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A New Freedom (Part 3 of 3)

Rodger F.

Co-founder of Nicotine Anonymous

This is the final installment of the conference-approved version of Rodger's Story.

I was being of service and trusting my higher power and it worked. I have not had any nicotine since February 17, 1982.

Those first years were exhilarating. I had a high volume of phone calls every day. We made many mistakes. At first, we decided that one of the steps did not apply to smoking and we became temporarily the first 11-step program. Maurice, an author, wrote an article for *Readers Digest* that was published in May of 1985. Thousands of letters poured into the post office box I had borrowed from a friend. In fact, the volume of letters forced him to get a new box. We had no literature so we put together a letter and a meeting format, and some of our phone numbers. For weeks, the members of our Roxbury Park meeting stayed long after the meeting ended, in order to respond to all the letters. We lined up tables and created an assembly line for folding and inserting packages to potential members.

One of the letters we received was from David M. announcing that he was a member of a Smokers Anonymous meeting in San Francisco that had started two years earlier. We also discovered that Georgie S. together with Doug H. had recently started a non-smoking meeting for Alcoholics Anonymous members in the San Fernando Valley. She had recently moved from New York where she had attended meetings there for AA members who were using the 12 steps to stop smoking. Shortly thereafter the San Fernando meeting became a Smokers Anonymous meeting.

Within a year, there were a hundred meetings. The article in the magazine also created con-

troversy. At least two correspondents were from people claiming we had infringed on their legal rights. One claimed that he held the national trademark to Smokers Anonymous and another group claimed to have the California registered business name of Smokers Anonymous World Services. It was David M., who in his calm and spiritual manner, talked to the Smokers Anonymous World Services people and eventually resolved the problem. The conflict with the party that had the trademark continued until the Phoenix conference in 1990.

In 1986, the Northern California members proposed a conference to be held in Bakersfield, California. Thirty-five people from Northern and Southern California came to celebrate our newly formed fellowship. We had workshops. Bill H. from San Francisco questioned whether we were truly a 12-step program; the general consensus was that we were. Through the fellowship of our program, the 12 steps, and a belief in a power greater than ourselves, we had overcome an addiction over which we had thought ourselves powerless. The next year, there was a second conference in Monterey at which Maurice Z. became our first main speaker.

In those first years, the San Francisco groups established the first intergroup and started using a small room at the Drydock, a 12-step clubhouse, managed by David M. as their base of operations. Learning from the Northern California experience, the Southern California groups also formed an intergroup with Georgie S. as the first chairperson. Some years later, Georgie moved to San Francisco where she became involved in the program there. She and

Send letters to the editor, articles, stories, poems, artwork, or other material for *Seven Minutes* to:

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Material may also be sent by e-mail to:

<info@nicotine-anonymous.org>

All articles accepted for publication may be reprinted in outside publications in their entirety at the discretion of the chair and editor.

Your trusted servants,
Gary M., *Publisher*
Catherine C., *Editor*
Joe S., *Subscriptions*

Our Preamble

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to live our lives free of nicotine. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may be free from this powerful addiction. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using nicotine. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine.

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The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over nicotine—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted here with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.

From the Chair . . .

Robin L., Atlanta, Georgia

Hello—My name is Robin and I am a grateful recovering Nicotine Addict. I have not needed to use nicotine one day at a time since January 6th of 1996. Wow—I just celebrated my 8th birthday. A few nights ago, my gratitude was in overdrive. I received my 8-year chip from my sponsor at my original home group meeting in Dallas—thanks, Fresh Start. I never thought I would get to this point. How did it happen? It is a miracle!!!! I know I had nothing to do with it. It was by a belief in a Higher Power greater than myself and the support of people in the rooms of Nicotine Anonymous around the country.

I am writing this article on the plane home from the January officer's meeting in Oakland, California. This is the last article before the XIX NAWS Conference in Philadelphia. A registration form is at our Web site (or in this issue of *Seven Minutes*). Remember to register and register early to save some money. Also remember if you are a delegate, you must register with the secretary at secretary@nicotine-anonymous.org thirty (30) days prior to the conference.

