



THE NA TIMES

Phoenix – West Valley – East Valley

April 2023

When Your Sponsor Dies (*Continued from March Newsletter*)

And from another member, Mary D.

I asked Caroline to be my sponsor when I had one year clean. She was tough and intimidating but I admired her recovery. It's hard to know all the things I learned from her, there are so many. In the early days of the Arizona fellowship, Caroline was well known and well respected. She was always of service and loyal to the program. One of the foundations of my recovery is to be of service. Doesn't matter how big or small the commitment, just make one and show up to do it. I at the very least keep a commitment at my home group. Speaking of service. Staying out of "high drama" was at the forefront. Many people have lost clean time over a resentment towards another member. Sometimes she had to help me sort out what was drama and what wasn't. I had trouble telling the difference. It was all drama as far as I was concerned and that inhibited me from working on some of the real issues.

She taught me to get to the point. I don't need to tell a five-minute story to get to the crux of the issue. This prepared me for a boss who had a similar personality; I liked him. It forced me to think through situations beforehand; it was good practice. I've been able to keep things simple and stay in the solution most of the time. Caroline was brutally honest, and I learned how to be as well. I've been working on dropping the "brutal" part. It doesn't help to hurt someone's feelings; we've all been hurt enough. I learned to get to the point and be specific with what I need for the situation at hand. I'm cautious about speaking in absolutes. It's easy to say, "you always do that" or "you never listen to me" when in fact it's rarely true.

I learned how to ask others how "they" are doing. Caroline taught me that it's rude to just jump in and start dumping all my problems on someone as if I'm the only one that matters. Now I ask and wait for the answer. I remember a story she told me about a woman she sponsored that was struggling to clean her house because it was too overwhelming. Caroline told her to pick a room, grab one thing and put it away. Then do that until the room is clean, one thing at a time. I use this process whenever I get overwhelmed and don't know what to do. I pick one thing and focus on it then pick another when I'm done with that one. Sometimes it's the best I can do.

She taught me boundaries, ask before you touch someone. You never know what their issues are and it's just polite. She personally didn't like to be touched. When I got to NA, I thought I would write a book because I had been through so much. Through working the steps and going to meetings, I learned everyone else has the same story and my shit isn't that special. I've heard a few addicts say the same thing when they were new. Now I just chuckle to myself when I hear it. So much of my beliefs came from early recovery. I didn't realize it until now. Caroline was tough and standoffish, but when I shared my step work and when I was hurting, she was kind and loving. I'll never forget her and the impact she had on my life. I'll carry her with me always.

With loving memory and gratitude, she will be missed.

And finally, another member, Penny F., recalls Caroline.

I remember Caroline. And I'm so grateful for her sponsorship! I had several sponsors before Caroline, but she was the first sponsor who walked me through and helped me complete all 12 steps. And of course, she came along at exactly the right time! She taught me to say "No," and that "No" was a complete sentence! Sounds simple; but it was something I needed to learn!

When I think of Caroline, I think of a strong woman demonstrating integrity, honesty, assertiveness and love! She was exactly what Phoenix needed when she and Charlie arrived! Some of us were starved for her guidance and she helped so many of us. We all agree she was tough but very respected and loved.

Rest in peace Caroline! Love Penny

I was in a meeting in Prescott the other day and my spousal unit happened to mention my home group, which has decided not to give out key tags in our format. “How can you let the newcomer surrender?” a visitor from another state asked, clearly upset at our group’s decision.

“We ask if there are any newcomers. If so, we welcome them and talk to them after the meeting,” I responded.

While this visitor remained unconvinced, the beautiful thing about NA’s Fourth Tradition is that each group can choose how it can best carry the message. As long as we use NA literature, abide by our Traditions and call ourselves NA, we are usually on steady ground.

I traveled widely for work and I loved walking into an NA meeting in another part of the country (or world) to see how other groups did things.

One of the coolest things I ever saw was at a group in the south somewhere. The secretary of the meeting took a few notes as people spoke. At the end of the meeting, the secretary recapped some of the highlights of the meeting as spoken by its attendees. I found that particularly helpful as traveling gets very lonely and sitting in hotel rooms sometimes can be dangerous for my recovery. His little recap of the meeting “gems” helped me head back to my hotel (complete with very noisy cocktail lounge) in a much better space.

Each group runs things a little differently. Some spend up to fifteen minutes reading many of our readings; other

groups pick what they read, limiting the readings to a few so that members have more time to share. Neither way is “right” if it doesn’t affect other groups.

