

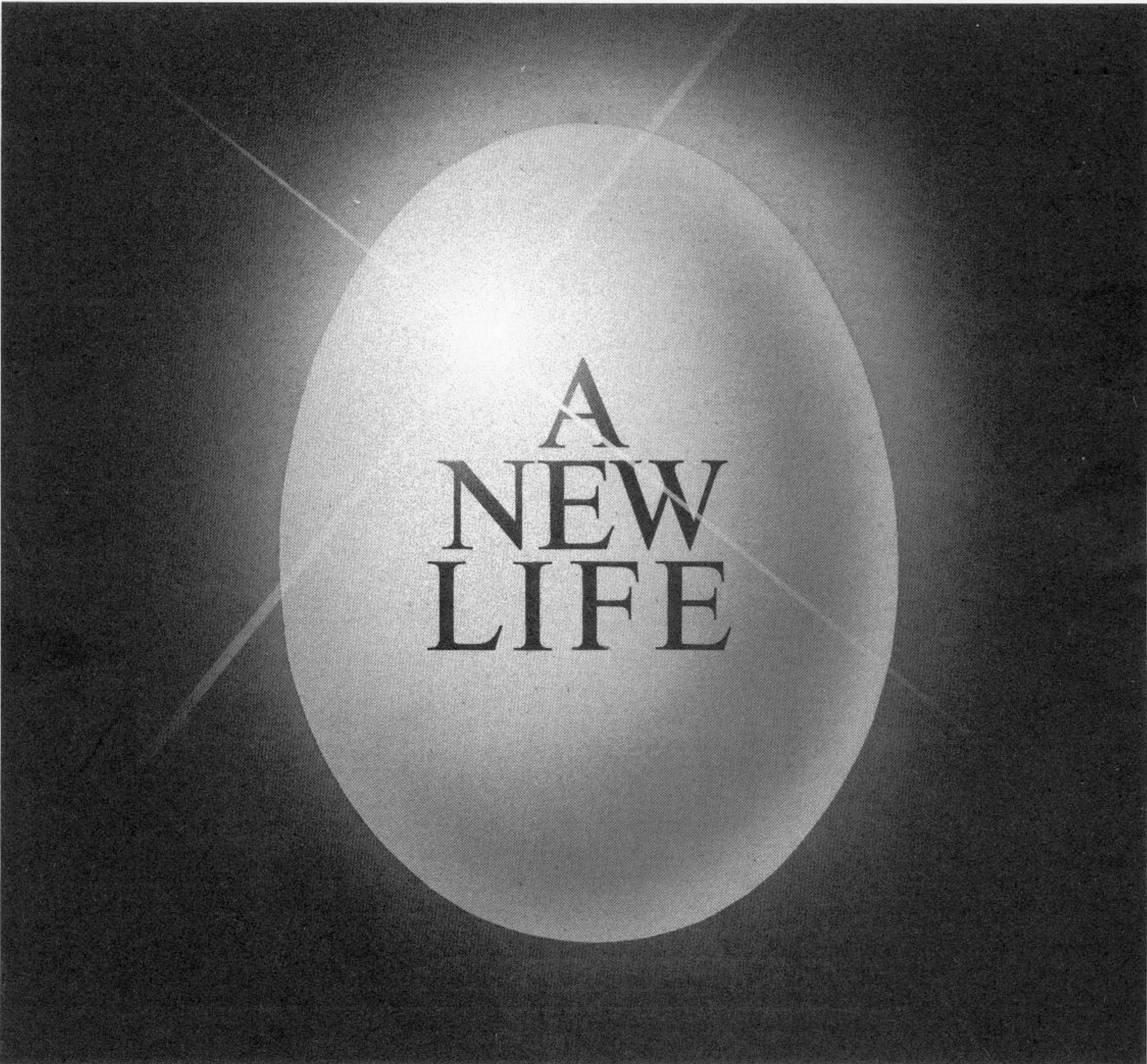
THE CONNECTION

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Volume IV, No.2

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

Summer 1989



A
NEW
LIFE

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FROM THE EDITOR

Hi again. Well, I'll be hooked sideways by an elephant's nose if we don't keep putting together a Connection!! Yeah! I want to thank all our contributors and welcome aboard Greg M. as our new design and layout person, looks good, yes? I also want to thank Mel M. who was so helpful with the past three issues.

