



# THE NA TIMES

Phoenix – West Valley – East Valley

January 2023

## Dig These Cats! (Part 1)

"I was in the hallway of the entrance to the premiere halfway house for local cats trying to sort out the wreckage of their lives after battling addiction to things like alcohol and drugs, when my sponsor Andy quietly approached me and my wingman, Kenny, looking from side to side, making sure no one else could hear him. In hushed tones, as if he's just stumbled onto the greatest plan ever for taking down Philadelphia National Bank at 2 a.m. in the morning, he says in subdued whispers, "There's a new meeting in town..."

Had I known then what he was talking about and what was to come, I would've understood all the cloak and dagger and why maybe the room full of drunks right next door SHOULDN'T hear what he was about to tell us, because it was taboo back in the day - that being 1979, to gather with junkies and garbage heads in smoke-filled rooms and call it recovery.

"...on Mill Street, in Bristol - it's a Narcotics Anonymous meeting."

We had never heard of the program, but it sounded great, anything new sounded great, compared with the rooms filled with old-timers, retired and reminiscing about the bouquet of their last drunk when they passed out in their locked, parked cars, having shit themselves in the hot summer sun. We were a scourge to them, outcasts, and having our own group of young souls start a new movement in 12-step recovery appeared as though it was some kind of alien invasion. They were afraid of the generation coming up clean. They were afraid of the mean streets that had borne us, giving birth to kids with fire in their veins instead of dope.

What we found as we, arriving early, ascended the steps to The Beacon outpatient facility that housed Bristol, PA's very first N.A. meeting was something akin to an ensemble comedy sketch out of Max's Dance Studio. Kids were throwing themselves around the room, laughing and shouting like recess on the James Buchanan Elementary School playgrounds. We just

stood there and watched, the three of us, taken aback at all the activity and life going on in front of us. This was nothing like A.A., this was bad as hell! The joy was infectious as one of the members, Barb McDonald ran up to us out of breath and covered in sweat.

"What's happen'in?"  
"..not much, how about you?"

Was Andy's patent response dressed up in that winning smile he shined on you, cutting his face nearly in half from ear to ear. You couldn't not like Andy, the most amiable cat I knew and he sponsored most of the kids who came in off the streets into 12-step recovery from a background using drugs. He was the first ambassador for N.A. in our area. Both myself, Kenny L., and my future sponsor for life, Pete Hawkeye B. were brought into Narcotics Anonymous by Andy. If he were a recruiter, the military would have given him a Distinguished Service Medal by now."

**(to be continued in February's Newsletter)**

**EAST VALLEY ACTIVITIES PRESENTS**



**Key Hole ARCH Trail / Green Thumb AREA**

**Directions to Trailhead:**

US 60 east to Idaho Road. Take Idaho Rd north and bear right at 2.3 miles onto 88 Apache Trail. Turn left about 2.9 miles onto North Hackamore Road. Proceed about 1.4 miles (rough dirt) to **Bullhead Canyon** trailhead parking lot.

**Come Enjoy an Easy Hike In the Best Part of Superstition Mountain to see the best Rock Formations. How Cool!!!**



**Travel time from Evergreen Park is 45 to 50 minutes.**

**We Will Meet at Evergreen Park @ 5th St & Country Club Rd. In MESA @ 8:30 AM To Carpool & Leave @ 8:45 AM. Or Meet us There at the Trailhead @ 9:45 AM Hike to start at Bullhead Canyon Parking lot 10:00 AM**

**BRING:**  
Newcomer, Water, Snack, & PMA



Call so we know to expect you:  
**Chuck H. 480-236-4859**

<http://www.arizona-na.org/>  
*The Wilderness is Open for Sharing*

My relationship with recovery and NA used to be complicated. After detoxing from daily use, I avoided 12 step programs because they were for sick people. I white-knuckled it for five years, never getting more than 8 months of abstinence. My life was miserable, and I often wondered why I bothered.

My moment of clarity came one week after my sister was found dead on the bathroom floor of a cheap motel, a rig lying beside her. An old friend had swung into town and brought some “really good sh\*t” to share with me. I could not say no. I held out for about 12 hours but in the end, I could not say no. A day later, in tears, I admitted to myself that I could not control my drug use. I headed to my first NA meeting the next day.