According to an archived article at narchive.com, “Sometimes it’s hard to know what affects NA as a whole. The Fourth Tradition offers a way to balance the freedom of autonomy with our responsibility to preserve NA unity. Autonomy encourages groups to become strong and lively but also reminds them they are a vital part of a greater whole: the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.” We consider our common welfare when we make decisions in our groups.”

If we wonder why a group does things a certain way, we can ask politely. We are proud of our home groups and we can get defensive about them. We sometimes feel “challenged” when others approach us about why we run the meeting the way we do. Politely asking why the groups do things a certain way, or if you don’t agree with how things are done, having a civil discussion, can help. An angry confrontation when you are emotional will often be met with equal emotion from that home group’s members.

I have my own personal two-pronged rule of thumb. If it does not affect NA as a whole and it is not my home group, I usually find it better to say nothing.

What are your thoughts on this important tradition?

Fourth Concept: *Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.*

What is leadership, and why is it so important that we consider a trusted servant’s leadership capabilities before we vote them into a position as a trusted servant?

I know, you’re probably thinking, “That’s our only candidate!” No matter whom I talk to in service to NA or where they live, they all say the same thing: “We’re struggling to get members to take service positions.” However, choosing a person to be a trusted servant when they lack leadership skills can be detrimental to not only your home group, area, or region, but to NA as a whole.

What are leadership skills?

Let’s review some leadership skills. A Google search will reveal a number, but let’s look at five that may apply in NA.

- **Creativity** – Sometimes things happen. Bank account funds go missing, venues refuse to renew contracts, accidents happen, or NA receives some negative publicity. Our leaders must quickly and creatively meet all these types of challenges.
- **Patience** – Leaders in NA do not “govern,” they seek consensus, which is not always easy to achieve because we are a divergent group of people. Consensus means that all in the group agree with the decision. In some consensus matters, some may say, “I don’t necessarily agree, but I won’t oppose you moving forward.” We can only achieve consensus through skilled leaders who take the time to explore all voices, including alternative opinions. As I learned when I worked on the World Service Literature Committee in the early 1990s, “We strive for unanimity (everyone agrees); we settle for consensus.”

(Continued on page 4)

Partial proof of a good Third Step is the action of writing on the Fourth. The decision made in the Third Step implies action. The *Basic Text* says that the proof of this Third Step “is shown in the way we live.” The new way of life we live in Narcotics Anonymous is the way of the Twelve Steps, not the Three Steps. Ask those who has been around for a while and they will tell you how common it is for people to relapse at some point because of the lack of willingness to write a Fourth Step. I did not want to be one of those people, even though I wasn't itching to do a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself.

“The purpose of a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves is to sort through the contradiction and confusion of our lives, so that we can find out who we really are” (BT, p.27). It is important not to procrastinate, because we want to build momentum through the process. Writing the inventory reveals more than by simply speaking about it. It seemed like a daunting task to me, in fact, nearly impossible, the first time I did a Fourth. A long-timer pointed out to me that a few minutes a day was better than no minutes a day, just like exercise. I took his advice and began.

I prayed before I began writing and asked the God of my understanding to help me be honest, fearless and thorough. Some of it was painful to look at, but I had already lived it, which was the really hard part. I did some bad things in my life, before getting clean. I think by almost all accounts I was a despicable person. However, I was not a person that did not have worth, or a monster. If I had not lived through that horror, then I would not be as grateful as I am today, and it is quite likely that I would not have stayed. Once the truth is on paper, I free it, and I unlocked my own prison cell by writing it all down.

One of the main ideas of this Step is to figure out what we want to keep in our life and what we want to get rid of. I want to keep courage in my life, for instance, but I do not want to live in fear. I want to be more God-centered and a lot less self-centered. “A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, yet we can never write too much” (BT, p.30).

Relationships were a major focus of each of my Fourth Steps. Sorting through the reality of what happened, and *my* part in it, was helpful to me in my new way of life. For us, sanity means living in reality. Writing these things down made them a reality. Before, in my head, I had been in fantasy, which was me telling people that it was all her, his or their fault that things did not work out. Self-pity is a form of self-centeredness. Yikes! What a reality check.

I also have assets, which are harder to identify when we are newer to the program, but they are there. I always cared about people who had less than I had, or for people that were getting picked on by others. I had a sense of honor, even in active addiction. True, there were times I chose to ignore that sense, but it was there. Thank God for that. Addicts are some of the most unattractive people in the world when they are using, and some of the most beautiful people in the world when we are clean! Who would have guessed?

