

December 2009



SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

Anonymous SJ

**Good Bye Aloha Ciao Auf Wiedersehen
Sayonara Au Revoir Adios
Bon Voyage**

SAY HELLO TO OUR LAST ISSUE!



Parting Notes

There isn't any Intergroup action as this Steering Committee has come to the end of its time. At press time, there was a single nominee for all posts but one. It doesn't speak well for our spirit of service here in SJ, that we could not muster more than five nominees out of a possible thousand, but what can you do?

As we clear out the Newsletter basket, we would like to thank you for reading and for the various items you submitted over these past two years. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Steering Committee.

Andy E. who has not only been a firm and calming voice as Chair, but also put the office on a solid Information Technology footing.

Our various Vice Chairs, Dave, Charlie and Beverly who wrangled the Steering Committee members at the meeting. No small task there.

Our ever Faithful Secretary Mary Lou who quietly makes sense of our meetings and gets the minutes to you, so your group is always informed.

Joe McC, Marge K and Harry L. who have kept our finances straight, paid our bills and always sought to improve our system. Thanks to our former Office Manager Janet for the many improvements she made while here and welcome to our new Office Manager, Esther C.

Our almost invisible Trustees; Tom L. Bob C, Catherine E, Cathie A. and Joe I who tackle issues of Traditions whenever they arose

Thanks also to our Committee Chairs, who have often been committees in name only. At times the poor response to service requests by the South Jersey groups has been frustrating, but the committees have trudged on, doing their service to the best of their ability and supporting each other. Thanks to Beverly, Woody, Priscilla, Jennifer, Tina, Rich, Joe K., Peter, Ginger, Greg, Bob P. Gene H., Brian C, Larry, Ron, Jackie and Dan. The type of service that you guys have provided is that which is only missed once it is gone. You've made things 'normal' here in SJ Intergroup.

Like the Ghost of Christmas Present, our time here is short and almost done. We leave it to you to see that the service is continued.

THIS IS HOW AA WORKS?

TRUE OR FALSE

- 1) **Bill W. wrote the entire Big Book.**
- 2) **It is a part of A.A. tradition that a person should say their name whenever they speak in a group.**
- 3) **The reading of How It Works has always been an integral part of an A.A. meeting.**
- 4) **A group and a meeting are the same thing.**
- 5) **The Twelve Steps are only suggestions.**

False: Obviously the stories in the back portion of the book have individual authors and Doctor Silkworth wrote his own opinions, but regarding the eleven chapters which are considered to contain the Program of A.A., it has usually been accepted that Bill W, was the sole author and in fact, he wrote To Wives from the point of view of a women. However he did not write To Employers. Bill wrote the opening paragraph, but Hank P, a New York AA and businessman wrote that chapter.

False; In a early Grapevine Audio, Bill W. is speaking at a California AA meeting and notes that he will introduce himself, “as it is the custom here in California.” The idea of identifying oneself has merit but is not a requirement of AA membership.

False: Articles and letters in Grapevine would suggest that the practice of reading a portion of Chapter Five of the book Alcoholics Anonymous crept into meetings during the Eighties and like many practices traveled by word of mouth. Many older AA’s cite the rehabs for starting many odd practices which are now accepted as a part of AA, such as saying Hear, Hear or We Think Not after certain readings.

False: Tradition Three notes that any two or three alcoholics gathered together for the purpose of sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that as a group, they have no other affiliation. Groups hold meetings. A single group may hold daily meetings, but it is the same group. You can attend a meeting but you can’t join a meeting. You can join a group

False: Chapter Five takes a beating on this. What it says is “*Here are the Steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery.*” In other words, this is how we got sober and it might work for you as well. While you can read that anyway which you wish, the remainder of the book deals with the explanation and description of those *suggested* steps. The paragraph following the Twelve Steps describes them as Principles.

The Big Book contains only brief discussion of attending meetings, (two pages in Chapter Eleven) and since there was no AA literature or structure, it doesn’t talk about reading or service commitments either. The first portion of our text tells us in some detail just how we are to proceed on these twelve suggested steps. The Steps of AA are the program of recovery-take that away and what are you left with? Suggestions?

Step Twelve Revisited

In 1939, the instructions on Step Twelve began:

“Practical Experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when all other activities fail.”

Of course that was written a long time ago in the last century, so maybe our 21st century version should read something like:

“I think that nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as: (pick one or more)

Going to a few more meetings

Reading AA literature

Going to Non AA Retreats on a regular basis

Getting outside counseling

Sharing about my problems at meetings

Putting my phone number on a meeting list.

