

# CleanTimes

January - March 2007

Serving the West Tennessee Area of Narcotics Anonymous

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*Happy Holidays Season Greetings Happy New Year*

## ***Losing A Loved One Doesn't Mean The Love Doesn't Live On***

My name is Ross N., and I wanted to share about losing a loved one in Recovery. This year on the 1st of May I received a call from my brother, telling me that my Dad had passed away. My mother had told me he was sick, but I didn't realize that he was in the last stages of Leukemia. Losing a loved one in Recovery is never an easy thing, but losing my dad at 5 1/2 months clean was especially hard. There were so many things to say, and so many amends to make. Unfortunately life is a one shot deal that we can neither plan for, or orchestrate it's outcomes. In my life those things are left up to my loving Higher Power, God. At this point my relationship with the God of my understanding was the basis of the strength that I needed to deal with and overcome this ordeal. Looking back it was the things that I did in my Recovery and my relationship with God that helped me to deal with this experience. And yes, there were even times where I was filled with such gratitude that God would bless me to be clean when this event happened in my life. Overwhelming feelings of gratitude that I was even able to go to his memorial service, and yes, even speak in front of my family, most of whom had written me off as dead just a few years ago. Three things that my Higher Power helped me to realize in this situation were that one; He would not give me anymore than I was capable of handling. Two, somewhere down the line someone that I was close to could gain experience, strength and hope from what I was going through at this point. And three, that the experiences in Recovery, that we grow through, can only make us stronger *if we so choose*. These moments of sanity were complete blessings given to me as gifts by the Grace of the God of my understanding. Gifts that have come: Higher Power and staying clean a day at a time through a loving fellowship known as Narcotics Anonymous.

I love u always family,  
Ross J.N.

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### ***Prayer Corner***

#### ***Serenity Prayer***

God grant me the serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change.  
The courage to change  
the things that I can.  
And the wisdom to know the  
difference.

#### ***Third Step Prayer***

Take my will and my life  
Guide me in my recovery  
Show me how to live

#### ***Gratitude Prayer***

My gratitude speaks, when  
I care and  
when I share with others the  
N.A. way.

## ***So I went to VRC 24***

This is my 5th VRC and memory doesn't really do any of them justice. I am always amazed at the feelings that stir in me when I walk into a Narcotics Anonymous convention.

If you get to go I recommend going for the whole 5 days. We couldn't this year because of work. Maybe next year.

So what's a convention like?

At first it's strange, going up to the front desk and asking for a room. I mean it's almost the opposite of being Anonymous isn't it? Hi I'm Bryan, and I'm here to hang out for a weekend with 1000 or so of my closest friends who are here to celebrate being in Recovery. It's funny when you think about it. There are so many of us who are scared to death of the labeling, or the possibility of losing jobs or friends if our disease were to become public knowledge. How many times have I had to keep someone's anonymity when I met them on the street and someone I'm with asks where I know them from?

But here it's different. Here the addicts outnumber the "earth people" in exponential numbers. Here it would be funny to have to explain how I know someone so well when I just met them 5 minutes ago. "They are my family", is the best reply.

My wife came with me and we have been in the door less than a minute when someone comes up and gives us a hug. We are still in line at the front desk and someone else in line turned around and introduced themselves and hugged us both. The first of many hugs for the weekend.

We get our keycards and decide to find our room before we unload the car. The lobby area and lounge are filled with smiling laughing people. It takes half an hour to go 50 feet to the hallway because everyone wants to say hello. I see people I haven't seen in 5 years, people I saw two days ago, and people I have never seen before. Everyone is hugging and smiling and happy to be here. People are talking about the workshops they were just at, or the ones they are getting ready to go to. Old friends and new are catching up on each others lives. We get to the hall and everywhere we see people with t-shirts and caps and jewelry and tattoos and nametags proclaiming their belonging to the Fellowship. More smiling and nodding and hugs down the hall to the room.

After we get our stuff unloaded we head back to Registration. There is a line and someone in it tells me there are 500 addicts already here with more coming all the time.

