866.36	-1,878.96	-48.6%
Total Accounts Payable	1,987.40	3,866.36	-1,878.96	-48.6%
Other Current Liabilities				
2200 · Sales Tax Payable	473.70	399.62	74.08	18.54%
Total Other Current Liabilities	473.70	399.62	74.08	18.54%
Total Current Liabilities	2,461.10	4,265.98	-1,804.88	-42.31%
Total Liabilities	2,461.10	4,265.98	-1,804.88	-42.31%
Equity				
3200 · Unrestricted Net Assets	41,342.43	41,342.43	0.00	0.0%
3900 · Retained Earnings	13,415.88	1,330.00	12,085.88	908.71%
Net Income	3,609.54	11,168.83	-7,559.29	-67.68%
Total Equity	58,367.85	53,841.26	4,526.59	8.41%
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>60,828.95</b>	<b>58,107.24</b>	<b>2,721.71</b>	<b>4.68%</b>



# God in Action, Part III

Mark S., Sacramento, California

This is the third article in a series documenting the joys and pains of starting a new Nicotine Anonymous group. Mark has had articles in the past two *Seven Minutes*. We thank Mark for staying in touch and sharing his experience, strength and hope with the rest of the membership.

*The Editor*

**T**he new Sacramento “Home Free” group of Nicotine Anonymous had a landmark meeting tonight. We had three newcomers show up, with a passionate commitment to jump into this program of recovery.

It was amazing to see what happens in this situation and to see how this program works. I have spent these past months worrying over putting together a meeting that will have the resources necessary to support newcomers in their recovery. I have repeatedly practiced telling my story, looked for the particular tools of the program I used in my own recovery, and developed the facility of explaining to the newcomers the ways in which I was able to successfully use these tools in my own program.

Tonight, at the first “live” meeting of the Home Free group, I got to see what GOD has in mind for this chapter of our fellowship. It was amazing. I could have sat there and kept my mouth shut for the entire meeting, saying nothing but what I read out of the meeting format. We read a story out of the *Our Path to Freedom* book, and the newcomers started sharing their reactions to the story, and their recent experiences

with nicotine. And I watched these people tell each other stories of recovery far more eloquent and far more helpful than anything I could dredge up from my memories of what I went through ten years ago.

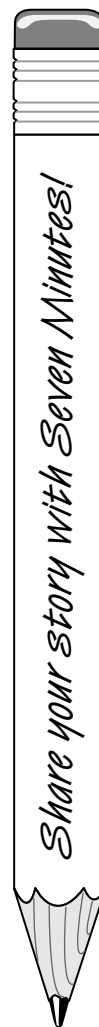
There was something powerful and moving for me to witness the magic in action. I felt like I was a midwife to the birth of a miracle. I felt awed, humbled, and honored. I felt overwhelmed with gratitude to my higher power for having put me in a position to watch this happen.

I also felt some sadness, too, to think of how many of us (myself included) stop going to NicA meetings after we get a year or two of freedom from nicotine. We come to feel that we’ve got the habit beat, and we no longer need the fellowship. Maybe we have, but maybe we don’t. I know that after five years of not having gone to meetings, I didn’t have any pressing concern that I was going to smoke again. On the other hand, my continued work with step twelve, practicing these principles in all areas of my life was compromised by the loss of integrity I suffered. I know that a critical part of this program is founded on our willingness to pass along the recovery that we have been so freely given. It was that problem that finally brought me back to NicA meetings, and ultimately led me to assume responsibility for making NicA meetings available to nicotine addicts in the Sacramento area.

And what started as my grudging acceptance of my responsibility to fulfill an obligation—to

relieve my guilt for not having paid back the debt in return for the recovery I have enjoyed—has turned into something much more meaningful. Because I have chosen to honor that debt and do this work, I have been blessed to be part of this great miracle, to see more of the great mystery of how Higher Power touches and moves in the lives of others. I’ve been blessed with an experience of recovery that I could never have seen had I not chosen to come back and do this work.

This experience is very meaningful to me, because I know that my home group back in the Bay Area struggled with this problem of losing members who had achieved some level of stable abstinence, members who seemed to feel that they were ready to graduate. And, too, I’ve heard some rumors through the grapevine that previous Sacramento meetings have failed—at least in some measure—for similar reasons. So if you are attending a meeting that suffers from this difficulty of keeping members in the program once they have established some security in their recovery, I invite you to share this experience of mine at meetings. Let’s make sure our members know about the benefits of continuing to come back, even when the old siren call of nicotine fades off into the distance. I would like to see NicA WSO consider developing a pamphlet that addresses this issue specifically; from where I stand, it looks like this is an issue of some importance to our fellowship as a whole.



