

THE CONNECTION

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vol. one

SHARING WORLDWIDE RECOVERY

number 3

ADDICTED TO EXCITEMENT

The story of a girl and the exciting life she led that brought her close to death.

Cocaine Anonymous is my life line. When I first got sober five years ago, there wasn't any Cocaine Anonymous in New York. Or anywhere else in the country, for that matter. So, like so many other addicts who desperately needed help at the time, I staggered into AA.

After a little over two years of sobriety in AA, I learned that a similar 12-Step recovery program geared specifically to cocaine addiction had just started up out in California. They called it "Cocaine Anonymous." *That* was for me! It wasn't easy, it took a great deal of hard work and a lot of love and support from a lot of people, but we finally got the program off the ground in New York.

What a feeling it was talking with other cocaine addicts! They understood me and knew what I had been through. I'd led an exciting life because I'm addicted to excitement. And it didn't really matter whether it was positive or negative excitement, as long as it got my adrenalin moving! But I had spent years trying not to feel, because feelings made me uncomfortable. Now, I could say anything without fear of rejection because *they* had been there, too. I was finally home.

I was born in a small Connecticut town of less than a thousand people. Since both my parents worked, we were pretty much raised by the help. Life was relatively normal until my father, an international executive, was transferred

to Hong Kong. It was quite a shock, going from the culture of a small, quiet town to the hustle bustle of a big foreign city. During our stay there, my mother suffered some emotional difficulties and ended up in the hospital. I was sexually abused by a man who worked for the family around the same time. I kept that a secret for many years.

I was 11 years old when we left Hong Kong. My parents got a divorce and we moved to Spain with my mother. I started drinking right after that. I learned early on that male attention helped me feel better about myself. Having a boyfriend made me whole. And searching for the father figure, I almost always went out with older men, sometimes twice my age.

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CA Conference Texas-Style

The Texas Chapter of Cocaine Anonymous will be holding its First Annual Texas CA Conference at the University of Houston Conference Center, Houston, TX., Saturday, August 30th. Called "The Spirit of Texas," it promises to be an action-packed, fun-filled, informative 18-hour event, starting promptly at 8 a.m. All six-shooters will be checked at the door. Call Cynthia K. at (713) 667-8477 or Stan F. at (713) 747-4434 or (713) 729-6764 for further information.

Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict To Address 2nd CA Convention

Dr. Paul, whose story, "Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict," appears on Pgs. 439 through 452 in the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, will be the main speaker at Saturday night's banquet during the 2nd Annual World Services Cocaine Anonymous Convention in San Diego, this Fourth of July Weekend.

Called a "Celebration of Freedom," the convention is scheduled to begin on Friday and run through Sunday, July 6th, at the Holiday Inn Embarcadero.

Three days prior to the convention, CA will hold its 2nd World Services Conference at the same location.

In addition to a round-the-clock 48-hour marathon meeting on topics as diverse as "Terminal Uniqueness, Humility, Running the Show and The Power of Fun," Al S. will be conducting his annual Meditation Workshop, Jim N. will be going over the 4th Step and Thomas M. will impart a little Spirituality upon the masses.

Also, Robin W. and Connie S. will be holding a workshop on the 9th Step.

Other speakers include Arlene W., who will address the Welcome Meeting, Friday at 7 p.m.; Frank and Coco C., Greg C. and Nadine M. on Relationships; Jack P. and Jennifer R. on Service; noted authority Kenny L., Steve T., Pat S. and Julie L. on Sex in Sobriety; Arthur H. and Misty L. on Working With Others; Shannon K., John K., Bob L. and Barbara M. on Fun in Sobriety; and Marc K. and Pia K. on Sponsorship.

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Like most of us, I spent the last days of my "using" career alone. Total, incomprehensible, pathetic demoralization would have been a positive step forward for me at that stage of the game.

"You never have to be alone again" you told me when I first began attending meetings three years ago. And for some reason I believed you.

You haven't let me down yet.