Think about that for a second. The registration area is in a room the size of a basketball court in a prominent Nashville hotel. There are recovering addicts everywhere you look. There are 2 long tables with coffee urns that will be full the entire event and addicts cluster around them like a herd at a watering hole. Name tags are on display from practically every state, even other countries. It wasn't too many years ago that 2 addicts couldn't meet without breaking the Rockefeller laws. Addicts would have to cruise around meeting places and check for surveillance, to make sure meetings would not be busted by police. My God how far we have come.

After we get our nametags on I check out the list for workshops. Its an hour til the next one so we look for merchandising and the marathon meeting. Merchandising is where you can get all the stuff everyone

is wearing. I have been wanting a ring and I find a silver one for \$30. My wife finds a life tree emblem in silver and we get some bumper stickers and magnets. Its like kids in a candy store. This is the stuff you just cant get anywhere else. Our family stuff. I look at the pocket basic texts but I don't want to spend too much in one pass. I should have bought it because they sold out before the next day. Everyone is starved for Fellowship goods. Everyone wants to show each other and the world that we have a place we belong. Now at home I wish I had bought the \$30 Basic Text "Welcome" mat! LOL

The Marathon Meeting is another convention staple. For the next few days there will be a meeting going on 24 hours a day. Someone will be there fellowshipping day and night. I have heard and said things in those meetings that I will remember forever. Gut level honesty on a level I wouldn't have thought possible for me or anyone else.

I went to the K.I.S.S. workshop and then hung out with my sponsor for awhile, ate some and then its time for the main speaker for Friday.All I will say is that the CDs are available online.You can get the workshops and the speakers for the whole convention on CDs for a minimal cost. It's very much worth it.

The opening and ending prayers are probably the most spiritual things at a convention for me.Especially the main speaker meetings. Saturday night there were over 1000 addicts saying the Serenity Prayer arm in arm. I can hear my Higher Power's love in that voice.

The second most spiritual thing is the hugs after the big meetings. There are no strangers in that room.

Everything whirls for the next 72 hours. There is a dance both Friday and Saturday. A live comedy show with one of us headlining. A Jazz brunch Sunday morning. Midnight speaker meetings. People playing cards and sitting up all night sharing stories. Clean Time Countdown. The oldest had 38 years clean, the youngest had a few hours. Lots of laughter and tears and smiles and hugs and coffee and smoking out on the porch and more hugs.LOL

What did I do this Thanksgiving weekend? I went to my Family Re-Union. I got my soul recharged with 1000 of my best friends. I represented and supported the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous at a Regional Convention. I was Happy, Joyous, and Free.

Bryan S.

***NA Literature Quote of the Day:***

*"Everything we know is subject to revision, especially what we know about the truth."*

That line from Chapter Nine in our Basic Text is my favorite line in all our literature. It is so easy to get caught up in thinking I know something, only to find I know nothing or next to nothing. When I got clean, I thought I knew so much about spirituality and all things spiritual. I thought I was a spiritual person. As I stayed clean, I came to realize what I thought was spirituality early on, was really only dogma. Not only that, but dogma based not on what I really believed, but rather, on what I was always told growing up. I