I plugged in, got a sponsor, and worked the steps. My sponsor at the time had completed one set of steps in another fellowship. My first set of steps were short, to the point, hurried, and somewhat helpful. My first set of steps were done while firmly grasping a few reservations. After all, my life had not been completely unmanageable; using or abstinent or so I believed. I was not willing to surrender all my defensive mechanisms nor a few character defects. I gleefully attended meetings with a stack of reservations stuffed in my back pocket. I relapsed at 5 years “clean”. Since then, I have had the benefit of a couple of excellent sponsors. When I came back, I followed the suggestions. I got a sponsor, I volunteered for a service commitment, I stocked people with time, and I even went to coffee after meetings. I read every piece of NA literature I could find. The most helpful thing I did differently this time was to attend a weekly step study meeting for roughly 18 months. This meeting changed not only my understanding of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, but it also changed my life.

The first step asks that I be fully honest with all areas of my life. The first step looks at my drug use but also how that drug use influenced my life. Sure, I was 30 pounds underweight when I detoxed but that was only the top layer of the chaos my life had become. I had become completely devoid of self-worth, mentally incapable of making wise decisions, and spiritually bankrupt. Only by becoming 100% honest with myself and looking at how I lived, not just what I had done, could I keep all aspects of my disease at bay. The disease of addiction involves every area of my life and so I must address it in all areas of my life.

The first step offers us the opportunity to see the disease of addiction in its entirety. The first step asks us to admit not only an inability to say no to drugs, but it also invites us to look at what our life has become. It is only through working a thorough first step and completely surrendering my old beliefs can I access the hope offered in the remaining eleven steps. Our Basic Text says it best: *“Surrender means not having to fight anymore.”*

**-Matt C**

**Tradition One** –“Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity”

Having an understanding of and the ability to apply the concepts of Tradition One into my life has had a huge impact on who I am and how I serve. Early in recovery my need to understand or utilize the traditions seemed unnecessary. The steps were a focus due to the belief I would die or spend the rest of my life locked up if I didn’t change. Little did I know from my very first meeting I was being provided with the opportunity to apply the first tradition, and I was benefiting from members living by it. These opportunities have been ongoing with my participation in meetings, business meetings, service work, sponsorship, and also in my day-to-day affairs. Over the years the importance of the application of “our common welfare” coming first, and my “personal recovery” being dependent on unity, has manifested change in all areas of my life.

The most obvious platform to use the traditions is regarding my engagement inside the fellowship with other addicts. My first home group was called “Birds of a Feather,” and it was located inside a correctional facility in Washington State. While incarcerated my flame was fanned by the H&I soldiers who brought the meeting in weekly. They helped us learn about Narcotics Anonymous, and how it would change our lives. One thing that stuck out to me early on was how the members would come in and participate in our meeting by just being present.

Most H & I meetings I serve at now are focused on panel leaders sharing their ESH, and the members in the facility asking questions. In retrospect I realize this format wouldn’t have benefited me as much.

**(Continued pg. 4)**

Our literature, *Twelve Concepts for NA Service*, states this about the 1st Concept: "Our fellowship's primary purpose is to carry the message that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. One of the primary means by which that message is carried, addict to addict, is in our meetings...the most important service offered by our fellowship."

As a public relations person, I recently communicated with a needle exchange program to see if we could provide a public relations presentation and they could offer our "Drug Problem? We Can Help? cards to the addicts they encounter. Here is their response.

"Hello, and thanks for reaching out. We are a harm-reduction coalition who supports people who use drugs. We aren't a good resource to hand out literature for abstinence-only programs, *particularly those who do not support people on medication-assisted treatment (MAT)* [emphasis mine]. We are science and evidence-based, not abstinence only."

This particular entity is not the only one telling NA that we do not welcome people on MAT. We heard clearly from our treatment center doctors and directors at WSLD in a few years ago that they don't refer their clients to NA because of our attitude toward MAT. Clearly, we have a lot of public relations work to do.