A case in point: about a month ago I had occasion to journey to Chicago, where one Monday evening Wally O. picked me up at my hotel and took me to his Awareness Group meeting in a church on the North side. I'd met Wally the last time I was in Chicago.

Normally, when I'm attending a meeting out of town, I'm content to merely raise my hand and identify as "an addict/alcoholic from Los Angeles," but this particular evening I had been asked to speak. The topic was Fear, which was something of "coincidence" since I'd been feeling a great deal of anxiety for the past couple of days. After I'd shared about it, Phillip, a newcomer with 30 days, said he'd been experiencing the same thing. As had Dan, who was back now after having gone out at two-and-a-half years of sobriety. By the time the meeting ended and we went out for coffee, I was feeling a whole lot better.

And why not? Where else but in CA or AA or NA can you travel 2000 miles away from home and find all the love and caring and warmth you left behind?

We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

The Editor

The Lady & The Cowboy

It was Friday night my first week out of detox at Long Beach Memorial Coast View Chemical Dependency Program. The nurse announced over the intercom that there would be an H & I Panel meeting in the patients' lounge in fifteen minutes. Attendance was mandatory for all recovery patients. I couldn't see any reason for not attending the panel; I was tired of playing ping-pong and television privileges didn't start until tomorrow. I couldn't sleep. I hadn't slept for more than 8 hours in the last 7 days. Yet, those 8 hours I did sleep, I didn't just pass out. I actually fell asleep. I hadn't done that in over 15 years.

I grabbed a seat in the front row. There were three speakers that night. One was a good ol' boy wearing a cowboy hat, boots and a big thick belt. I hadn't seen anything like that since my last John Wayne movie. There was also a middle-aged lady all dressed up as if she were going to dinner and a bald-headed man in a white shirt.

What could these hillbillies possibly tell hip, slick and cool me? I asked myself.

The Cowboy kicked off the meeting by telling us H & I Panels go into hospitals, institutions and prisons to carry the message of recovery to the people confined to those facilities. The lady said no one was paying her to be there that night; she was there, she said, for her own personal recovery and sobriety. I will never forget that. And even though we all appeared so different on the surface, I could really identify with each of their stories.

Willingness and a God of my own understanding helped me get nine months of sobriety. It was at that time that I was asked to speak on an H & I Panel at a kick-out house in Pasadena. It was great. Boy, did I dump a lot of stuff! I saw myself several times in the faces of the 10 young men that were there. Most of them had just been released from jail. I saw heads nod up and down. I heard the laughter of identification. It's amazing after that night how close I felt to the four other panel members. I still have that feeling today.

By the grace of God I now have a year.

I am very active in CA, NA and AA. I enjoy all 12 Step Programs. My sobriety is as diverse as my drug usage used to be. Between my meetings, my sponsors, my reading and my commitments, I am enjoying my sobriety. I live the steps and practice the principles.

In February of this year, I attended the 1st Annual CA World Services Conference. For me, the Conference gave Unity to CA and promoted Change based on Fact to insure Continuity in CA as a whole. I wasn't a delegate, but I got on the H & I Committee. It blew my mind to see how much work Meredith and Ross had done to organize it. I made a commitment to support H & I any way I could.

That commitment has given me tremendous serenity and happiness in my sobriety. Working the 12 Steps carry the message. Today, I am a Panel Chairperson and attend all H & I business meetings. I also participate in at least one H & I Panel a week. And it doesn't matter how far I have to go; it certainly didn't matter how far I had to go when I was using. Today, God is providing me with serenity and peace like I have never known before.

Now I know why the lady said no one was paying her to be there to carry the message that Friday night.

Cathy B., Los Angeles

LAST RITES

A friend of ours who never made it to the program died. At the funeral several days later, the following conversation was overhead:

"What did he die of?"

"Using cocaine."

"Did he ever try to get help for his problem? You know, like go to Cocaine Anonymous?"

"Oh, no. It was never *that* bad!"