*Con't. on page 4*

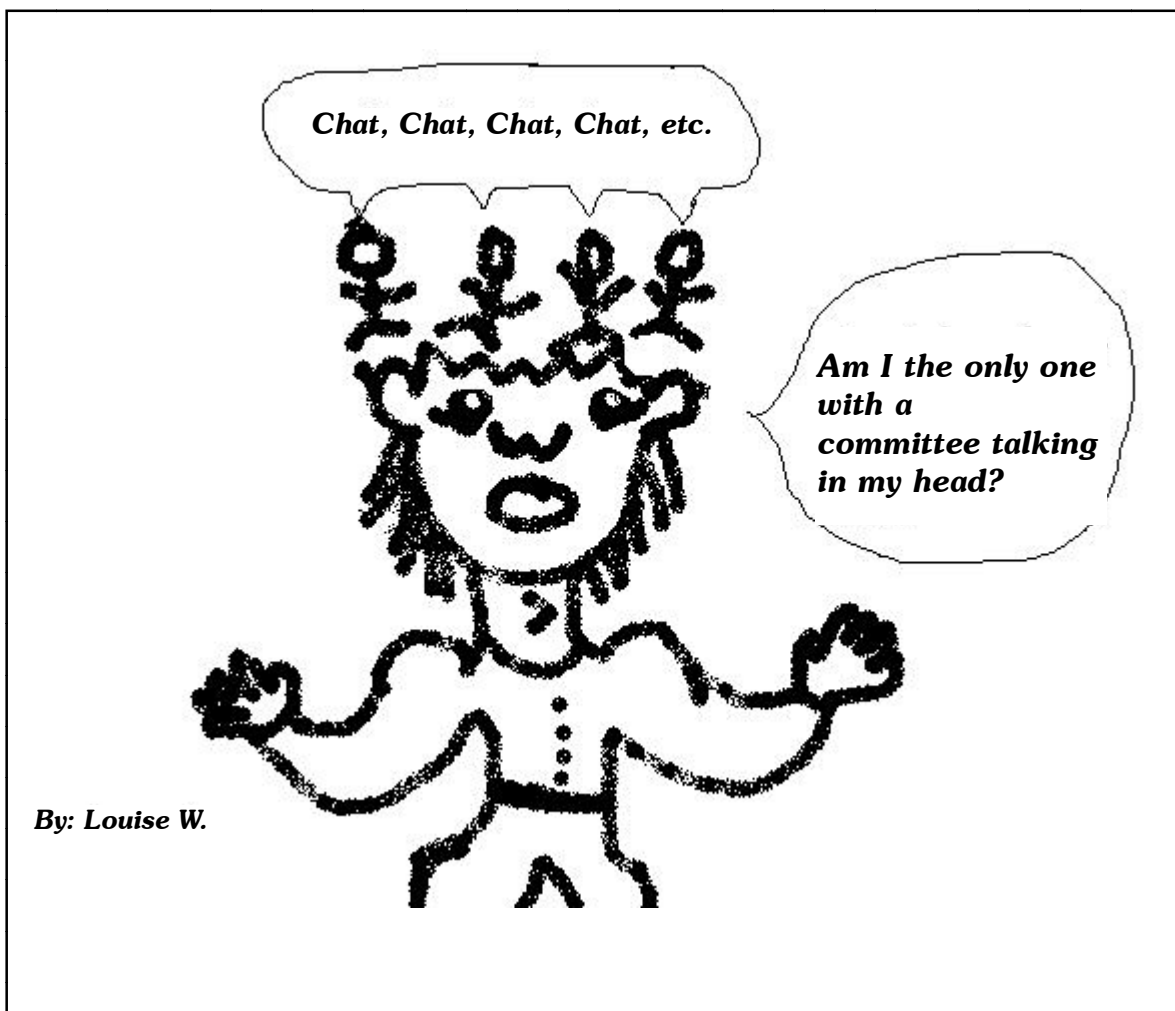
*If you would like to submit a favorite quote from our literature and explain what it means to you or why you like it please let me know. You can email it to me at NewsletterNA@yahoo.com. All submissions would be appreciated.*

**NA Literature Quote of the Day:** *Con't from page 3*

didn't know how to be honest, loving, caring, compassionate. I had no integrity, hope, faith, trust, brotherly love. Perseverance? Yeah, right. Humility? Hell no. I found that all I really had when I got here that was spiritual was the willingness to surrender. My "truth" changed on me.

What this line has come to mean to me in the context it is written is that my idea of a Higher Power will remain fluid and ever-changing. I thought I had God all figured out when I got here, only to find a year later that I didn't believe the same things I did then. In the past 5 years alone, I have gone from having a working relationship with a God of my understanding, to not believing in a God at all, to rediscovering God all over again, yet on a deeper level than ever before. At first I was confused by it all, then I remembered that I was forewarned about the possibility of it happening, every time I read that line. Just when I think I have myself, people I love, or my Higher Power all figured out and categorized, it all changes. That change is what I live for. As comfortable as I can get with my life, the change is what makes me feel alive.

Kevin C.



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