How we treat the newcomer, whether they are on MAT or trying to get clean by immediately stopping to use, is critical to unity. Our information pamphlet, *Narcotics Anonymous and Persons Receiving Medication-Assisted Treatment*, tells addiction professionals that, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." It goes on to say, "While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total abstinence, still-using addicts are welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to keep coming back." (*It Works*, "Tradition Three").

**(Continued on pg. 4)**

## 5.10.22

I can't afford the life I've known  
Not for the price but because I have blown  
So many blessings for one more high  
No matter how hard I try  
My best is never enough  
It takes an awakening to call my bluff  
I can't do this solo  
I'm up against a menacing foe  
It takes an army to overcome  
I can't beat this monster post-mortem  
So fight with me tonight  
And be the shining light  
That I can't see quite yet  
I feel an overwhelming debt  
Is owed to my past  
But she is an outcast  
I can't let her back anymore  
So many times she swore  
To never let someone see  
The pain that brought her to her knees  
But she is not me any longer  
I've risen up stronger  
By the strength of the one  
Carrying me for none  
Can compete with his power  
By his strength I'll survive this hour.



South Central Area Activities

# Chili

## COOK OFF

Make the best chili  
Capture the Apron!

**SATURDAY,  
JANUARY 21ST**

12999 N Cox Rd  
Casa Grande, AZ 85194

4-6 PM RIGHT BEFORE THE  
FIRESIDE MEETING  
50/50 RAFFLE  
SODA AND WATER FOR SALE

FREE TO ENTER &  
FREE TO TASTE

For more information:  
Tim S  
520-280-1014

Our meeting was a standalone meeting, and we were able to bang our heads against the wall, break traditions, act out in self-will, create disunity, and struggle at times. Then after each meeting from a kind, compassionate, and loving place, those more experienced members would help guide us in the right direction. By allowing us to struggle, they provided us with the opportunity to make our common welfare a priority, which in turn led to unity. When I started attending “Birds of a Feather,” there were three-to-four members a week, and very little structure. Through the guidance of those H&I members prior to getting released there were 20 to 30 members attending weekly, a monthly business meeting, men were sponsoring men, we put on an annual recovery event, and this was all done as a result of becoming united. This experience was monumental in my growth as a member of NA.

I have served in many different capacities in my 14 years of recovery. Without gaining a better understanding and application of the traditions I would have created a ton of wreckage inside the rooms. I have a big personality and believe at times my opinion is the only correct one. This perspective is in complete contradiction of what our first tradition stands for. This is where anonymity comes into play. I have learned my opinion is as equally as important as everyone else’s, and coming together in unity provides a much richer and fruitful atmosphere of recovery for all members to thrive in. We are so much stronger together than I could ever be on my own. Remaining open-minded and practicing humility opens me up to a greater understanding of recovery and my place in it, helps promote our fifth tradition more effectively, has a greater impact on the community, and allows me to be a part of something so much bigger than me. I regularly share that if NA was full of all Joel W’s, it would suck.

One area Tradition One has had a huge impact is in my personal life. My wife and I have used the traditions to grow closer and work through some challenging times. Tradition one has been foundational in this growing process. We try and live by the belief that our common welfare should come first, our marriage depends on unity. Just like any relationship there are times when we have different perspectives on things. Applying Tradition One forces us to put our personal beliefs aside, and come together collectively. We are able to “disagree without being disagreeable” as stated in the *Basic Text*. This was foreign to me prior to getting clean, and at times is still challenging. In the end I want peace, love, and connection in my relationships. Tradition One helps me to have this experience.

The *Basic Text* states, “We must live and work together as a group to ensure that in a storm our ship does not sink, and our members do not perish” (pg. 63). Thankfully I fully believe this, and I am able to apply it in service to Narcotics Anonymous and my personal relationships. I am forever grateful for Narcotics Anonymous and those who have come before me and paved this way of life.

**In loving Service – Joel W. 7-21-08**

**1st Concept: Continued**

As NA public relations volunteers, we are running into roadblocks like this when we try to carry our message to the exact population that may need to hear our message.

Needle exchange programs are part of the theory of “harm reduction” According to literature at harmreduction.org, “Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use.” Needle exchange is an important part of harm reduction. You can’t convince me that every addict they meet wants to continue to use. If they do not, then NA is an appropriate referral source.