I want to share with you the state of Nicotine Anonymous as we enter 2004. To date we have approximately 580 Nicotine Anonymous meetings around the world. This includes meetings in over 30 countries, on the internet, and now a new format—telephone meetings. The internet and phone meetings are not to replace face-to-face, but they offer an additional format for those who do not have a meeting in their home town or who cannot get out of their home for some reason. Please remember to send in your meeting confirmation form that you received in the most recent group mailing. If we do not hear from you after two years in a row, we will delete your meeting from the meeting list.

Outreach is an area that all the World Services officers feel is a major concern.

How do we reach the nicotine addict that still suffers? How do we get the addict into the rooms of NicA? World Services has a program where intergroups or groups can apply to World Services for funds to support Outreach in their area. This year, we helped provide funds and literature to the Atlanta Intergroup (GANICA) for the South East Conference on Alcohol and Drug (SECAD). We provided funds for a Canadian group to purchase a trifold display that they use when attending health fairs. In addition, World Services funded the Southern California group's (SCINA) sending a mass mailing to churches in the area and also provided literature for an individual who attended a health fair. If you have an idea for your local group and need some funds to make it happen, contact the Outreach Coordinator at outreachcoordinator@nicotine-anonymous.org. You will need to fill out the Outreach Request Form and Literature Request form that can be found in the Outreach section of our Web site (www.nicotine-anonymous.org/outreach).

In addition to the funds, the World Services has made a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that we are in the process of preparing and sending out to radio stations in the markets that have NicA meetings. At the October officer's meeting we had a brainstorm session and came up with some ideas that World Services would like to consider, but we need help. These included: doing more public outreach, putting ads in newspapers or magazines with our name and web address, being more proactive during the period in November when individuals put an emphasis on quitting smoking, attending more health fairs around the country, letting smoking cessation programs know that Nicotine Anonymous is available for anyone who needs support. You can help us by doing some of these in your local area. Jeff C. has done an outstanding job

as our Outreach Coordinator for a number of years. He spearheaded the Mass Mailings, Adopt-A-Mile, and Media Mania projects. He is stepping down from his position as Outreach Coordinator in April. It is time to pass the torch. If you have questions or are interested in the position, please let me know or e-mail outreachcoordinator@nicotine-anonymous.org.

The Book of Daily Meditations has been an ongoing project. At the conference in 2003, we finally had enough meditations to create a 90 in 90 book. Our goal is to have the book, *90 Days, 90 Ways*, available for sale at the conference in Philadelphia. Watch the Web site "What's New" section for future information. Since then, we have collected over a hundred additional meditations. Kate W. who stepped in to fill the service position (vacated by Jennifer M. who, with Steve M. recently had a beautiful baby girl, Lily), has done a tremendous job getting these new meditations ready for a 2004 conference vote. The 366-day meditations book is getting closer and closer to a reality. We are almost two-thirds there. If you haven't already, please write your own meditation, and share your experience, strength and hope.

Nicotine Anonymous follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. In *Nicotine Anonymous-The Book* we have a whole section that talks about the Steps. In the past few years, we have tried to add a section on the Traditions. We need someone to take the lead with this. John O. helped to organize the writing on eight of the Traditions. These need to be edited and we still need Traditions 5,8,11, and 12 to be written. Our Book Coordinator has stepped down. We need someone to coordinate this project. If you have experience with the Traditions and would like to share your experience, strength, and hope, please let me know.

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Teleservice is the committee that answers the Nicotine Anonymous phone line. Scott J. has a small group of people who answer calls. He needs more servants. This does not require a lot of time. One checks the voice mail and returns calls or contacts the appropriate servant to answer questions. If you have ever worked your local NicA phone line, you know how rewarding it is to be there for someone else. Please e-mail Scott at Teleservicecoordinator@nicotine-anonymous.org.

This publication—*Seven Minutes*—is your way to find out what is going on in the fellowship. It offers stories of experience, strength and hope. This year we published “A New Freedom”—Rodger’s Story in three parts (this issue has the final installment). Catherine C. has done an outstanding job. She has used her talents to design a first rate publication. For the November issue of *Seven Minutes* she received more submissions than she was able to print—WOW. Thank you to all who have written your stories to share with

others in the fellowship. Tradition Eight reminds us that we should remain forever nonprofessional. We need to rotate the servants in this fellowship. Catherine has asked the fellowship to find someone to take over the editor position of *Seven Minutes*. If you are interested or are willing to share your talent, please let me know or e-mail Catherine at sevenminuteseditor@nicotine-anonymous.org