RESPONSIBILITY TAKES HARD WORK

*All her life she was scared of everything,
mostly responsibility.*

All my life I was scared of everything, mostly responsibility. I wanted a lot but could never seem to do all the work involved to get what I wanted. I was very angry and jealous of people who had more than I.

Today, I wish I could give what I have to everyone because you have given me so much.

I finally called it quits on February 29, 1984, and went into treatment for 21 days and then on to an independent living program here in Chicago for the next seven months. The only way I could stay clean and sober, I felt, was to live with recovering people; I needed all the support I could get. Since I'd been told how important it was to take commitments and get involved, I began making coffee at a women's group. I would get there early, set up, stay late and clean up. That is how I met people. Many times I didn't feel like going to the meeting but I went anyway because I had a job to do. I certainly didn't want anybody mad at me!

After a while, they asked me to be the Literature Person, which meant that they trusted me. What a shock! What shocked me even more was how much I cared. I really wanted to do a good job and keep good records. I also had access to all the literature, so I got to read it anytime I wanted to.

I was brought to my first CA meeting sometime in 1985. I loved it immediately. The people there were more honest than I could ever dream of being. But it rubs off, as we all know, as long as we keep coming back. After attending the meeting regularly for the next six months, I was elected Secretary. What an honor! And, even more, what a responsibility! But I got to meet a lot of people and really get to know them. My walls were slowly being knocked down, one by one, and I was beginning to learn that I was O.K. I started to pay more and

more attention to what was going on in the Fellowship and I even started going to a few GSO meetings. Next thing I knew, I was made Chairman of Special Events.

With my new responsibility, I had the opportunity to work with even more people and help get our first *Unity Conference Chicago* off the ground.

*I would get there early, set up,
stay late and clean up.*

Three months prior to the conference, I wasn't sure it could happen and be a success in such a short time. But I prayed a lot and I knew God was with us. How could anything go wrong when so many people were working for the good of others?

People came from all over. There were patients from hospitals and treatment centers, professionals involved in the field of recovery and addicts and alcoholics from the midwest and as far away as California. The feelings I experienced that day were far better than any highs I'd ever known. I wanted time to stand still so I could absorb everything in every panel discussion I attended. I wanted to meet and talk with everyone! We had twelve panel discussions, with three going on at the same time in different conference rooms. Which one to go to? People were sharing and caring, listening and laughing and crying. There was a hospitality suite with coffee and pastry and a literature room with everything we have on display. Everywhere I went there was someone I could talk to who'd been through the same experiences I'd been through.

The night we had a banquet and a meeting with over 180 people. I was the Mistress of Ceremonies. We had a sobriety countdown where the oldest (sober 17 years) presented the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* to each of the youngest (both with 6 days). Jonny S.

flew in from California to share his story with us. He was terrific, honest and funny, all at the same time. Following the Lord's Prayer, there was a dance until 1:30 a.m.

The conference was a real success!

And to think that I never, ever would have been able to play an active part in all this if I hadn't started out making coffee at that women's group! Service not only keeps me clean and sober, it builds my self-worth. I like myself today. Getting involved was the best move I ever made. Now I don't have to be angry and jealous of people anymore because they have more than me. All I have to do is ask myself how they got it and then go out and get it myself.

We have something special here. And I want to hold on to it as tight as I can, because I truly believe there is more to come. I'm 30 years old and clean and sober a little over two years. I am very, very happy.

Responsibility is a little scary but more than possible with a lot of help. Doing each day what I can makes *The Promises* come true in my life. For the first time I feel loved and capable of loving. I am very grateful.

Lynn Z., Chicago

CORRECTION

Everybody screws up once in a while, even the Editor of *The Connection*. In the lead article in our last issue, "Confessions of a Conference Junkie", the line, "Where had we ever gotten enough self-esteem to start CA in the face of such vehement disapproval and oftentimes even ridicule from more than a few members of AA? should have read, "Where had we ever gotten enough self-esteem to start CA in the face of such vehement disapproval and sometimes ridicule from some members of another fellowship?" Jack P., the author, assures us that he was referring to another 12-Step recovery program and that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous in his community could not have been more supportive of the formation of CA. The Editor apologizes for any misunderstanding this error might have caused.