When we hear someone share about ‘slips’ the focus always seems to be that they stopped going to meetings, but do we hear anyone say, I stopped working with other alcoholics. I stopped trying to carry the message. Nothing about Step Twelve is about seeking help, but rather helping our recovery by helping others. The Twelfth Step is so crucial to individual recovery, that an entire chapter is devoted to it. At the start of that chapter, we are given the assurance (or promise) that life will take on a new meaning! No ifs, ands or buts! Pretty strong language, but many who have tried it have found that it is entirely true

Why don't we hear more about Step Twelve in our meetings? Perhaps it is because we have **outsourced** our Twelfth Step work to the rehabs and outside counseling agencies. Once a newcomer arrives at our meetings, they are more or less on their own. We often ask, in our meetings, if anyone is new, but as a group do we practice the Twelfth Step when a new person arrives at our group or does our Group effort amount to giving the new person a list of anonymous phone numbers. Shouldn't we be getting their phone numbers and calling them? How solid were you in your first few weeks of sobriety? How many people did you call?

Working the Twelfth Step isn't a requirement for membership in AA. You can certainly attend meetings, share your opinions, experiences, strengths and hopes without working with others, but if you would like to pursue recovery as opposed to abstinence from alcohol, it might be a good suggestion. If you don't seem to have the same enthusiasm for recovery as you once had, it might be a good suggestion and if thoughts of drinking are becoming more frequent even as you get more 'sober', it might be a good idea to work with another alcoholic, but all of that is your choice. Just keep in mind what the step says and also what it doesn't say

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs

As the end of my term as your Chairperson approaches, I would like to thank all of our committee members, past and present, for their selfless devotion of time and effort in the task of making South Jersey a great place to have an AA Group. I couldn't have done it without you. So much goes on "behind the scenes" to make the Intergroup organization run smoothly that there are just too many names to list them all. You know who you are... ;-). I'd also like to thank all of the Groups for your continued support, and express the hope that you will show the 2010-11 Panel the same or even better levels of enthusiasm. We are all in this together, sharing the load, so that when the nervous and jerky newcomer shows up and says "I'm ready" our Groups are able to say "Welcome aboard!" and give them the tools and support required for successful recovery from our common ailment. I want to thank you all for your contributions to my continued sobriety, as well as your votes of support through good times and bad. I wish you all a safe, sober, and joyous Holiday Season. Hope to see you "in the rooms". Happy "Trudging"... Peace... Andy... ;-)

I have enjoyed working with the team of committees that are a part of the Intergroup. Aside from the crazy arguments and intriguing disputes, I have enjoyed working with all individual personalities within the Intergroup Body. I am grateful to have fulfilled the commitment of Archives Chair for the past 2 years. Thank you for allowing to be of service.

Priscilla L. Semmens Archives Committee

Over nearly the last two years as I have served as your Hospitals and Institutions Chairperson a certain situation has recurred that I wanted to address. It seems that some people have misconceptions about the availability and use of H&I literature. As with all circumstances that arise in Alcoholics Anonymous we look to the traditions as our guide. The issue that has repeatedly arisen involves the distribution and use of AA literature through H&I. Literature is provided to AA meetings that are held in Hospitals and Institutions by Intergroup distributed through the H&I.

Our sixth tradition says:

An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

So when we interact with "related facilities" we must always be careful not to cross the line drawn by the traditions. We cooperate with facilities but we are always careful not to go so far as to support an outside for profit facility. We always support the clients within the facility, but not the facility itself. We support people in Hospitals and Institutions by taking meetings into facilities to enable people who would otherwise be unable to attend an AA meeting attend a meeting. We refrain from supporting the facility. This includes donations of literature; we do not donate anything to facilities. Literature donated by Intergroup through H&I is taken into a facility by AA members for use at meetings by the members confined to the facility. It remains the property, for lack of a better term, of the AA intergroup. To do otherwise would be to support the facilities financially and that would offend our sixth tradition.

I hope that my time as your H&I Chairman has left the South Jersey Intergroup better than when I arrived. I realize that I have been at the center of some controversy and perhaps the cause of some. I have tried to be guided by the traditions and have taken seriously, although at times it may seem otherwise, the responsibilities entrusted to me by the groups through the Intergroup. The commitment to all of you over the last two years has been a gift to me and has kept me grounded in recovery. I want to thank all of you who have continued to carry the message of AA into what the big book calls the most sordid places on earth and I ask all of you continue to carry the message of AA to those least able to hear it for themselves. I also want to take one last parting shot at those of you who seem to avoid any kind of service and ask why?