# Traditions Committee Report

Bill P., Coordinator, Carrollton, Texas

by the results of the x-rays and the doctor's dire predictions, I did not have the willingness to stop smoking. It was only when I began to pray for the willingness to be willing that it finally started to happen. I joined a singing group, which became increasingly important to me. The motivation to quit smoking came, because I wanted so much to sing, and my voice had become more and more unreliable.

In the fall of 1983, I went to a Nicotine Anonymous meeting. I could not wait to leave and light up, and I continued to punish myself with nicotine and carbon monoxide poisoning until August 1984, when I finally surrendered and went to another meeting. I have not smoked a cigarette since.

After more than a year of abstinence, I now consider myself a non-smoker. I will not say that I am not still tempted occasionally—especially when feeling frustrated or making a decision—but I pray for answers to come and for growth in the conviction that I do not have to smoke over anything.

I am extremely grateful for my vastly improved health—fevers and colds cured by “allergies” have mysteriously disappeared. I have had only one cold in over a year, and my singing voice has been called beautiful. I use it to sing the praises of my programs, including Nicotine Anonymous! Thanks to all.

In October, E-mail Coordinator, Alan sent us a copy of a question he had already answered concerning people who still smoke, chairing a meeting. The writer said NicA had a rule against it. Alan let them know that there's no NicA rule against it. It's a group issue. All Traditions Committee members who responded agreed.

In November, we received an e-mail via Alan from a member in Amsterdam who wanted to know if there's a rule against people who still smoke sharing in meetings. How long should they be allowed to speak, etc? The members of the Traditions Committee responded that it's a group issue. Individually, we thought that the smoker should be allowed to speak, but it's not our place to direct the show. Steve made an interesting point. He said that, in his opinion (and I agree), if they have a group conscience meeting, the smoker

should be allowed to vote if he/she has a desire to be free of nicotine and considers him/herself to be a member.

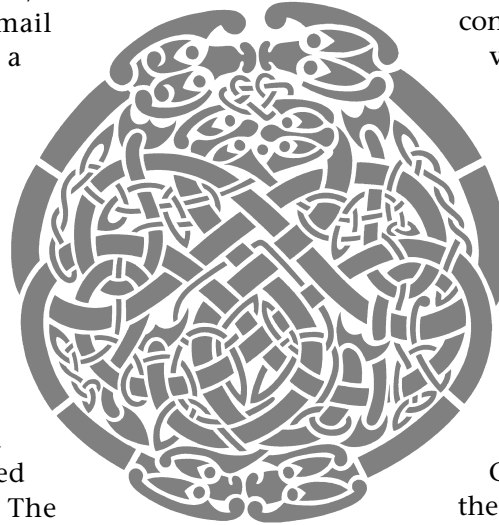
In late November, Catherine forwarded the proposed next issue of *Seven Minutes* to several other people in addition to the Traditions Committee. She received far more input than she might have wanted.

There was an article that was considered to be controversial by many in and out of the Traditions Committee. Catherine decided to pull the article.

In December, Kenny forwarded a question concerning the “Policy” on meeting formats.

Could the chair alter the format to accommodate late arrivals, etc? The committee responded that it's a group issue and we shared some experience, strength and hope.

January 8, Jennifer M. e-mailed looking for input on the October minutes. None of the committee members forwarded any Traditions concerns pertaining to the October minutes.



## Conference Site Selection Procedure to Change

The procedure for selecting future locations for Nicotine Anonymous World Services Conferences will change. The method previously used to select annual World Services Conference locations has not been the correct method as prescribed by the Bylaws of Nicotine Anonymous. In past years, a vote of the Delegates attending a conference had selected the site where the conference would be held two years later. The Bylaws [Article VII, Section 2, Item c)] and [Article VIII, Section 1, Item a)], on the other hand, state that it is the World Services officers who shall “designate a place . . . for holding of any meeting of the Delegates,” including the annual conference, “at such place as the officers may designate.”

During future conferences, Delegates will continue to be asked to review proposals brought by Intergroups wishing to host a conference, but the selected site recommended by the Delegates will require a formal confirmation vote of the officers.



# The Book of Daily Meditations

Following are three submissions to the Book of Daily Meditations. You are encouraged to share your experience, strength, and hope with others by writing for this book. Please consider contributing your own personal prayer, meditation, or experience.