COCAINE

Peeking out the window
and feeling the pain
of paranoia and psychosis
as it starts again.

Cocaine

At first it's full of love
and beautiful things.
But soon you find
you're left with only
horrible dreams
from *Cocaine*

In the 60's you snorted
with long hippie hair;
in the 80's you smoke it
or shoot 'til you're scared
of *Cocaine*

Snort it, smoke it
or shoot it from a gun.
The truth is all you ever do
is chase it and run
to *Cocaine*

Living close to death
and living in Hell;
by now you can't remember
when you were ever well
from *Cocaine*

And just before death
you stop with a smile
'til the boredom and the pressure
change your legal lifestyle
of *Cocaine*

So peek out the window
and feel the rain
of paranoia and psychosis
as it starts again.

Cocaine

Steve S. Los Angeles

DANCE THE DANCE OF DEATH

*All that she held beautiful was forever driven from her
soul by the Pied Piper of Death.*

This year has been a gift of God.

I am grateful today that I am alive and well, and have been delivered from the living death that had become my existence.

I had allowed all that I held dear and true and beautiful to be forever driven from my soul in that endless pursuit of the Pied Piper of Death. The base pipe was the tune he played. It spread sweet notes of euphoria that so soon began to jarr, each sound leaving the listener in fear and agitation, yet so engulfed in the vicious music that we needed to hear just one more tune. The "dance macabre" was a pathetic sight to see. The dancer compelled by the insanity of the music to continue until exhaustion of death took hold.

But our sad dancer did not learn. At the first note from the black-hued piper, the gruesome spectacle began anew. There is no feeling between each of the sad dancers. They are detached from one another. Eyes sunken in their heads, forever fixed on the piper, their only true master, their lover, their friend, the only one that has their allegiance. The other fools around are meaningless.

They laugh and cavort with hollow-echoed voices, as the piper smiles venomously to himself. He has them . . . they will follow him down his grim path . . . there is no escape.

And I followed, crawling sometimes on my hands and knees. This was the way of no return, and I wanted none. I had slid down and down so far into the slime that I knew that I could never return home. Never return to the life that I had known and held true. I was willing to take this path to the very bitter end. All was lost, I cared no longer . . . my existence was worthless, and therefore should be ended. The piper was my only friend. If I paid him, he always played me a tune. He told me it would be an

heroic death . . . I believed him, for no one cared anyway . . . my parents, my children, all meaningless, all futile. The piper was the only true way as he dragged me lurching, screaming, wild-eyed down to his ultimate goal — the welcome release of death.

Yet, I did not die . . . here I am. I can only believe that it was some divine intervention that told me to call for help that night, a spark of rational thinking that told me I was dying. I listened . . . thank God, I listened.

But I was frightened, I panicked. I wanted to return to the safety of the piper's tune. But they would not let me return. They thought I had gone insane, and so they kept me safe . . . safe from myself. And I began to let the evil tune fade in head and listen to another quiet voice . . . so gentle and kind . . . a voice I had never known or believed existed.

*This was the way of no return, and
I wanted none; I had slid down
so far into the slime.*



I looked in the mirror and saw a skull with but little flesh upon it to give the impression of life.

"This is not me!", I cried, "I used to be beautiful and happy. I used to have a brain, I used to think, I used to feel, I used to laugh."

Behind me in the mirror, I saw the piper, the skeletal finger beckoning. I looked onto those dead eyes of mine.

"I have no strength, I no longer have the energy to live," I whined at those who would listen.

"Eat and your strength will return," they responded.

"I have no faith, I have no hope," I screamed.

"You will come to believe, and with that will come hope and faith."

