

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

MAY 2016

In Memoriam: Michael ‘The Baker’ M. A ‘Good AA Guy’

How many times have we heard the phrase “He’s a Good AA Guy” and wondered “exactly what DOES that mean”? For me it invokes thoughts of Service, Recovery, and Unity. Someone who ‘walks the walk’ and doesn’t just talk a good game. Someone who doesn’t share at meetings just to sound good, brings their problems to their sponsor and their solution to a meeting, and will do anything to help the newcomer. I think of someone who, quite frankly, has

completely and thoroughly incorporated a new design for living into their life.

It’s taken quite a while, going on four years to be exact, for me to sit down and put pen to paper about the passing of a friend who personified what it means to be a ‘Good AA Guy’. Maybe I had to get past my grief, or it just took a long time to find the words. But the time has come. So here it is. On July 23rd we will CELEBRATE the passing of our dear friend and ‘Good AA Guy’ Michael ‘The Baker’ M from the Masonville Group. Yes, you

heard right. We will CELEBRATE because of a life devoted to giving and being there for others. A life, like so many others, had humble beginnings plagued with war stories, but ended in 17+ years of sobriety dedicated to becoming a different and better person. Michael was a pastry chef at Princeton for over 25 yrs, thus the moniker Michael ‘The Baker’.

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Doing Work or Manipulating the Situation

I am currently 9 months sober by the grace of my higher power and through the fellowship of AA. My first 9 months has been quite a journey as I am certain it has been for everyone else. I do my absolute best to follow the principles of AA, attend meetings, volunteer for service commitments, and take advantage of the fellowship in the rooms.



One of my biggest character defects is being controlling or demonstrating self-will. I always knew I had an issue with this within my professional life as well as my personal life. I just never realized how severe it was until

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Inside This Issue: Another Spoke in the SJ

Wheel ♦ Religion and the 3rd Tradition ♦ Words of Wisdom from the Past ♦ Announcements and Things to Do

Into Action

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

“Having made our personal inventory, well what should we do about it?”

My 4th step disclosed to me the old attitudes of selfishness, fear, and harms done to others – those exact things that kept me blocked off from the love and grace of my Higher Power. I now had them on paper. However, the idea of sharing my defects with another person paralyzed me with fear.

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Situation

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after doing my moral- inventory. I find it challenging to keep this character defect at bay in my professional life, given my career. Therefore, I decided to focus first on my personal life.

I had a situation come up recently with my daughter. The issue arose in January 2016. I prayed for my higher power to help me with this daily. You see, prior to AA I prayed to a higher power; however, since I was totally disconnected from my higher power, I would just pray for things that I wanted.

I would pray for mostly materialistic things. If I had an interview I would pray for the job. If I had a problem I would pray for the outcome to be what I wanted it to be. I realized after joining AA I was not relying on my higher power like I should be. I shouldn't be about praying for a certain thing or a certain outcome. Today it is just praying that my higher power help me with whatever I am going through. I pray about how grateful I am for my life. I thank my higher power for my sobriety, as well as guidance when life- on- life terms arise.

I spoke with my sponsor about this issue, and she said just pray on it and keep doing the work. I had come to realize that doing the work had become a weekly task which involved a lot of time, effort, and money. During this time as my "doing the work efforts" progressed, I convinced myself that the outcome would most like be what I wanted since opportunities continued to present themselves that would resolve the issue.

However, I also kept in my mind the serenity prayer. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Thy will not mine be done." I continued to focus on" accepting the things I cannot change, the courage to

change the things I can", as well as "Thy will not mine be done". I knew that if the outcome was not what I wanted, it would be devastating for me as well as my daughter.



In March the outcome turned out to be not what I wanted. It was devastating for me and my daughter as I thought it would be. I kept saying to myself "I did the work. Why were the opportunities presented to me that should have helped the outcome be different"? I then began to realize I needed to accept the outcome. "Thy will not mine be done." I will be honest; I was down for a couple of days. If I were not in AA I know that I would have ended up relapsing, which I cannot afford to do for many reasons.

Sometimes you must do the work for other reasons. Maybe you will become a stronger person. Maybe a wiser person. Maybe a nicer person. Maybe doing the work will help you be a better person.