Part of our structure includes NA’s public relations efforts. When a member mishandles his or her approach to a person at a meeting who is on MAT, it makes our public relations efforts harder.

Talking about our approach to those on MAT with our sponsors and in our home groups can help. We know this topic can generate controversy. That is not our

intent. We simply recommend that we set time aside in our home groups’ business meetings to ensure we are welcoming the newcomer, whether he or she is on MAT or not.

If our fellowship is about unconditional love, then we must meet all newcomers where they are – not where we want them to be.

Let’s talk about how we treat and incorporate into the group and into our fellowship people who come to NA on MAT. While it may not be an easy discussion topic, it is essential to our ability to carry the message to precisely the people who need us – the still suffering addict.

We recommend your group read the pamphlet mentioned earlier for discussion purposes.

- **Reprinted from the *West Valley NA Messenger*, January 2019**

# Don't leave before the miracle happens

Greetings, my fellow members! I would be very happy to know that my story could help and contribute to another addict's recovery, as well as helping addicts who are suffering from the disease of addiction and are still using. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you do for NA in Venezuela and around the world.

My name is Freddy, and I'm an addict in recovery by the grace of a Power greater than myself.

I first came into contact with alcohol over 39 years ago. I became very drunk, which started me on the road of extreme unmanageability in my life.

I spent time in a juvenile detention center, where I had problems with the other inmates, mostly due to my violent behavior. When I was released, I went to buy drugs; seeing other youngsters using in the detention center had sparked my curiosity.

I started using pills, then smoking pot. My behavior became totally antisocial, and I began trying other drugs. All of these substances helped me become a juvenile delinquent-in-training. From that point on, all of my efforts, desires, and feelings were geared toward getting and using drugs, and nothing else was important.

I never worried about having a girlfriend or a job or about going to school or about my family. All I wanted to do was to use. From the time I was twelve until I was 20 years old, my life went on in that drug scene, which included numerous stays at juvenile detention centers and lots of other negative things that prevented me from living my life the same way as a normal, healthy teenager.

I committed robberies in my own home, taking everything from my house (silverware, TVs, radios, stereos, jewelry, etc.). Because of these things, I was kicked out of my house for good when I was 13 years old. Then I started to walk the streets, sleeping in a graveyard located near the

neighborhood where I lived, as well as sleeping on the beach.

When I was 20 years old I was sent to an adult prison, then to a penitentiary, and then to El Dorado Jail, where I've been incarcerated twice. This jail in El Dorado had a center where the officials would supposedly "reeducate" the inmates through hard labor. It's located near the border of Brazil, and some of the worst delinquents in Venezuela are kept there.

I was there for two years, and when I was released I became a mugger. However, this new job didn't last long because I got shot twice in the left foot during a mugging attempt.

Later, even though I needed crutches to move around, I began to sell drugs, and eventually I ended up in jail again. That place (thankfully) doesn't exist any longer. It was known as Las Flores de Catia, one of the worst places on the planet! I was there on three different occasions, and I was even shown on TV and radio as a drug dealer.

Finally, the time came to begin my recovery. It happened during the wake of a friend who had died of a drug overdose. That night I was high on a lot of drugs, and I started to hear voices. I felt like I was being chased by those voices and by monsters that didn't exist. I finally lost all contact with reality. I didn't realize who I was, where I was, or what I was doing.

Again, I began to walk the streets—not just in a state of physical and spiritual indigence, but totally crazy and insane, walking and sleeping in the streets and squares of Caracas, and finally arriving at the banks of the Guaviare River, into which drain all the sewers of Caracas. It was here that a group of firefighters rescued me, put me in a straitjacket, and sedated me with a shot (injection).

I felt very troubled and was in a lot of pain, almost to the point that I thought I would die. Later that day, I thought I saw myself in a living graveyard with dead bodies rising up from their graves and trying to devour me. I felt horrible, and I experienced two more similar situations.

I was taken to the Caracas Psychiatric Hospital, where I stayed for a month and a half. When I was released, a woman I had not met before, gave me the message of recovery from Alcoholics Anonymous. I went to a few AA meetings, where they

suggested that I go to NA to receive help for my addiction problem.