As you can see, we have some coordinator positions that do not have coordinators for the coming year. The officers have been able to provide help with some of these open positions, but they are not getting the attention they need that one or more dedicated individuals can provide. Without a new coordinator for *Seven Minutes* we might be without this fabulous publication. Without an active Outreach Coordinator, we may not be able to effectively follow Tradition Five—being able to reach out and help the nicotine addict who still suffers. Without a Literature Coordinator, we will not be able to add to the fantastic and helpful literature we already have. Without a Book Coordina-

tor, we may never get the Traditions section completed. Without people willing to serve this fellowship as officers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer), we cannot be there for others. We need people to step up to the plate. Please don’t be shy. If you are waiting for someone to come up to you and ask you directly—consider this a direct appeal. As we near the conference, please consider putting gratitude into action and volunteer. In doing my own personal inventory, I feel I have done my footwork. Now it is time for others in the fellowship to do theirs. I am concerned for this fellowship, because I personally am not aware of many new people who are willing to do service on the World level. I am letting go and letting God. I am putting this fellowship into the hands of a Higher Power. I know that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. But more importantly I know that God does NOT do for us what we CAN do for ourselves. With you, we can keep this a thriving fellowship that will always be there for the nicotine addict that still suffers.

Discussion Corner

Gender Issues

We received several more responses to the Gender Issue question raised a couple of issues ago. Here they are:

I feel the Twelve Steps should stay written as they are.

Nicotine Anonymous is not affiliated with any religious denomination but it is a spiritual program which mentions God and also the Higher Power. This was the intention of the Alcoholics Anonymous founders and Nicotine Anonymous adopted these steps from AA.

As far as God being stated in the masculine, I believe this is reasonable. The Jewish religion accepts the Old Testament of the Bible, the Christian religion

accepts the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and Islam accepts the Bible as well as the Quran. The Bible refers to God in the masculine tense. Why would we want to contradict the Bible?

Seven Minutes has asked members to share their experience, strength, and hope on “gender issues” and the language we select for our World Services literature. When this recovering nic-addict was Literature Coordinator for World Services creating and revising pamphlets, there was the ongoing life and literary challenge of—to change or to remain. From other members and our Serenity Prayer, I asked for “the wisdom to know the difference.”

Language structures our thoughts and shapes meaning onto our experience.

Long-standing “official” language can seem above reproach, as if a culture should not evolve or examine. We often resist change that rocks the boat where we float. However, in NicA, we ask for the “courage to change the things we can.”

Does our literature’s current word selection best represent our program’s principles? I seek guidance from those principles.

Tradition One states: “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon Nicotine Anonymous unity.” Although Tradition Four suggests some degree of autonomy for individual groups, at a World Services level we ought to seek a sight above our “local”

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A New Freedom

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David became our first Smokers Anonymous romance that led to marriage.

I had become friends with a number of the San Francisco members, especially Bill H., who founded our newsletter, *Seven Minutes*. One day he and I were attending another 12-step program meeting on Guerrero Street. When we were leaving, Bill said that he had been thinking that we should start up a World Services organization. I told Bill that starting a World Service organization sounded much too grandiose. But Bill persisted and with the Northern California Intergroup laid plans to establish a World Services organization at the next conference scheduled for San Francisco in May 1988. This was the first World Services conference. It was during those three days that we established the organization that continues to function to this day. Being elected as the first chairperson of Smokers Anonymous World Services was a tremendous honor for me. Julie W. was elected secretary and Elizabeth D., treasurer.

The next year was an extremely exciting year for all of us. We were putting together an organization that was supporting an ever-growing membership and number of meetings. There were policies and procedures, bylaws, and literature to be written. We had growing pains and arguments where people walked out of meetings in anger. We made mistakes but then tried to make immediate amends and rectify them. People dedicated hours and hours of their time in service to help our fellowship grow and reach more and more addicts.

Personally, I was burning out and had an inflated sense of my own importance. I have heard many people who were founding members of our fellowship describe the same feelings. For a number of years, I was simultaneously the chairperson of World Service and the chairman of the Los Angeles Intergroup. I felt I had to hold all these offices and do all that work because the program needed me. I was surprised when I finally opened up the intergroup chair to elections and was promptly replaced. What I found was that a power greater than all of us directs and

guides our fellowship, not myself or any other person. We are all indispensable and completely dispensable at the same time. Just when I think my latest project or job will fail if I'm not there, someone comes forward and takes it to a new level.