Joe K

H&I Chair

Final Words from Our Co Founders

Bill W.'s Last Message

My dear friends,

Recently an A.A. member sent me an unusual greeting which I would like to extend to you. He told me it was an ancient Arabian salutation. Perhaps we have no Arabian groups, but it still seems a fitting expression of how I feel for each of you. It says, "I salute you and thank you for your life."

My thoughts are much occupied these days with gratitude to our Fellowship and for the myriad blessings bestowed upon us by God's Grace.

If I were asked which of these blessings I felt was most responsible for our growth as a fellowship and most vital to our continuity, I would say, the "Concept of Anonymity."

Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical.

On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level, anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes.

A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we, turn back the clock. However, I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard. As long as we accept our sobriety in our traditional spirit of anonymity we will continue to receive God's Grace.

And so—once more, I salute you in that spirit and again I thank you *for your live*
May God Bless Us All, Now and Forever

Ever Yours
Bill W

Dr Bob's Last Message

My good friends in A.A. and of A.A.,

... I get a big thrill out of looking over a vast sea of faces like this with a feeling that possibly some small thing I did a number of years ago played an infinitely small part in making this meeting possible. I also get quite a thrill when I think that we all had the same problem. We all did the same things. We all get the same results in proportion to our zeal and enthusiasm and stick-to-itiveness. If you will pardon the injection of a personal note at this time, let me say that I have been in bed five of the last seven months and my strength hasn't returned as I would like, so my remarks of necessity will be very brief.

There are two or three things that flashed into my mind on which it would be fitting to lay a little emphasis. One is the simplicity of our program. Let's not louse it all up with Freudian complexes and things that are interesting to the scientific mind, but have very little to do with our actual A.A. work. Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words "love" and "service." We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind.

Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.

And one more thing: None of us would be here today if somebody hadn't taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to do numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So let us never get such a degree of smug complacency that we're not willing to extend, or attempt to extend, to our less fortunate brothers that help which has been so beneficial to us.

Thank you very much.
Dr Bob

ESSENTIAL READINGS ABOUT A.A. HISTORY

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers (B-8). The life story of the Fellowship's co-founder, interwoven with recollections of early A.A. in the Midwest.

Pass It On (B-9). The Story of Bill W. and How the A.A. Message Reached the World.

A.A. Comes of Age (B-3). Bill W. tells how A.A. started, how the Steps and Traditions evolved, and how the A.A. Fellowship grew and spread overseas.

The AA Grapevine Digital Archives. The AA Grapevine is the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. Here, for a nominal fee, you can find and read every article, letter, editorial, special feature, joke, and cartoon published in the Grapevine magazine starting from the first issue in June 1944.

On The Lighter Side

An Alcoholic Idea of financial planning is to use credit cards to pay off his credit cards. When he runs out of credit cards, that's called a geographic.

The still functioning alcoholic went for her annual physical, "Well Doc, how do I stand?" she asked. "That's what puzzles me." the doctor replied.

My wife, an AlAnon told me that I was narcissistic and self centered. My reply was, "That's okay as long as it doesn't affect me."

A construction worker, a rather large, menacing guy, enters a bar. He orders a beer, chugs it back and bellows, "All you guys on this side of the bar are a bunch of idiots!" A silence descends. "Anyone got a problem with that?" The silence lengthens. He then chugs another beer and growls, "And you guys on the other side are all scum!" Once again the bar is silent. "Anyone got a problem with that?" One lone man gets up from his stool and unsteadily starts to walk towards the man. "You got a problem buddy?" the angry man says. "Oh No" slurs the drunk, "I'm just on the wrong side of the bar."

There was the songwriter who tried to compose a drinking song, but she could never get past the first three bars.

This drunk hated his wife's cat and decided to get rid of it by driving it twenty blocks from his home and leaving it at the park. But as he was getting home, the cat was walking up the driveway. The next day, he decided to drive the cat forty blocks away. He let it out of the car and headed home. Driving back up his driveway, there was the cat. He kept taking the cat further and further and the cat would always beat him home. At last, he decided to drive a few miles away, turn right, then left, past the bridge, then right again, and another right, until he reached what he thought was a safe distance from his home and left the cat there. Hours later the man called home to his wife: "Honey, is the cat there?" "Yes." his wife answered, "Why do you ask?"

Frustrated, the man answered, "Put the cat on the phone, I'm drunk, I'm lost and I need directions!"



Borrowed from The AA Grapevine, At Wit's End

A Message from our New Office Manager

Hello everyone my name is Esther C, Alcoholic.