I have been clean now for four years and three months thanks to the NA program. It was in NA where I came to know and recognize that I was powerless over any mind- and/or mood-altering substance. I also realized that I could not manage my own life, and that I needed help from other people whom I identified with in NA meetings. These fellow members help me on a daily basis to face my problems, my difficulties, and my defects of character. They value me, and they help me to improve the positive things in my life.

Today, the emptiness that was inside me has disappeared; it has been replaced with the power of NA. NA has taken me out of my isolation and has relieved my ignorance about my problem. By staying in NA, attending meetings, sharing my experiences with fellow members, reading NA recovery literature, working the steps and traditions, working in service, and always being ready to lend a helping hand to anyone who has an addiction problem or who needs or wants my help, I have returned to real life again.

I am very happy. After being spiritually dead for so long, I know that through NA all my internal being is being healed. Thanks, Higher Power. Narcotics Anonymous works! We can stay clean 24 hours at a time, just for today!

Freddy G, Venezuela

*"Sharing with others keeps us from feeling isolated and alone."*

*Basic Text, page 81*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out *Arizona-NA.ORG* for more Details

Fire Side Meeting	January 21st (6:00pm)
EV Skyline Serenity Hike	January 28th (8:00am)
Day of the Dinosaur	January 28th (12:30pm)

BEFORE RECOVERY, WE COULD ONLY SEE THE DARKNESS IN OUR LIVES.



AFTER RECOVERY, WE HAVE THE FREEDOM TO LIVE OUR LIVES WITH EYES WIDE OPEN.



The NA Way – July 2002  
(Volume 19 Number 3)



# Sponsorship Behind the Walls



Sponsorship in Arizona for inmates is 100% voluntary and can begin with just a letter of willingness to participate. Once your message of interest has been received, your initial projects to be completed will be sent to you. After completion, a sponsor is then assigned to work with you as long as the communication remains open. Your Sponsor will send you an initial welcome letter letting you know who they are and how to further reach them with "Step Work" and other correspondence. This method of sponsorship is useful for those who are serving six months or longer than six months from their release date.

### Where to mail your letter:

Arizona Region of Narcotics Anonymous – H&I  
PO Box 1351  
Phoenix, AZ 85001

While you wait to hear from us, search out your unit for existing NA meetings and begin attending. In the meantime, let us welcome you to Narcotics Anonymous, **Arizona Sponsorship behind the walls.**



### A. Write to us about:

1. What did using cause you to lose or give up/away?
2. Where did you first hear about Narcotics Anonymous?
3. What have you gained from working a program of recovery?
4. If you are working with a sponsor:
  - a. Is he an inmate?
  - b. Someone from before?
  - c. Or from writing to "Sponsorship behind the walls?"
5. What keeps your interest in NA alive?
6. How long will you remain incarcerated before release and your concerns for that eventful day.

### B. Guidelines for writing:

1. Keep your story concise and fit it on one page or less.
2. No need to over emphasize with cussing.
3. Please don't write with excessive details about the drugs or drug class which you used.

### C. Once completed send your story to:

East Valley Prison Coordinator  
PO Box 5264  
Mesa, AZ, 85221



## Inmates! *Show your creativity*

We would like to publish your artwork. **The NA Times** - Phoenix, West Valley, East Valley – is looking to involve the members of the fellowship **Behind the Walls**. Send your artwork and a piece of your recovery story to us for publication (Keep the artwork clean and recovery related).

### Send to:

Narcotics Anonymous Prison Coordinator  
PO Box 5264  
Mesa, AZ 85221

East Valley Activities Presents:



## LIVE, LAUGH & LOVE — VALENTINE'S DAY FORMAL DANCE

When:  
Saturday,  
February 11th, 2023  
Doors Open at 6:30pm

Where:  
Community Christian Church  
1701 S College Ave  
Tempe, AZ 85281

*Come join us for an Italian dinner and comedic show.*

*Meeting follows at 8:00pm*

*Dance Following the meeting*

*Fellowship, raffles, and merchandise available.*

For Dinner and Show ticket: Contact Tony L. at (480) 547-4561