In 1990, we held our first conference out of California, in, Arizona. For the year preceding the conference Jack C., a founding member of Smokers Anonymous in Orange County, and I had been working with a trademark attorney to try to resolve the dispute with the person who held the national trademark for Smokers Anonymous. Jack, a former World War II Marine Corps fighter pilot, wasn't about to surrender and neither was I. We came to the conference with various options on how to continue the battle and wrestle the name Smokers Anonymous from the person who held the trademark. Then both of us in the heat of the discussion in Phoenix on this issue came to a realization that we had to quit fighting everyone and everything. For legal reasons and to clearly and exactly define who we were, our group conscience came to the conclusion that we needed to change our name to Nicotine Anonymous. It was a real change in thinking that stirred a lot of emotion. People were attached to our former name. However, we were addicted to the drug nicotine, not just ex-smokers. We were nicotine addicts.

There has also been great sadness for me. My mother who smoked through my infancy, finally quit at the age of 62. I was so happy for her and hoped I had been a positive example. However, some years later the damage done during a lifetime of smoking appeared in the form of emphysema. It progressed slowly. By the time I brought my first baby boy to meet his grandmother, she was using oxygen fairly consistently and would sit by the kitchen table with her tank and mask. My youngest boy only met her once when he was six months old. In October of that year, my mother contracted pneumonia. I flew to her immediately. She lasted three days. The doctor said that with the emphysema, her condition was not very hopeful. I stayed with her almost constantly those days. We talked and I tried to comfort her with her pain. She said, "I

really wanted to see your boys grow up," and "Where did all the years go!" She went into a coma. On Tuesday morning, after I slept in her room all night, the nurses told me it wouldn't be long now. I called my sisters, my father, and my mother's minister. They all arrived. We stood in a circle holding hands with each other and my mother. While we said the Lord's Prayer, she passed away. God be with her.

Her death certificate read pneumonia, but without the emphysema, she would have survived. Her mother had lived into her early nineties. I am convinced that without smoking and nicotine, my mother would have lived to see my children grow up.

My sons, Jordan and Matthew, are two of the greatest blessings of my life and they are blessed with a healthy, active and involved father. They rarely if ever are around cigarette smoke and they have never seen their father smoke, which will greatly reduce their own risk of becoming addicted to nicotine.

I love those boys. I love this program.

Over the years we have grown. Many have been disappointed that we haven't grown larger faster. It seems that only a fraction of our members keep coming back and get into service. Many, if not most, use our program to stop smoking and then disappear. It is sometimes discouraging for those of us who are of service. What I know is that, for me, stopping smoking was not the answer. I have an addictive personality. Left to my own devices I will return to my addiction. My experience with coffee tells me that. Even if I think I will never smoke again, why take the chance? I have been given so much physically, emotionally, and spiritually from this program that it only seems natural that I continue to go to meetings and be of service so that I can keep what I have found here.

Today I have respect and regard for my body and a desire to live a healthy life for as long as God allows. I have taken yet another step away from the addictive nature of my personality and toward a compassionate humanity. I have been blessed with a new freedom.

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*World
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Call for other information: Jan S.: 610/933-9181

or Maureen M. 610/647-0996

Advance Registration \$25 Deadline April 10, 2004 (Registration after April 10: \$35.00)

Checks payable to: CONFXIX Mail to: 333 Lancaster Avenue #316, Frazer, PA 19355

Registration	\$25.00 (\$35 after 4/10)	No. _____	\$ _____
Sat. pm Philly Block Party	\$31.00	No. _____	\$ _____
Sunday Gratitude Brunch	\$27.00	No. _____	\$ _____
Ride The Ducks	\$30.00	No. _____	\$ _____
Golf Shirt (M,L,XL,XXL) \$15.00ea. Size(s) _____		No. _____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/> Navy			
Optional Donation to WSO			\$ _____
Delegate? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		TOTAL	\$ _____

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Discussion Corner

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view and use language that embraces our world as a whole.