I began to wonder if I had been manipulating or inserting self-will in the situation. Should I have accepted the outcome at the very beginning and not do the work, even though solutions were presented? It really baffled me, however, now I fully understand. Some-

times you must do the work for other reasons. Maybe you will become a stronger person. Maybe a wiser person. Maybe a nicer person. Maybe doing the work will help you be a better person. I just have to continue to remember that even doing the work, does not always mean the outcome will be what you want it to be. And we have to accept that there is a reason why it did not happen." Thy will not mine be done."

Melanie M.
Sisters in Sobriety
High Nooners

South Jersey AA Adds Another Spoke to Its 'Wheel of Fortune'

From the files of 'we never know who needs to hear our message' comes a tale of a new source of public access. Public Information was recently contacted by, of all sources, the Collingswood Bike Share organization. That's right, you heard correctly! We have reached a new audience! It seems that many of Bike Shares' clients are recent DUI recipients who have lost their license and need a new mode of transportation. Who'd have thought! But it makes perfect sense.

Public Information is excited to add this group to our list of contacts. We are providing them

with AA pamphlets and will be obtaining bumper stickers to be posted prominently on their bikes. Bike Share wants to help us get the message out to those who need it. There is a way up and out! And while the successful direction of their clientele to AA may cut into their profits down the road (no pun intended), Bike Share is happy to collaborate with us to spread the message of strength and hope.

So, if you find yourself driving around in the Collingswood



area and happen to see one of the bumper stickers on a bike, smile!!! Your AA dollars are hard at work!!!

*Jim S
Eileen T*

An AA Considers Religion in the Context of the 3rd Tradition

Sometimes, it seems that the Third Tradition has been amended to "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking and a belief in God." In many meetings, as well as Grapevine articles, I hear that unless I profess a belief in God, I am doomed to drink again. This God is usually not a God of my understanding but a God of their understanding.

I have been sober in AA for well over 30 years. For the first 10 years or so, I tried to believe and I made believe that I believed. At my sponsor's suggestion, I prayed daily and worked the Steps. The more I studied religion and God, the more convinced I became that this was not for me. Yet, I continued going to meetings, sponsoring others (if they believed in God I did nothing to discourage them), engaging in service work, and stayed sober.

I find most AA literature, on this subject, very condescending. Even chapter four of the Big Book, "We Agnostics," promotes the idea that atheists and agnostics will eventually come to believe in God.

Discretion has become the better part of valor for this atheist at meetings. Many AAs will insist

that this is a spiritual program and then go on to explain their religious beliefs and why I should accept them.

Convincing them to become an atheist is not my job or intent. While it is not appropriate for me to point out the errors of their thinking, why do they think it is their responsibility to convert me? I have no problem in believing in many powers greater than myself. I just believe in one less God than they do.

In the June 2013 Grapevine, "K.K." wrote, "Tradition six reminds us to be careful not to endorse." When a newcomer, or a visitor, comes to an AA meeting and experiences it being closed with the Lord's Prayer, wouldn't they assume that, since this is a Christian prayer, and AA endorses it, therefore AA must be a Christian organization? We say, "We want the hand of AA to always be there..." Are we placing restrictions on who will be allowed to grasp that hand?

Bob L., Gilbertsville, Penn.

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'Good AA Guy'

From page 1

Loved by several and missed by many, our friend Michael was a kind and generous soul with an infectious laugh that lit up a room. On many occasions we



would hang out and watch a Phils game, go fishing, chill at Rita's for water ice, or head down to his beloved LBI and he would spout out the most hilarious stuff I've ever heard. And we would laugh until our bellies hurt. Such was Michael's personality. Kind, gentle, intelligent, wise, and witty beyond compare!

Now don't get me wrong. Michael had his problems. After all, it is progress not perfection. And even those with the most sober time have to deal with life on life's terms. But Michael had the ability to turn to his spirituality during the tough times. He turned to what he had been taught in AA; a faith in a Higher Power that worked under any and all circumstances. I miss my friend because he showed me a way up and out. He showed many of us what it meant to be sober, one day at a time, and how to remain sober through

even the most difficult of times. Michael came, came to, and came to believe, and those who knew him best loved him for that.

Michael succumbed to pancreatic cancer in 2012 after a long, arduous battle. But from the very minute he was diagnosed, to his dying breath, I never heard the man complain or ask, "Why me God?" Sure he cried while holding him during the occasional 3 am jags in the ER when the pain was unbearable. But he never complained, never asked why. He remained true to his spirituality and prayed only to see his daughter Carol Ann's 21st Birthday. Unfortunately, he missed that event by a month. But I am 100% positive he was there in spirit.