What we really need is more contributions from all over this beautiful world, so if you're out there, write something down about the quality of sobriety in your area!

This next issue is on "Working It," so do a little footwork for CA, and send in those submissions!

QUOTE

"I always thought that I would have to give up so much to stay clean. That I couldn't go here, couldn't do this or that. I didn't realize that I was chained to my drugs. Without them, the possibilities for my life are boundless. I can do anything today."

CHECKING IN ON

A NEW LIFE

I was born 62 years ago today. My family was very wealthy and I was driven to school in a chauffeured limousine. This wealth, and being fat, separated me from other kids during my childhood. I was physically abused by a governess and by other kids, and I was mentally abused by my mother and other kids. I kept a knife in my dresser for suicide from the age 11. When I got to college, it was the first unrepressed atmosphere I knew. When I got there in 1944 I didn't know who I was or what I wanted to be.

After two years of being an A student, I began drinking and smoking pot with my school buddies. My newfound freedom gave me friends I never had before. My grades fell, but I equated substance abuse with fun, friends, lovers and life.

There were years when I would stay clean and sober, but, without a program, I had terrible tempers, compulsions and acted on whims. I never knew what to do, or what to do about not knowing. I was very insecure, and rarely talked. Then when I took dexadrine I couldn't stop talking, and ended up having a nervous breakdown from its abuse.

I moved all over the country. I never lived anywhere for more than three years. Drinking had gotten to the point of blackouts by 1962, and I lost all control when I drank. I was disgusted with myself, but I'd be drinking or smoking the next night.

I didn't experience coke until 1978. I had a different attitude toward cocaine. I lost my insecurity, shyness, and even though my life was falling apart, I couldn't see it.

The last of my family wealth was lost by 1978, so I chose to babysit suitcases of cocaine for a friend. At the end I couldn't get out of bed for two months. I had lost the will to do anything. I was suicidal. Anything good in my life was meaningless.

Finally I went to be with family in another state. My family started in recovery. I never thought of myself as an addict, but after a nudge from a member of my family, it became clear what my whole life had been about—from the teenage drinking parties to hanging out in bars for four decades, from living with the 'Beats' in North Beach to living in Mendocino with the hippies.

After a year of Cocaine Anonymous meetings I started working the steps with a sponsor I trusted. I did the steps slowly and eagerly. With all the intellectual knowledge I had acquired, I hadn't been given tools to deal with the day to day craziness that life brings. I had the will to learn.

In my family today there are five of us in 12 step programs. Cocaine brought us to our knees. At four and one half years of sobriety, my life is a blessing. I have no more suicidal thoughts. I have a solid spiritual program. I have learned to talk and share what is inside me. I have love and support from family and C.A. friends. My perception gets clearer by the year, my mind clearer. Meaningfulness and fulfillment come from everywhere as long as I go to meetings, accept service in the program and as long as I am aware of my Higher Power whom I choose to call God.

Anonymous

WHY

AM I DOING THIS?

"I kept swearing night after night that I would never use again."

I remember walking down the street, feeling very sick and saying to myself, "Why am I doing this?" I was about 14 at the time, and had just snorted a few whites at a friend's house. It wasn't my favorite thing to do, but no one had any liquor or other drugs that day. I was sweating; I felt nauseated; I was weak. I couldn't wait to get home to lay on my parent's couch and cry "flu," which is exactly what I did. It wasn't the first time, nor would it be the last.

Almost ten years later at the age of 23, I was preparing to graduate with a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing, and I was asking myself the same question, "Why am I doing this?" There was no rational explanation for why I kept putting that straw to my nose, yet I did—day after day.