*"Every day we wake up, we have choices to make up."*

—A RECOVERING ADDICT

Each day we can begin by deciding our behavior regarding such things as hygiene, exercise, and food. We can choose to pray for guidance and support for this day. These choices will also affect our choice of attitude with which we begin our day. We can create a plan with these choices and then take active steps to carry it out as well as we can at each moment. We seek progress, not perfection. We humbly practice the intentions of our own choices.

As addicts, once we choose to use our drug of choice, we begin to lose our gift of choice. Using controls our behavior and our attitudes. Using controls who we associate with, the places we go, and the situations we end up in. Using causes us to lose choices all along the way and thus we become lost. Eventually we may get sick, institutionalized, or die as a direct result of our addiction.

Choosing a path of recovery, rather than the closed cycle of addiction, improves our lives. Recovery opens us to new possibilities "beyond our wildest dreams" or in ways that we have previously been too sick to see.

*Today I am aware of my power to make new choices, create new behaviors, and enjoy new attitudes that improve the quality of my life.*



*What will I do today? It may depend upon which "will" I chose to listen to.*

—A RECOVERING ADDICT

Human beings have what we call "free will." This may be true, but our thinking is also influenced by the people, places, and things in our surroundings. We say we have "will power," but even "normal people" find themselves admitting, "I knew I shouldn't have done that, but . . ."

As addicts our will power has not been sufficient to help us stop using drugs. After all, our will has been conditioned with the determined thinking of: I want my drug of choice, nicotine; I will have nicotine.

Coming "to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity" (Step Two) can mean becoming open-minded to consider the guidance and wisdom of a counselor and/or a sponsor, the group, the Program, and a belief in a Higher Power of our own understanding.

*Today, as I open myself to the possibility of being restored, I do not lose my will, I gain a greater Will to help recover my life.*



*I no longer count the value of a day by feeling the change in my pocket, but by feeling the change in my heart.*

—A RECOVERING ADDICT

When we are children, much of how good we feel depends on what we get. Whether attentive care, birthday presents, or just getting our way, our focus is on getting something from the outside world. We continually count our "marbles" and either feel powerful, satisfied, or resentful when we compare "our pile" to others.

Many of us became addicts when we were still children, often starting with nicotine. We may have wanted to get away with or get more . . . but found we could never get enough.

In recovery we learn about the tool of service and carrying the message by practicing the program's principles, such as humility, kindness, and patience "in all our affairs." Maturity comes when we realize our real value comes from what we have to offer and freely give it away.

*Today, I will count my blessings and offer them to others, knowing this is the source of true wealth.*



# Are You Willing?

Barbara M., Tucson, Arizona

I'm a second generation Twelve Step Program person. My mother joined AA in Los Angeles County on July 13, 1944. I grew up with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. (AA founder) Bill & Lois W. were frequent visitors to our home as I was growing up.

As a child I was asthmatic, and in those days there weren't many drugs or treatment available. An ex-Navy doctor from WW II showed me how I used asthma attacks to get my own way. He also put me into a therapeutic program using the "new" drug, penicillin, to relieve symptoms. The asthma attacks stopped and the doctor told me if I didn't smoke, I shouldn't be bothered by bronchial problems much at all. He said if I did smoke, I'd be dead by the time I was twenty-six years old.

But all the enriched background in addiction and its diseases didn't prevent me from starting to smoke when I was sixteen years old. I was married a year later. During my first pregnancy, I stopped smoking for Lent and stayed quit a total of four months. Then my new obstetrician told me that I should take up smoking to lower my blood pressure. This was recommended instead of tranquilizers. We didn't know in those days what smoking while you're pregnant can do to the baby! This was in 1954. I didn't start to smoke addictively until the birth of my first child. Once I began, I couldn't quit. What had been a four or five cigarette habit a day previously rapidly became two packs a day. I smoked for thirty-six years like that.

Naturally, by the time I was in

my thirties I'd developed chronic bronchial problems. Like any good card-carrying addictive compulsive, I figured I'd beaten the odds by living past the age of twenty-six. I wasn't a guilty smoker in spite of all of this. I loved it, it made me feel good, and I didn't intend to quit.

To make a long story short, I continued to smoke. About six months before I quit smoking I called the local AA number here in Tucson to ask if there was a Twelve Step Program to quit smoking. I got a location and time for a meeting, but did nothing with the information at that point except to limit myself to a pack-and-a-half a day, eventually getting down to a pack a day. Big stuff for me!