It was important for me to attend NA meetings regularly while writing this Step. The process is sure to bring up some uncomfortable feelings, and we want to be able to share those at an NA meeting. *We need to be able to survive our feelings*, which will never kill us. Feelings will not kill me, but trying to kill my feelings will. The Steps help us to grow up. “We must grow up or die” (I.P. #17).

Jason S.



Narcotics Anonymous

From Dharamshala, India

In my experience, the process of prayer and meditation enhances my recovery and makes me a better person by facilitating a process by which I can diminish the negative and practice the positive.

I am moving away from my past, when I believed that I was the exclusive victim in the center of the universe, with all the accompanying resentments which fed into that insatiable role.

I am taking fewer vacations into the future. For me, prayer and meditation act as the ticket out of the fantasy island of "what if" and "if only" into which I can slide like it's quicksand, and get stuck.

I am starting to achieve glimpses of what it's like to dwell in the present. Throughout my recovery, I've lived in situations that cause me to say the Serenity Prayer on a regular basis. My latest is living in a tiny community that is a hotbed of opportunities to practice spiritual principles, where experiences illustrate the necessity of choosing my battles wisely and relinquishing the rest. My present Himalayan environment reminds me to practice restraint of tongue and yet continue to breathe. Sometimes I even succeed in evaporating most of the smoke in my mouth, though there is a flaming fire still roaring in the active volcano of my heart.

Lisa M

Fourth Concept: (Continued from page 2)

- **Decision-making abilities** – Sometimes our trusted servants must make difficult decisions. As my dad would have said, "It's time to fish or cut bait." We may have all worked for bosses who could not make decisions, and things that should move smoothly post-decision never happen. Failing to make important decisions can lead to bigger problems than the ones our leaders are trying to solve. Leadership includes the ability to decide.
- **Relationship skills** – Trusted servants should be not just skilled verbal communicators (and sometimes in writing), but they should be solid listeners. This often requires patience, because many times people want to be heard and heard again when they don't agree on the direction the group takes. This is where "principles before personalities" really comes in. We often work on committees with people we don't know, or even don't like. Many times, once we've worked together in service, we become friends, or at least figure out how to support one another.
- **Critical thinking skills** – Critical thinkers are able to review the details, evaluate fact from fiction, and narrow down the facts so that all can understand the problem and the proposed solution. A critical thinker must be objective and be able to evaluate the information presented prior to forming a decision.

When Is it Better to Leave a Service Position Unfilled?

Sometimes it is better to leave a service opening unfilled rather than fill it with someone without the appropriate leadership skills for that position. For example, you don't want a person as a hospitals & institutions' spokesperson who has a resentment toward the law enforcement or the department of corrections, for whatever reason. An ability to put personal and even petty resentments aside is a critical characteristic of leadership. Lacking that, the person who insists on reliving those resentments can do more harm than good to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

Another example is that you probably don't want a regional treasurer who has no experience in accounting or accounting software. Are accounting skills leadership skills? They become so when your regional treasurer must handle credit card transactions that reject and must talk to a member or your credit card processing service provider, or solve financial problems that impact our membership, for example.

What do you do when you don't support a potential trusted servant? A solution could be to frankly discuss your concerns with that person. That person may be willing to accept mentorship as they grow in the position.