Language, like nicotine, can oppress people in cunning and insidious ways. The dominant sect within a culture may not even realize the oppressiveness of its language, because it serves them. We can overlook what doesn't hurt us. This is much like our unawareness of secondhand smoke had been. Similarly, as long as nicotine served us, it was not fully recognized as an oppressor in our own lives. That insight only became clearer as we began to accept Step One, "that our lives had become unmanageable," that it hurt.

Our Preamble states: "Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine." Step Twelve asks that we "carry this message" of hope. We discover universality when sharing our common experiences and goals, but risk provincialism when preserving word choices merely for their familiarity to "us." Openness is one of the three elements of HOW our program works.

Step Ten guides us to continuously "take personal inventory and when we [are] wrong promptly [admit] it." We've learned that "wrong" need not connote a malicious intent, but can be a pattern of behavior or belief that is no longer effective. Language is also an evolving process of awareness.

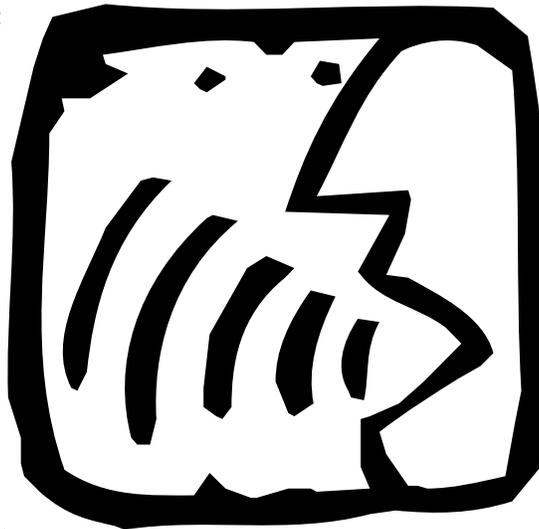
Nicotine Anonymous is "a fellowship of men AND women," open to ALL seeking recovery from nicotine. "Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution. . . ." Therefore, a Fourth Step inventory of our language requires attention toward words that either favor, divide, or subjugate—intentionally or not.

Step Twelve points out that "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions" and reminds "us to place principles before personalities." The use of "He," "His," or "Himself" is not truly anonymous, culturally or institutionally. Additionally, as a gender term, it segregates more toward personality than to principle. The term

"Higher Power" is more focused on the principle, and thus, more universal.

I believe recovery challenges us toward openness and growth. Attraction to our program's principles would be enhanced by our willingness to select more inclusive language options in our World Services literature. Yes, there is an adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." However, in our program, we are asked to conduct a thorough inventory that is "searching and fearless."

The revising of our literature with the more inclusive suggestions proposed in



Seven Minutes would more closely honor our Traditions, Steps, and principles. We became more inclusive and true by shifting our literature's focus from smoking to nicotine. I encourage us to exercise faith and become "entirely ready" to let our literature's language evolve. Let the power of its message be as welcoming to all as we hope it to be.

Of course, all decisions, by their arbitrary nature, require drawing a line somewhere. Here, I ask that we draw a curving line, whose arc ever-aims to encircle all the wonderfully varied cultures.

I was very baffled about the "Gender Issues" in the September 2003 *Seven Minutes*. I thought that gender-neutrality would be achieved by simply replacing "Him" by "God" and "His" by "God's":

Step 3—Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we

understood God (not Him). *Step 7*—Humbly asked God (not Him) to remove our shortcomings. *Step 11*—Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God (not Him), praying only for knowledge of God's (not His) will for us and the power to carry that out. *Tradition 2*—For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience (not a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience). Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

But the proposed changes to the above go far beyond gender neutrality and into very controversial territory—they replace God by Higher Power.

Question 1. If one of the purposes of the revisions is to replace God by Higher Power, why isn't it proposed to do this in the other Steps, namely Steps 5 and 6 (*Step 5*—Admitted to GOD, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. *Step 6*—Were entirely ready to have GOD remove all these defects of character).

Anyway, that is what confuses me.

As for what I think, I am 100 percent in favor of gender neutrality (replacing Him by God and His by God's and the rewording of Tradition 2 as shown above. I think it is simple, relatively non-controversial, and about time—this is the 21st century, not the 9th century BC. I know many groups (in AA, Al Anon, and Adult Children anyway) that have an official gender-neutral version like the above. And in other groups, many make the appropriate substitution of the words when reading the steps out loud.