"I cannot believe. I have never believed . . . there is no God. I cannot feel. All I can do is think. In my mind there is no God." I stamped my foot and crossed my arms in defiance.

Again they said, "You will come to believe . . . you will . . . if you want to live."

I did want to live. I began to open my closed mind and remove the many layers of armour to expose my feelings. And I came to believe. With those feelings came the beginnings of hope. Each day I replaced those thousand fears with small pieces of faith.

I looked at all those smiling faces with their open arms. At first, I mistrusted their motives. We had never been formally introduced. I knew it was socially unacceptable to hug these strangers. And yet . . . I had no money any longer and the men just wanted to be my friend . . . perhaps these were people I could trust.

As I began to trust myself, I began to trust you.

As my trust increased my faith increased. As my faith increased, I began to see my fears to be the imaginary insanities they really were.

I began to look back over my life and opened up the festering wounds of



resentment and hate, the poisons growing and spreading each year. As the air and sun were allowed through, the wounds began to heal. The pain was excruciating; so often I wanted to just cover them up once more. But I did not. I walked through the pain and the wounds healed, forever.

I began to feel free. To breathe in the good air of life. To gain spirituality from the sea. The strength and noble beauty of the waves. The majesty of snow-clad mountains, the tall noble pines. A scene unchanged for millions of years. My problems began to pale into insignificance.

*As I began to trust myself,
I began to trust you.*

So, here I am as a three-masted schooner. Built in England with the best materials that could be found, foundered on the rocks. My steering mechanism somewhat antiquated, charts unchanged in a hundred years. The world had moved on.

And you lovingly helped to rebuild me. The steering now state-of-art. The charts revised, with all the rocks and all the pirates clearly marked. I now know where I should not go. And now I am filled with such optimism. The schooner is once more whole; I can venture forth once more. I have all the strength to out-

ride whatever storms I may encounter, and hopefully the patience if I am becalmed.

I am alive and free and happy and, with God's help, will go anywhere in this world that I wish.

Elizabeth P., El Segundo



Artwork by Patricia Davis

From Spain we moved back to Connecticut, and then I went to Brazil to live with my father. Another geographic and I was living with my mother in the Virgin Islands. By this time I was involved in any and every drug I could find . . . speed, acid, pot, alcohol, and sopers (quaaludes). My mother decided I needed to get away from this atmosphere, so I was shipped off to Newport School for Girls in Rhode Island. There I learned about new drugs (including Romalar cough syrup) and not much else. Midway through the 11th grade, I was transferred out (with much resentment) to Northfield, Mt. Hermon Prep School in Mass. I just managed to graduate. Rather than go on to college, I went backpacking through Europe trying to "find myself". Needless to say, I didn't.

I loved the fast life we led . . . the money, the coke, the champagne.

I then moved to California. Maybe the answer was there, I thought. Instead, all I found were more drugs, alcohol and sex. I felt like a lost soul. I continued my quest to St. Thomas, and then back to New York, where I tried cocaine for the very first time. I honestly didn't understand what all the excitement was about. It really wasn't until a few years later that I discovered what I had been missing. Of course, I never told anyone it didn't get me high because I knew they'd stop offering it to me!

I remember working on a cruise ship out of Miami as a croupier, dealing craps, blackjack and roulette. We were in port in St. Thomas for the day. I was with an old boyfriend and we did some coke. I don't know whether it was the purity of the coke or the kind of day it was or where we were or what . . . but after that first line, my whole life changed. The world looked beautiful, everything became crystal clear. I knew all the answers; I felt in total control. It was *euphoria*. From then on I loved cocaine.