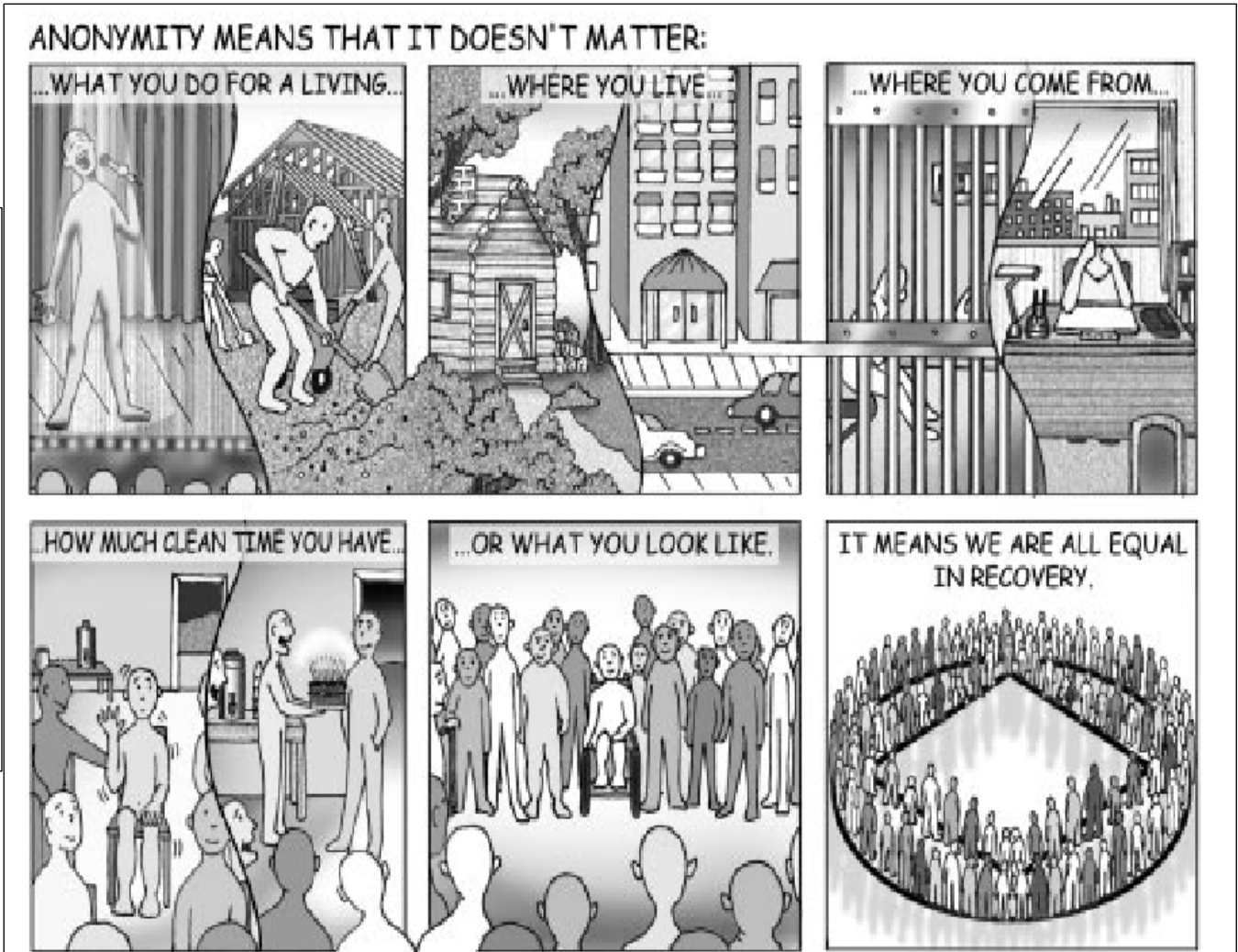
These are my opinions born out of years of service. These are just some of the critical skills needed for effective leadership. I'm sure you can think of more.
Nancy G.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Bowling and Fellowship	Saturday April 8 th @ 2:00pm
MACCNA XIII	Friday April 21 st – Sunday April 24 th
EV Skyline Serenity Hike	Saturday April 22 nd @ 10:00am
ARCNA Sweets and Treats Event	Saturday April 29 th @ 12:00pm

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



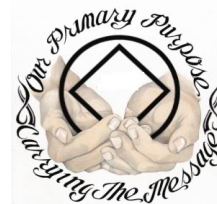
Sponsorship Behind the Walls

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



Skyline Serenity

HIKE Boulder Canyon Tortilla Flat

**4TH SATURDAY
APRIL 22, 2023**

Boulder Canyon Trail
Moderately challenging route in Superstition Wilderness that climbs out of Boulder Canyon to hike the ridgeline with excellent views of Canyon Lake. The trail to Viewpoint is 5 miles but we will hike a couple miles in, find a place for a meeting then hike back out. Lunch @ the Saloon in Tortilla Flat is optional

We Will Meet at Evergreen Park @ 5th st & Country Club Rd. In MESA @ 8:30 AM To Carpool & Leave @ 8:45 AM. Or Meet at the Trailhead by 10:00 AM

Directions:

From Phoenix Area Take Highway 60 East. Exit Idaho Rd. Go North on Idaho road for 2.2 miles. Right on Rt. 88. Follow Rt. 88 for 14.7 miles. Turn left into parking lot of Canyon Lake Marina. Meet there. Start at 10:00 am
We return to Evergreen Park approx 2 PM



NO shade!
Bring hat and sunscreen

**Let us know if you plan to hike
Chuck H. 480-236-4859
Eric G. 941-720-0143**

BRING:

Newcomer, Water, Snack, & PMA The Wilderness is Open for Sharing!
www.arizona-na.org

Steps to Recovery

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

serenity
service
confide
sponsor

recovery
strength
counselor
guidance

surrender
gratitude
forgiving
commitment

hope
choices
sober