I am the youngest child in a large Irish Catholic family of seven children. I was always an intelligent child usually first or second in my classes. From what I can remember of my early childhood, I believe that I was a somewhat lonely little girl. As young as first grade I can remember feeling I was on the outside looking in on everyone having fun and participating in conversations, games and parties.

The earliest recollection I have

of taking a drug to get high was when I went to the dentist at about age seven. The dentist always gave me orange-tasting nitrous-oxide. I thought it was great stuff! One day they started the gas, and after a few minutes, I was feeling pretty funny. I liked it and I wanted MORE. When they asked me if I was feeling it, I said no, because I knew they would turn it up. Soon I felt my body floating off that dentist's chair, and felt as if I was flying around the office amidst the multi-colored fishie mobiles. I loved it. The assistant asked me again if I was feeling it, and I still said no. She looked in my eyes and ripped off that mask! She really rained on my parade. I was never happy when the drugs were all gone.

I started drinking when I was 13, then went to smoking pot, dropping acid, taking mushrooms, and doing a little PCP. Immediately my attitude began to change. I didn't care about anyone or anything. The only enjoyment in my life was getting drunk and high. In high school, my parents sent me back to private school to 'reform' me. Of course I rebelled with everything I had. I was constantly in trouble. Luckily I never got caught for anything serious. I sought out 'lower companions,' as I had no self-confidence or self respect. I was in desperate need of attention and acceptance, and I got into a relationship that was very emotionally abusive.

When I was 15 I discovered cocaine. It was my favorite drug—

better than pot, even better than booze. Cocaine did for me what I could not do for myself. It took away the pain inside. It took away my fears and self-doubt. It enabled me to walk into a party without my hands shaking and my face twitching. That little white powder made me feel pretty, powerful, worthwhile and in control.

Only one of my neighborhood friends graduated from high school. Miraculously I graduated and decided to go away to college. I applied to a State University which was known for its party reputation. I was sure it was the place for me. I was on the Dean's list for the first two semesters, and I lived off campus in dorms where there was drinking, some pot smoking but no cocaine. I drank ALOT. I was so afraid of people that I believe if I had not had the alcohol to help me cope, I would have had a nervous breakdown. It was truly an overwhelming, paralyzing fear.

My sophomore year I began dating a dealer. That relationship lasted almost five years. By my junior year I began having periodic all night using sprees. I still did very well in school, working very hard during the week. But as school progressed so did my addiction. I rationalized that I didn't have a problem because I still got A's and B's. I used to say, "I work hard and I party hard," or "I deserve this line because I got an A on my test." The truth is, I deserved a lot better than I was giving myself.

(Turn it over to page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Somewhere in the last year of college I realized I had a problem. I kept swearing night after night that I would never use again. I didn't realize I was no longer making the choice to use—I was compelled. I began flunking classes. I kept thinking, "I'm an intelligent person. This drug is ruining my education, my future and my relationship. Why can't I just stop using it?"

The last year of my using was a living nightmare. There were countless trips to the dealers house by five in the morning. I became so obnoxious that they would slam the door in my face. It was humiliating. I would stand there and bang on the door until they would open it out of fear that someone would call the police. I made many trips to the liquor store to buy booze at six A.M. I thought I was still maintaining, but I was really insane.

When the sun began to rise, I would feel a depression and loneliness that was so complete, it can't be described in words. All the drapes would be shut, the phone was off the hook. I would be scared someone would come by and see me like that. I wouldn't go out of the house except for more coke, booze or cigarettes. I rarely showered and often wore the same clothes for days at a time. I became more sick with each passing day. I didn't want any part of life anymore. I didn't really believe in God, but I found myself praying, "God help me."

I started going to meetings once or twice a week. I was not willing to go more often or to give up drinking. The meetings kept me clean for a few days at a time, which was long enough to get my work done. Finally, I did graduate with my nursing degree, and within ten days of graduation I voluntarily committed myself to a treatment program. I was done. I knew I could never hold a job. At that point I didn't care what I had to do to stop using. I became

willing to go to a meeting every single day, to give up my old friends, to break off my five year relationship.