In the Fall of 1990, when we went to San Diego for a business banquet on Coronado Island, I



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contacted an old friend who lived there. She mentioned she'd quit smoking in 1976 because she couldn't stand the idea of a "little white stick" controlling her life. The next evening, our last on Coronado, I found myself on my knees. I asked my Creator to give me the willingness to quit smoking for 24 hours and please not let my weight be a concern. (My big excuse for not quitting, besides all the other compelling reasons, was that I'd gain weight and immediately go back to smoking.) That this happened is a miracle. Where it came from, I didn't know.

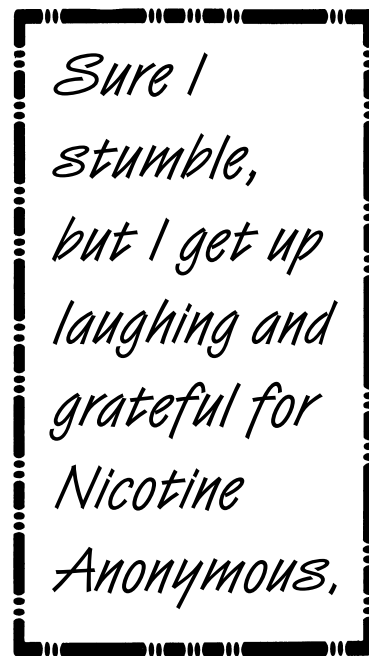
We drove back to Tucson and I told my husband about praying on my knees in Coronado. He'd quit smoking the month before and said if I wanted to try, he still had some Nicorette gum that helped him over the early rough spots. I didn't think anything more about it, until the next night. I'd completed my bedtime ritual: bathing, scrubbing my face, brushing my teeth and hair, spraying cologne all over. Then I got into bed for a final cigarette before turning off the light. The irony hit me later that I did all this self cleansing then lit up a dirty, smelly cigarette! While I was smoking that last cigarette, the realization came to me that I was smoking my last one. So far, this has proved to be true.

The first two weeks were hell. I'd had surgery that took out almost half my colon several years before. After a few days of being smokeless, I called the gastroenterologist to see how not smoking would affect what was left of my GI tract. He said no more than nine or ten pieces of Nicorette a day. I didn't exceed three or four, but this kept spasms and problems in that

area to a minimum. I was lucky.

The miracle in all this is that I lost the desire to smoke by doing it minutes at a time. I never had the fear of failure about my quitting smoking. On the contrary, I'd seen how well AA worked and my only fear was success. I knew that a Twelve Step Program, sincerely worked on a daily basis, would keep me smoke free, nicotine free.

Prayer really works. My fears about gaining weight were groundless. I went into such deep grieving over the loss of my beloved cigarettes, I lost five pounds the first ten days I didn't smoke. I've lost a few more as my system adjusts itself to a smoke-free existence.



*Sure I  
stumble,  
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grateful for  
Nicotine  
Anonymous.*

To newcomers I suggest lots of reading, drinking ice water through a straw and "smoking" the straw when the urge is present. A real treasure of an idea came from a friend who quit smoking in Denver several years ago: blowing up balloons! It is impossible to blow up a balloon and smoke at the same time. You can give the balloons to children or adults who need to lighten up

a bit. Everyone I gave a balloon to in the early days of my quitting was pleased at the "gift."

Aside from feeling better than I have in twenty or thirty years, I have the freedom to do just about anything. Working the steps and seeing all my character faults, asking for help with them, making amends, and reaching out to others in the same pain I felt has vastly improved my entire life. I'm content to live with progress and not perfection anymore. Anger and unreasonable behavior are two things I've turned over to my Creator for guidance. Sure I stumble, but I get up laughing and grateful for Nicotine Anonymous.

My mother spent her last thirty years as a recovering alcoholic who started the first women's rehab house in California. Our oldest daughter is going to celebrate her tenth anniversary in Al Anon next Spring. At the same time, our youngest daughter will celebrate five years of abstinence from smoking. My husband passed his one year mark without cigarettes earlier this month. I hope, with all of us working together, we can break the cycle of addictive behavior.

The program doesn't work if you can't accept the spiritual side of it. I'm coming to realize the closer my connection with my Creator is, the easier my life becomes. The rare days when I think I want a cigarette are those days my connection isn't as strong as it needs to be for me. Each of us is different, yet our need to consciously live our program is the same.

To the people who call and ask about Nicotine Anonymous, I say, if I could quit, you can. Are you willing?

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