Many of Michael's AA friends traveled to LBI during the last several months of his life to say their final goodbyes and yet there isn't a SINGLE picture of him without a smile. Even in the face of certain death and severe pain Michael 'sucked it up' and posed with his friends for one last picture, and managed to plaster a sh*t eating grin on his face. That was how he wanted his friends to remember him and he made sure it happened. He made us laugh during those visits, uncontrollably at times. In fact, one AA member, and you know you are, was ushered from the house and told not to come back for fear Michael's frail frame couldn't handle the frivolity!

There's a picture of Michael 'The Baker' on a shelf in my home. It's a goofy picture of him standing by, jazz hands flailing, while I removed the hook from a turtle he caught while we were fishing. I love that picture because it's a reminder of the man I knew, not the one whose body was ravaged by cancer, making him a shadow of the person he once was. He is the Michael I knew in that picture, happy and at peace with himself. And when I look at that picture it reminds me that he looks down and shines upon all of us; his home group friends at Masonville and other friends throughout the rooms, his daughter and sisters Ann Marie and Mary Catherine who he loved beyond compare, and the still sick and suffering among us. Michael always said "You can never give up on the new guy. It's not for you to determine when someone will get it". That's exactly what a 'Good AA Guy' says. That's how a 'Good AA Guy' behaves.

Thank you Michael. For the laughter, the tears, the wisdom, and the time. We love and miss you every day. Please continue to pray for us and watch over us as we trudge the happy road to destiny. Thank you for being a wonderful example of what it means to be a 'Good AA Guy'!!
Peace and God Bless.

Jim S
Masonville Group

Editorial Policy

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Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@asj.org.

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SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

The One Dollar Challenge

From 1982 until 1992 I always put a buck in the basket. This seemed to be a reasonable amount, and it was certainly in line with the times. However, around 1992-93 there was considerable talk in the rooms about trying to encourage everyone to increase our contributions.

Wow, two bucks seemed like a lot of money to me. After all, I was attending 4-5 meetings a week. That means I would be \$8.00 to \$10.00 a week out of pocket. I really needed to think about this.

Now it is important to note that as a direct result of AA, I was making a fairly good living and driving a nice car (Lincoln Continental). I had a full dressed Harley Davidson. I was living in a comfortable home. All of my needs were taken care of. At that time, I was a smoker and spending \$6.30 per pack 4 or 5 times a week (average \$35.00). Coffee was costing around \$1.25 for 16oz. once or twice a day. Can you see where this is going?

So, from somewhere around 1993 to present, I began putting \$2.00 in the basket. Now, here is my big problem. Cigarettes are up to \$8.00 per pack. I quit smoking a year or so ago. I was paying about \$48.00 per week. Gas has gone down to below \$2.00 per gallon. Coffee is now \$1.65 per 16 oz. cup. My income, as a retired person is still pretty substantial with very low expenses.

Sooo, why is it such a struggle to put one more dollar in the basket?

I went to see a movie last week with my nine-year-old. For the tickets, popcorn, soda and candy I spent \$37.50. I got about 95 minutes of pure entertainment. However, when I put two dollars into the basket. I get two cups of coffee, an hour of great entertainment and a lifetime of joy as a sober fella.

I always say, at every meeting, that AA saved my life. I boast about how grateful I am. I am able to spend hours of sober fun with my family and friends. I enjoy smoking \$8 to \$12 cigars with my AA buddies. I love driving my big pickup truck. Why, does \$3.00 seem like such a big deal?

I think that the big problem for me is this: No one knows I am doing it. So, I am reaching out to all of you. If you see me at a meeting, please remind me how grateful I am and that I should be putting \$3.00 in the basket. Wow, \$3.00 per meeting, times 4-5 meetings a week = approximately \$13.50. Are you kidding me? I leave more than that as a tip after eating out with the family 2-3 times a week. I am embarrassed that I am even hesitating on this.

So, \$3.00 it is. At every meeting, no matter who sees me? Thanks for supporting me in this monster decision.

Anonymous (LOL)

As Bill Sees It



“I try to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one’s heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion we can ever know.”

As Bill Sees It, page 37.

Into Action

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Upon further reading in the Big Book, it was made clear to me what the first 100 A.A. Pioneers experience meant – that if I skipped this step, I might not overcome my drinking problem. This clear and concise statement made it evident to me just exactly what I needed to do. It’s clear, that a solitary self-appraisal is insufficient.