Thankfully in our society we no longer talk about writing our Congressmen or about our brave fighting men—we are very careful to talk of writing our Congressperson or Representative and of our brave fighting men and women. And of our heroic firefighters, not our heroic firemen. It is time that the 12-step programs likewise updated their language.

For those who argue, "The Steps have

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worked the way they are written. If it's not broken, don't fix it," I strongly disagree. Yes, it has worked for many, but I know for a fact that it has put many off. It is broken in the eyes of many women and quite a number of men including myself.

On the issue of replacing God with Higher Power—well its an improvement, giving first class status to those whose Higher Power is not some sort of deity. So I'm in favor of it. But it is still a sort of sham.

If I am an atheist and my HP is the Program or the Fellowship or the Group for example, (let's pick the Fellowship), how do I PRAY for knowledge of the Fellowship's will for me and the power to carry it out? I don't know how to pray to anyone or anything other than a deity. And I'm not really sure that I want to become a slave to the Fellowship even though I find it extremely helpful.

In Step 3 I do not wish to turn my will and my life over to the care of the Fellowship. I need their help and support, but I'm not going to become a slave to them.

In Step 7 do I Humbly ask the Fellowship to remove my shortcomings? I guess it wouldn't hurt, but come on.

Whatever I substitute for God and Higher Power in the Steps, it doesn't work. Try

replacing God and Higher Power with "Some Entity." Then read the revised steps and ask what could be substituted for "Some Entity." Nobody I know has come up with any "Some Entity" that fits the steps (and Tradition 2) other than a favor-dispensing deity.

What else besides a favor-dispensing deity is going to restore me to sanity and take care of me and remove my shortcomings and give me the power to carry out its will? What besides a deity can I pray to and seek knowledge of its will for me? What besides a deity am I reasonably going to turn my will and my life over to? What besides a favor-dispensing deity is going to be a loving entity and ultimate authority that expresses itself in the group conscience?

How about Light Bulbs, Door Knobs, A Force For Good, Nature, The Universe? None of these concepts fit in with the steps (or Tradition 2). And even if one worded the steps a little bit to make reasonable concepts fit, they would lack power to transform an addict's life—at least this addict's life.

Personally I think Nicotine Anonymous should drop the claim that it is not a religious program. It may not be a particular religion like Christianity or Judaism, but it is still religious (check your dictionary—it does not require adherence to a particular religion to be religious). Saying that NicA is not religious because one can sub-

stitute one's concept of God does not make it not religious, since the only concept of God (or Higher Power or Some Entity) that fits with the Steps as-currently-worded is a favor-dispensing deity.

As a life-long atheist, I used to agonize over how to "Work The Steps" when I could find no concept for God, Higher Power, or Some Entity that fit the steps. As a member of a number of recovery message boards and participant of many regular 12-step groups, I have known many others who have had a similar long and difficult struggle with this.

We have an opportunity to be more inclusive in our language than previously established 12 step programs. We don't have to be limited in our perspective, thanks to the pioneering work done for us.

Personally, I try not to let my feelings about semantics give me an excuse to avoid participation in this great program. Usually, the thing that annoys me will be the thing that can teach me something about myself.

To respond to the Discussion Corner item in the December 2004 (*sic*) edition of *Seven Minutes* about the Lord's Prayer, I would like to see groups be more inclusive and not use a prayer from a specific faith. I'm rather partial to the Serenity Prayer, for example.

I Don't Know How This Program Works ...

Gary M., San Clemente, California

I came to Nicotine Anonymous not having a clue what was going to happen, whether I was going to quit or not quit or how long I would quit if I did. I had no confidence in myself or anything or anybody else. All I knew was that I was scared and I was dying. Those were the undisputed facts I had going for me.

I arrived at my first meeting scared, angry and not believing in anything, but I had nowhere else to go. Here was a bunch of people happy to be off cigarettes and enjoying it. This was not a reality for me. But I kept coming back. Something was there, but I didn't know what.

I guess I felt a little bit of encouragement. (Just maybe. . . .) I came back—again and again and again. . . .

There was a support system here I could identify with. These people felt the same things I did. After a while I didn't feel quite so strange. I was told "Keep coming back," don't smoke no matter what, drink lots of water, go to lots of meetings, get phone numbers, call those numbers, get a sponsor, change minor habits, cut back on coffee, do anything, but don't smoke. Eat your heart out but don't light up. The weight can wait! It did! But I didn't light up.