The beginning was painful, yet it was the start of a journey which has brought me joy and freedom that I have never known or imagined. I have learned that I am not alone in my fears and frustrations. I discovered I am not the only person afflicted with this fatal disease. My disease is in my thinking and in my perceptions of myself and those around me. My responsibility in my recovery is to stop ignoring myself and start paying attention. Cocaine is no longer a solution to the way I feel. It took away my fears and frustrations and pain, but it also stole my ability to give and feel love. It took away my self-esteem, my hopes and my dreams. It left me empty, alone, frightened and full of despair. Today I want to live and be part of life. I have many friends in the fellowship with whom I can truly be myself.

I am learning to accept myself for who I am today. I am eliminating the word "should" from my vocabulary. I've always thought, "I should be more outgoing, less afraid, have more self-confidence." Instead I am accepting that I am afraid of people, and am, most the time, a quiet person. Both are okay. I'm perfect as I am. If I want to and am willing to change, the steps can help me grow to be a new person.

"My recovery and my life today is miraculous, and I believe, deep inside, that no human being could have relieved me of my addiction."

This is a spiritual program and I have a very simple concept of spirituality. I think of spiritu-

ality as anything that makes me feel good connected to life. That could be getting out of bed in the morning to go to work, an honest conversation with a close and trusted friend, a great Italian meal, a sunny day at the beach, or a new day of sobriety. My Higher Power wants only the best for me. He wants me to be happy and at peace with myself. This does not mean there will never be struggle or pain in my life, there is. However my life continues to get better. I would never have dreamed I would be where I am today. I can speak in front of people and feel fairly comfortable. The fear of people is no longer paralyzing. The self-confidence I have today is real, not drug-induced. Within six months of being clean and sober, I secured a job in a renowned teaching hospital as a critical care R.N. Just months before, I was so sick I wouldn't have known the difference between a bedpan and a thermometer!

My recovery and my life today is miraculous, and I believe, deep inside, that no human being could have relieved me of my addiction. It had nothing to do with my willpower. Only a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. My experience tells me that God can and will if I seek him. I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand him, and in return, he has relieved me of my addiction and transformed me into a person I can love. He has given me more joy and success than my human intelligence and talents could have dreamed of or created. He has done for me what I could not do for myself.

I thank all the people in this program who have come before me and shared their pain, the healing power of their love and understanding, and their hope so that I, too, could recover.

Anonymous

INSIDE STORY

"C.M. had been released from prison but was not yet free."

I believe I was an addict before I ever picked up drugs, because I never fit in anywhere, though I certainly tried. I tried living in an outlaw creed with bikers, and got real caught up in the cocaine lifestyle. But wherever I was, I changed to be like the people I was with. I always felt I had to prove myself.

I never felt loved or wanted. I tried to make people love me. I tried to buy love. My family would tell me that they would love me so much more if I just got off the drugs, and most the women I knew would tell me that they would love me so much more if I would just get more... Always there were conditions on the love. I would make people write "I love you" down and then put it in my wallet as proof. And I would do other insane things for attention. Once I took an overdose of 'downs.' I didn't want to die; I just wanted someone to pay attention to me.

"Always there were conditions on the love."

It felt like I fought for years for love and affection. After so long I gave up. I took the attitude that I didn't need anyone. I could do everything for myself and didn't want anyone around me. I didn't need you. Nothing bothered me. I could handle everything. No one would ever get the best of me.

Little did I know that drugs

and alcohol were simply easing the pain. Pretty soon though there wasn't enough drugs and alcohol in the world to kill the pain and rejection I felt. I had to stay numb 24 hours a day. I hated myself. I had no self-respect or self-worth.

I was so determined to be 'free' that I didn't realize I was already in prison. I talked about all the places I would go, all the things I would do, but always ended up in the same places, doing the same thing...getting high.

Using progressed. I stole, I lied, and started dealing. I saw my 21st, 22nd, and 23rd birthdays in prison from all the using and dealing drugs. I thought freedom came the 4th day of March 1986 when the front gate of the prison opened for me. But freedom really came on the day that I finally hit a bottom and entered a treatment program. I learned that my life would never get better, until I helped myself. But then I thought I was too young to really have a problem. I relapsed.