After that, I went back to college and managed to get my degree, only using cocaine socially. Then I moved to Key West and fell in love with the lifestyle there. I got a job as a bartender and partied non-stop. I met a man who was on

the Chicago Board of Trade who had lots of cocaine. I quit my job so we could travel whenever he had time. He supported me. I loved the fast life we led, the money, the coke, the champagne and the traveling. Not long after, I moved back to New York to become a photographer and the relationship tapered off. I was devastated. I immediately got together with another man so I wouldn't have to feel the pain. I had just inherited some money, which we used to start dealing pot and cocaine, but one night all the drugs we had bought were stolen during a bad deal and I got a little crazy. Shortly after, I was hospitalized for serum hepatitis and, gratefully, my relationship with that man ended.

When I got out of the hospital, I went down to Carnivale in Rio to recuperate! Coke made me feel better so I bought some and partied for a week. I couldn't slow my pace when I returned to New York. I met some coke dealers and immediately hooked on to one of them. We had a contest to see who could stay up the longest and four of us stayed up for *seven* days, never leaving our little apartment.

My mother had moved to New York and was now sober in AA. It was hard to face her in my condition; I felt so guilty I moved to San Francisco, where I met a cocaine dealer and moved in with him. It was the beginning of the end. I began to binge on a regular basis. I tried taking some business courses at San Francisco State but I couldn't even sit through a class. During the breaks I would get high in the bathroom and then I'd leave. I couldn't concentrate for more than 10 minutes at a time; I had real difficulty finishing any work I started. I never completed any of those classes. I felt there was something wrong with me; I had no idea it was the drugs.

I started dealing coke again and brought some to N.Y. to sell. By the time I boarded my flight I'd been up for three days and was pretty spaced out. A guy on the plane discovered I was holding, so I sold him some in the bathroom. Pretty soon the word got around it was a party flight. At one point I peered out of the bathroom and there *six* people lined up to buy from me!

When we finally landed, I recall strik-

ing up a conversation with someone on the ground. We were talking about the weather, only he was talking about the weather in New York and I was talking about the weather in San Francisco. It was quite embarrassing, to say the least, when he explained that I was nowhere *near* San Francisco; I was in New York. During the same binge, I was at a party and everyone left without saying good-bye. I asked where they'd all gone only to find out I was hallucinating; there had *been* no party! Paranoia became a part of my life. My friends took guns to imaginary people and every phone (including the public phones) was bugged. I thought there were invisible bugs on my body and actually consulted several doctors for relief.

I had stopped snorting cocaine because my nose didn't work anymore; instead, I was eating it through my mouth.

I had stopped snorting cocaine about a year-and-a-half before because my nose just didn't work anymore; instead, I was literally eating it through my mouth. One morning I started coughing up blood. I was terrified. I was so paranoid when I went to the hospital, I couldn't tell them I was doing cocaine. The next time it happened, in Haight Ashbury, I went to the Free Clinic and they told me I had to stop doing cocaine, but that wasn't an option. Not for me. I couldn't stop. I continued coughing up blood.

By now, I was no longer walking the dog, my behavior had become anti-social, and I was miserable whether I was high or straight; it didn't matter. Life had become an absolute, total living hell for me. My boyfriend at the time told me I had to leave the house but my paranoia was so intense I preferred death to going outside. I took an overdose of pills and he became so furious he called someone to take me away.

My life and the situations I continued to get myself into kept getting worse and worse. A violent rape attempt brought me back to New York *one more time*. It was a nightmare. On January 16, 1981, in the early morning hours inside an afterhours club, I was caught in the middle of a drug war. I just stood there. Guns went off. Real guns. Someone knocked

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ADDICTED continued from page 6

me down on the floor to get me out of the way. When I came to in an alley outside, everything but the clothes on my back was gone. I had no money, no keys, nowhere to go.

I called my mother for help and she took me to a detox.

And an amazing thing happened . . . I found out I had a disease, that if I stayed straight I would feel sane again. I had been out of it for so many years I had no idea what being sane felt like without drugs in my system. But it felt great. And with these feelings came an ability to believe in a Power Greater Than Myself. And *that's* a miracle! I used to be embarrassed to talk about God, much less *believe* in Him!

Miracles do happen if we stay sober.