I don't know how this program works. . . .

I had to accept I was powerless over the use of nicotine and my life was unmanageable. I needed help. The drug had me whipped and I couldn't do anything about it. How was my life unmanageable? Not because I hid in a corner, not because I wouldn't associate myself with other people, not because I wouldn't confront life's problems and on and on the list goes.

I was angry with God because he wouldn't take the desire to smoke away from me and make it easy so I could do it. I didn't want to be responsible for the act

Highlights from the October Officers' Meeting

Catherine C., Secretary

The World Services officers' meeting was held in January in northern California, hosted by the Northern California Intergroup. Thanks to all.

- Donations to World Services continue to be down, and literature sales are flat. Expenses are up.
- A Conference Guidelines workbook is being prepared for future conference committees. Anyone with information regarding past conferences that they can share, please send to secretary@nicotine-anonymous.org.
- (1) During a discussion regarding the web site and outreach, the issue of the anti-spam law was discussed. (2) Issue: is the purpose of outreach to support the individual groups but not to support on a national level? Consensus: both.
- (1) Requests for outreach grants are down. (2) The Outreach Coordinator position will be vacant in April. (3) A 30-second radio spot was made and reviewed by the officers. It will be distributed to the fellowship.
- Teleservice: (1) Great News!!! There is a

new meeting by telephone on Sundays at 8:00 EST. To reach the meeting dial 1-775-533-8315, wait for the recording, hit 2, and enter the 7 digit code: 4567891. (2) More teleservice volunteers are needed.

- Work on the Step Study Guide is progressing.
- Conference 2004 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: the first registration has been received. There is a strong committee that is dedicated and ready for the upcoming work on the conference. It should be a blast.
- Conference 2005: an after-conference activity has been chosen. Flyers will be available for the conference in Atlanta, Georgia.
- Traditions Committee: (1) Dealt with a query regarding whether a smoker should chair a meeting. The consensus was that all groups are autonomous and can decide by group conscience to allow this. Generally it is not recommended. (2) On a query regarding bumper stickers, they felt that if the sticker does not

refer to Nicotine Anonymous it would be acceptable.

- (1) The Book of Daily Meditations: *90 Days, 90 Ways* will be ready for the conference in April. (2) There are 132 more meditations to be presented to this year's delegates.
- E-mailing *Seven Minutes*: A question came up regarding whether we could send out e-mail subscriptions to *Seven Minutes*. There are issues in regard to having to pay to have it done. It is being looked into.
- The board is working on preparing a version of "How it Works" to be distributed in the starter packets and suggested for meeting formats.
- The workshops for the upcoming conference were discussed and chosen.
- There have been no nominations for officer positions and no bids for the 2006 conference put forth to the board. Members of the fellowship are encouraged to submit recommendations for officers to serve. Also consider offering your city as the site for the 2006 conference.

of quitting. I left it up to God to take the desire away before I would quit. I found out it didn't work that way. When I came into Nicotine Anonymous, I had the insane thought that there must be another way to quit smoking besides quitting smoking. Wow! I found out if I wanted to quit smoking, I had to quit smoking. What a revelation. Then I had to trust God to do this. There was the rub. He had let me down so many times I wasn't ready to trust him anymore. But I found out He was just waiting for me to be *willing* to go through the pain of quitting and then He gave me the courage to do so. I learned I didn't have to quit for the rest of my life, just for today. I even broke it down more: I won't smoke right now. It's impossible for me to smoke if I don't smoke now. I learned I could handle small bits of life if I kept it for *now*.

Was it easy? No, but I kept working at it until it became a habit. I asked God's help daily and repeated the Serenity Prayer many times throughout the day. As the days off nicotine accumulated it got easier and I gained the courage to go on. I talked to my sponsor and other people in the program many times. I had some tough cravings in the beginning and didn't want to call anyone; I had been told to call before I lit up. I was afraid to because they might talk me out of it. They did!

I don't know how this program works. . . .

I learned to live this program a day at a time. Everything in my life has come to a daily task. Not tomorrow, but today. Every morning I ask God's direction in my life and even if I don't feel it, I do it. It does work. I plan what I am going to do for

today but leave the results up to God. Most of the time I am successful with this. Sometimes my rebellious nature gets in the way and I have to keep on trying. Striving for progress is the key.