After some internal mental debate, I called my sponsor and told him I was ready. We set the date, and it was done. No going back now. When the time came, he picked me up and drove me to a nearby park. We found a secluded area, sat at a bench and said a prayer, asking a Higher Power to aid us in this process. I commenced to share the contents of my inventory, left to right. My sponsor sat very patiently as I worked my way through the resentments, the causes, what it affected, and specifically my part in the situation. He masterfully asked questions, and helped shed light upon the things I couldn’t see. Through the sharing of his own experience, the courage to disclose the more embarrassing items gradually crept in. The process had a momentum effect, the further we went, the easier it got.

Slowly and surely, I was feeling lighter and lighter. The mask I had assembled through years of destructive drinking, hiding, lying, and scheming was being removed piece by piece. Without even knowing it, humility, serenity, and peace of mind were sweeping in to fill the space that was now becoming free within me. After sharing that final terrifying item that I swore I was taking to the grave, I felt something I hadn’t felt in a very long time. A frightening tremble deep inside me, like a crack in the wall of an ego-built reinforced dam. I was left in tears, as embarrassed as I was; I knew I was free from the pain of my past. The park I left was not the park I had entered. My perception had in fact changed; this was my first of many spiritual experiences. The Big Book has truly confirmed my own 5th Step experience-

“We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator; we may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but we now begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared often comes strongly. We feel that we are on the Broad Highway walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.”

*God Bless,
Young & Sober
Michael E.*



**THE RESPONSIBILITY
DECLARATION**

I am responsible when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. to be there, and for that: I am responsible.

Written for A.A.'s 1st Convention 1950



Words of Wisdom from the Past

by **Bruce B.**

...We must remember A.A. will continue strong only so long as each of us freely and happily gives it away to another person, only as each of us takes our fair share of responsibility for sponsorship of those who still suffer, for the growth and integrity of our group, for our Inter-group activities, and for A.A. as a whole.

It is in taking responsibility that real freedom and enduring satisfaction of life are found. A.A. has given us power to choose -to drink or not to drink- and in doing so has given us freedom to be responsible for ourselves. As we become responsible for ourselves we are free to be responsible for our share in A.A., and unless we happily accept this responsibility we lose A.A. (STRANGE isn't it?)

From a souvenir book for the 1965 convention writes Dr. JACK NORRIS



THE UNITY DECLARATION

"This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep the fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

Written for A.A.'s 35th Anniversary At the International Convention held in Miami Beach Fla. July 1970. With the growth of A.A. to date, and the removal of much of the stigma of alcoholism, the INTERGROUPS and GROUPS are the PRIMARY SOURCE of A.A. today.



Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

May 2016

Thursday, April 21 – Oaklyn Thursday night how it works in will be celebrating their anniversary on at 7pm speaker at 8 pm.

Saturday, April 23 – Dying to Live Young Peoples Group is hosting "Moonlight Barbeque."
10:00 pm meeting followed by barbeque. \$10.00 for all-you-can-eat burgers, dogs, desserts. New Beginnings Clubhouse 101C Rose Ave. Runnemed. Questions? Tom D. [856-889-3885](tel:856-889-3885)

Saturday, April 30 – Pemberton Happy Hour Group's 24th Anniversary. 4:00 pm food and fellowship, meeting at 5:30 pm. All are welcome! Speaker is Bob P. from Manahawkin Daily Reflections (38 Years). 449 Club 6 Pemberton St. Pemberton 08068

May 6-8 – 39th Annual Couples in Recovery retreat, St. Mary of Providence Center, 227 Isabella Rd., Elverson PA 19520. Check website for directions: <http://www.stmaryofprov-pa.org> \$290/couple.
For more info call Wayne : [856-534-0104](tel:856-534-0104)

May 6-8 – Camping in Bass River, 762 Stage Rd., Tuckerton, NJ 08087. \$10.00 / person. Contact Sal C. [609-741-7393](tel:609-741-7393) or Dylan B. [609-922-5390](tel:609-922-5390), socialevents@aasj.org to confirm or reserve.

Friday, May 20 – The Marlton Group will celebrate its anniversary from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Route 70, Marlton, NJ. An eating meeting with a guest speaker!

Monday, May 23 – Masonville Group 27th. Anny. 6:00 PM Food & Refreshments. 7:00 pm special guest speakers. Masonville UM Church 200 Masosville/Ark Rd. Mount Laurel, NJ 08054.

June 24-26 – 5th Liberty Bell Roundup, Philadelphia Woodstock of AA, Registration.: \$40