So many incredible things have happened to me since. The void inside me disappeared and I learned to like myself. I bought a new car, got a house, a diploma, a profession, a private practice, a husband, two step-children, a dog and a cat.

But the most important thing I have today is an understanding of who I am and an ability to enjoy my own company. Miracles do happen if we stay sober one day at a time.

Jennifer R., New York



**Welcome to San Diego!
"Celebration of Freedom"
The 2nd CA World Service
Convention
July 4th, 5th, and 6th, 1986**

Complete details and reports
in your next issue of
The Connection

**TWELVE REWARDS
OF THE
TWELVE STEPS**

1. Courage instead of fear.
2. Faith instead of despair.
3. Hope instead of desperation.
4. Peace of mind instead of confusion.
5. Self-respect instead of self-contempt.
6. Real friendships instead of loneliness.
7. Self-confidence instead of helplessness.
8. A clean conscience instead of a sense of guilt.
9. Respect of others instead of their pity and contempt.
10. A clean pattern of life instead of purposeless existence.
11. Love and understanding from our families instead of doubts and fears.
12. Freedom of a happy life instead of the bondage of an addictive obsession.

CONVENTION continued from page 1

In addition, John S. will lead a Men's Stag, while Laurie W. leads a Woman's Stag, Saturday at 8 a.m., and Scott M. will lead Gay Meeting at noon.

A three-hour dance with a live DJ will be held both Friday and Saturday night at 10 p.m.

Program Chairman for the convention is Ken C., with an assist from Co-Chairman Bob M., along with a number of other recovering addict/alcoholics who have actively been involved in the Fellowship since its inception in November of 1982.

The 3rd Annual World Services Convention is tentatively scheduled to be held next year in San Francisco.

A GIRL and HER PLAN

I walked into Cocaine Anonymous nine months ago with three days of sobriety and a plan. I had no idea at the time that my life was being saved.

I was at the height of my using when I was arrested for selling cocaine to a police officer. I was told that the next three years of my life would most likely be spent in prison. The idea didn't thrill me, so I immediately went to work on a plan that would, one more time, get me out of the mess I'd made of my life.

I knew CA existed. I'd attempted to call before, but I always chickened out. This time I figured I'd go to a few meetings, stay clean until my case was over and then resume my insane lifestyle. Fortunately for me, that's not what God had in mind.

I walked into the first meeting secretly patting myself on the back. I thought I was so smart. When they asked the newcomers to raise their hands, mine went up. Then the leader asked us to stand and state our name and disease. I did. I even took a newcomer chip. I left that meeting with mixed feelings:

"That wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."

"Those people didn't look like addicts. They're too happy to be addicts."

"What the hell am I supposed to do with all these phone numbers?"

"They really don't expect me to call them, do they?"

And so it went. I soon found myself looking forward to 7:30 p.m. I made a couple of friends my first week of sobriety and began talking to them on the phone every day. My first appearance in court, I showed up with a 30-day chip on my keyring. Was I proud!

Around this time I started praying. A quick one in the morning was all I could manage. Then something happened. At 46 days I had a powerful spiritual awakening. I got down on my knees with another sober member of the fellowship and took the Third Step. I felt God's presence in my life immediately and He hasn't left me since.

I became a new person that night. I found myself reaching out to newcomers newer than I, taking commitments at meetings, participating in my own recovery.

My court dates came and went and

each time I had new chip on my keyring. 60-days, 90-days, six months. I volunteered to have court cards signed. Members of the fellowship wrote letters to the judge on my behalf. I am to appear in court soon for final sentencing, but I'm not worried. I have turned it over to my Higher Power and I have faith that His Will will be done. I continue to do the footwork. That's all I can do.

I cannot express how much this program and the fellowship means to me. It hasn't been easy, but it has been working. I am slowly but surely becoming the person I've always wanted to. There is a peace and comfort inside of me that I never dreamed possible.

For a girl with just three days and a plan, CA is more than I ever bargained for.

Tanya D., Los Angeles

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