While doing the steps I found I had to find out the nature of my wrongs, character defects and shortcomings. A rose by any other name is still a rose. I am screwed up and had to find out what is short-circuiting me.

My defects are what kept me smoking. My coping tool was the cigarette and if I didn't replace the cigarette with something else, I would go back to smoking. All that is necessary is to change myself and my attitudes. So I write, and write some more, and then tell God about what I found out.

continued on page 10

I Don't Know ...

continued from page 9

"That's good enough." Ha! Then I had to tell another human being those things about myself that I wanted to keep in a dark closet. What a humbling experience that was!

I learned about amends, to say I am sorry and to try to rectify the problem I caused. "Hey that's water over the bridge. I don't have to do that. It's over with. Right?" Wrong. That is what ate at me and kept me angry and resentful and I didn't know why until I started backtracking and cleaning up a mess I created. I have a long way to go, but this is a lifetime program and I will never graduate.

I don't know how this program works. . . .

I am told, "you can't keep this program unless you give it away." Sure thing. I don't have the time, I am very busy running a business, I have other responsibilities. Then I discovered I have gained an extra 3 to 4 hours a day by not smoking. I was willing to go to any lengths to stay quit. It became my life. I smoke, I die. So I jumped in and got my feet wet and became a secretary of a meeting, treasurer and whatever else I could find to do. I became a service junkie. It's a love of my life. It brought me alive and helped me come out of my cocoon. I share my strength, hope and experience wherever I can.

There are all kinds of ways to get involved with the program. On the meeting-, intergroup-, and World Services-level. The greatest joy I get from service work is to feel worthy and that I am contributing something to

		Jan-Dec '03			Jan-Dec '03
ORDINARY INCOME/EXPENSE					
INCOME			EXPENSE		
4000 · Donations		8,075.18	6000 · Office Expenses		19,885.84
4100 · Literature Sales		41,775.68	6700 · Board Expenses		11,753.08
4290 · Shipping & Handling		5,050.18	Total Expense		<u>31,638.92</u>
4299 · Conference Profit (Loss)		(785.17)	Net Ordinary Income		<u>(1,439.06)</u>
Total Income		<u>54,114.87</u>	Other Income/Expense		
Cost of Goods Sold			Other Income		
5000 · COGS		3112.65	7010 · Interest Income		264.78
5700 · Fulfillment		2,800.00	Total Other Income		<u>264.78</u>
5710 · Storage		360.00	Net Other Income		<u>264.78</u>
5720 · Shipping		6,402.44			
Total COGS		<u>23,915.01</u>			
Gross Profit		<u>30,199.86</u>	Net Income		<u>(1,174.28)</u>

Errata

Last issue the date on the masthead was December 2004. This is incorrect. It should have been December 2003.

life. I am able to see a new-comer come after me and stay to see the miracle I have found. I am responsible and feel respect for myself, not to mention all the friends I have made all over the U.S. that I wouldn't have had if I had continued smoking. Not to mention I would be dead a long time ago if I were still smoking.

Most of the time I have an attitude of gratitude. Sometimes I don't feel grateful but I try to show my gratitude by my actions. I have learned that being unsuccessful in life is not doing the things I didn't want to do but I needed to do. This program has helped me get off that mindset. If it needs to be done today, just do it.

I don't know how this program works. . . . Probably by osmosis.



Addiction

Cathy, Whiting, Indiana

Hiding
behind crevices
and corners
your presence
is alive
yet
your shape
and form can't be seen

A thought
travels like an arrow
straight into the soul
to persuade
and paralyze
the mind
from thinking
clearly

Emotions rise
and the roller coaster
takes a dive
and dips

into the imagination
tapping
into insanity
You are clever
as you cleave
to the weak
and vulnerable
areas of a soul
with enticing thoughts
and promises

You are empty
shallow and hollow
vanity
pride
lust
you are every evil
in the world

Yet—
You are nothing
without human flesh

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Congratulations and thanks for your donation to:

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Share your recovery!**

~ Birthday Gratitude ~

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**Publication Dates and
 Deadlines for Submissions**

Publication Date	Deadline Date for submissions
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September 8	August 4
December 9	November 3
March 8	February 2
June 13	May 9

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