On March 14th 1987 I tried to kill myself. I 'came to' three days later not knowing where I was or what had happened. Today I know that my God wanted me alive.

I surrendered and became willing to do anything. Today I have a great sponsor and more true friends that truly love me than I could have imagined. I work the steps and have happi-

ness in my life. No more clinging to the old image. I now have some self-respect and self-worth.

I hold my head up high today, because I am worth something. I love myself. I sponsor two men in the program, and am involved in the fellowship. Today I truly am free. I am a true miracle. I have never been happier in my life. I know I have a life and death disease. This is no game for me. I have a real patient monkey on my back, waiting to kill me. Today I choose to live.

"I surrendered and became willing to do anything."

Please don't ever give up on anyone. I was one of the ones that people said would never make it. But because the fellowship loved me when I could not love myself, and you didn't give up on me, when I gave up on myself, I live today.

You taught me how to feel when I didn't know how. You gave me a place to belong, when there was none. You led me to a God, when I didn't believe. You gave me hope when I was hopeless. You gave me a choice.

You taught me honesty, open-mindedness and willingness, and you gave me life. Thank you Cocaine Anonymous.

C.M., Birmingham, Alabama

PROGRAM POETRY

What gives a morning serenity
The freedom of him
The desire of me
Soaring unlimitedly
They hover over head
Making unthinkable
All logic we've read
It is not our duty to question the rare
But live with the miracles
He designed us to share
Ninety hawks gliding
On winds so free
Leaves no doubt to the question
Of our serenity

M.T., Ontario, CA

New life.
Shiny and full of colour.
New life.
Before me, around me and above.

New life.
To taste now and savour.
New life.
Filled with sweet self-love.

Take all of me,
New life.
I'm ready, finally,
Ready, for new life.

S.S., Glendale, CA

THE CONNECTION NEEDS YOU!!!

STORIES, POEMS,
QUOTES, LETTERS,
CARTOONS...

Send Submission (with signed release)
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Legal Signature

Date

Address

City

State

You may use my city, state Y___ N___

Hello (Drug Free)

*Hello, I'm no longer in misery.
I'm grateful to have freedom from drugs.
The blindfolds are off and I can see
My true self, the one that I love.*

*Hello, mother and father, I hold you so dear,
Please forgive me for losing my self-worth.
What you told me was right, but I didn't adhere,
But now I've come back down to earth.*

*Hello, my fond sisters and brothers,
Our drug using mustn't go further,
Rather than fighting and rivaling one another,
Let us share good times with each other.*

*Hello, my lovely nephews and neices,
I was a junky and undependable you know.
With lies I tore your small hearts to pieces
Today I will take you where you want to go.*

*Hello, my relatives, so many misused,
Thinking about it, I realize my wrongs,
No longer will you be used and abused,
Together we can stand, very strong.*

*Hello, all my old and forgotten friends,
The drugs nearly drove me insane.
Now that it's over, I can see once again,
I realize that I, not you, had changed.*

*Hello, my Higher Power, great God above,
I have returned to your table to feast,
You have given me now the power to love,
And my resentment continues to decrease.*

*Hello, I'm grateful to be drug free,
I no longer have to deal with that strife.
I feels good to have sobriety,
With God in control of my life.*

M.E., Hacienda Heights, CA

AMEN

12 STEP PRAYER

God, please me to stay sober today.

Help me to remember that when I feel overwhelmed, you will restore me to sanity

Allow me to turn my will and my life over to you.

Remind me that, having taken moral inventory of myself, I do not have to regret the past, which I have shared with you and another.

Help me to see and to identify my character defects so that I may allow you to remove them.

When I have harmed another, give me the courage to make amends, unless it is better not to.

Help me to go over my day and to admit when I am wrong.

Allow me to increase my conscious contact with you through prayer and meditation, and to carry your message to those who still suffer.

Help me to practice these principles in all my affairs.

Amen

Anonymous, Stanford, CT

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