I wanted to introduce myself to all of you and let you know a little bit about what it is that I do in my role as South Jersey Intergroup's new Office Manager. However before I begin, I must tell you how Grateful I am, and what a Blessing this opportunity is for me to grow in my own personal recovery and to gain more knowledge and insight into our beloved AA, and how it works as a whole.

I just celebrated 12 years of continuous sobriety and have always been involved in service. I have held several positions in my homegroup including Intergroup Representative for a number of years and have served on the Anonymous Newsletter committee for 6 years. I also work with recovering people professionally and this new God given assignment has already afforded me the ability to help others and carry the message in an even more productive and meaningful way.

In my new Intergroup office position, I am here to work for, and assist individual AA's, Groups and Committees with various task such as meeting information, upcoming events, correspondence with other areas of AA and the interested outside community. I am also responsible for recordkeeping, making sure reports and meeting minutes get out, postal runs, keeping equipment well stocked and running properly, filing, maintaining the office environment, helping out with phones and selling literature. Overall the Office Manager's job is to chip in and help were ever needed and assure that overall daily office operations run smoothly and efficiently. It has been Great fun so far! I have already got to know, and work with some terrific people from all over South Jersey! I am really looking forward to meeting and getting to know even more!

If there is anything that the Intergroup Office can help you with, Please do not hesitate to let me know. You can reach us by phone, e-mail or swing by -----whatever works best for you!

Thanks to you all for this wonderful experience!

In Love and Gratitude,

Esther C

Our hours of operation and contact information are as follows :

Site Location: SJ Intergroup 5090 Central Highway Suite 3, Pennsauken, NJ

Office Phone: 856-486-4446 Office E-mail: sjintergroup@verizon.net

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2514 Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

Office Hours: Monday – 10am to 3pm and 6pm to 8pm

Tuesday- 10am to 12 pm and 3pm to 6pm

Wednesday- 10am to 8pm

Thursday-10am to 12 pm and 3pm to 8pm

Friday- 10am to 6pm

Saturday- 10am to 12 pm

The Intergroup

An Intergroup is a service organization, formed when there are many groups in a geographical area. In 1941, there was only one Intergroup office in the entire state of New Jersey in Newark, because that city had many (9) groups. Today there are Four Intergroups in New Jersey, North Jersey, Central Jersey, Cape Atlantic and South Jersey. Central Jersey was at one time under the Lehigh Valley Intergroup, as there were so few Groups here and Cape Atlantic was originally a part of South Jersey Intergroup. There is also a small independent Intergroup out on Long Beach Island, which provides meeting information, especially in summer months.

Intergroups are not a part of the AA structure, such as Area or Districts and have no voice in matters which affect AA as a whole. The entire focus of an Intergroup is to the groups which make it up and which it serves. The South Jersey Intergroup has been in existence for over fifty years and at present, serves the areas, south of Trenton down to Millville, Hammonton and surrounding areas and out to Pemberton.

SJ Intergroup has six elected positions on the Steering committee and a board of five elected trustees and provides service to the groups through these Twelve committees

ANSWERING SERVICE/12th Step List Over 40 volunteers answer phones in two hour shifts

ARCHIVES Volunteers collect, record and publish information about SJ Intergroup history

BOOKERS Provides groups with the opportunity to exchange speakers with other groups

BUDGET & FINANCE Provides financial oversight to the Treasurer and advises Intergroup on financial matters

HOSPITALS & INSTITUTIONS Arranges for groups to send speakers into locked up meetings

LITERATURE Provides AA literature for groups to purchase

MEETING LIST Collects changes to meeting schedule and arranges for regular printing of new lists

NEWSLETTER Publishes a regular newsletter for groups

PUBLIC INFORMATION Arranges for AA information programs to outside agencies

SOCIAL EVENTS Plans, Develops and promotes various social events for SJ groups

UNITY Visits groups to promote service and traditions

WEBSITE Maintains and updates the SJIG Website. www.aasj.org

All of these committees need chairpersons and also committee members. The more volunteers, the better the results. If you think that you need to get more involved in your recovery and want to be more active in AA, maybe you should consider being on one of these committees this year.

Thanks for your Contributions

The Intergroup Treasurer would like to thank all of the Groups for their contribution to the support of the Intergroup. Group treasurers are reminded to put the name of the Group and the Town where the group meets on the check or on an attached note. Many groups have the same name and we want to ensure that your group's contributions are acknowledged. A copy of monthly contributions is attached

Our 2009 budget will be voted on in December and all groups are invited to review it and if there are any questions, present them to the Budget & Finance committee or the Treasurer.