

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

JUNE 2016

Lessons from Conventions – Past and Present

On Mother's Day, I was eating lunch with friends and someone mentioned a few struggles she was having with her mother. I asked, "Were you at convention for the Saturday night speaker?" Not only had she been, but she had had the opportunity to engage with the speaker beyond just hearing her share.

I went on to share how some of my own experiences with my

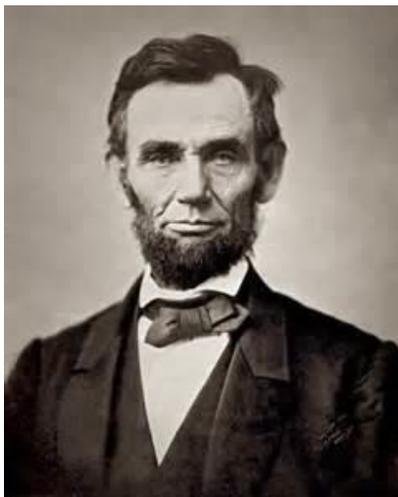
mother were brought back to mind as I was hearing the speaker – suggestions from a sponsor to make a habit of regular contact with mom, practicing acceptance when communication wasn't received as I had hoped it would be, and a concerted effort to continue reaching out even when the results might not have been what I "wanted."

As I drove home from lunch, I reflected on other lessons I had learned or as in the case of mother relations been reminded of by participating in Area 45 General Service Conventions. *(Note: Since I did not ask anyone to use their name, any names used have been changed in this written sharing of my experience.)*

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Lincoln's Insight into Alcoholism

Milton Maxwell, a professor of sociology, brought to Bill W's attention that a group in 1840 almost succeeded in the alcoholism problem. Amazingly, in about three years, their membership grew to almost 100,000, but they fell into obscurity almost as quickly. The 10th tradition of AA used the Washingtonians as an example of the pit falls that face such organizations.



In the February 1964 issue of the AA Grapevine, there is an article entitled "Abraham Lincoln on Alcoholism". Lincoln showed a profound insight into the problem of the habitual drunkard. This address was delivered in 1842

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Inside This Issue: Step Six: Moving Forward ♦ Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do ♦ Room Still Available for Founders Day Trip ♦

Jersey Goes to Mass

Last month my work brought me to the Gloucester/Lynn area of Massachusetts, about an hour north of Boston. No chicken or steak this week, it was all "lobsta" and codfish!

Giving myself extra time to find a meeting my first night there, I arrive an hour early to a near capacity parking lot and meeting hall. I can't speak for the whole area, but the fellowship was strong at every meeting I attended here. Judging by the size of the area meeting list, and the number of "old timers" up here there must be at least a little truth to the

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Step Six: Obligated to Go Forward

Especially when it hurts too much to stand still

Step Six has always seemed to me to be the most theoretical of the Twelve Steps. What, exactly, do we mean by "entirely ready"? What if I am only a little bit ready? Halfway ready? Seventy-five percent ready? Can I still approach Step Six? I think the answer is yes, and I'd go further: despite the degree of readiness I might or might not possess on a given day, I am obligated to go forward.

My first pass at Step Six occurred within the first few months of my sobriety. I had completed Steps Four and Five, and when I got to the Sixth Step, my sponsor asked me to read one paragraph a day--no more--of the essay in the "Twelve and Twelve." That took about three weeks. When I was finished, he suggested that I do the same thing again. I think now he was preparing me for the glacial pace at which we become ready to have any given defect of character removed.

At this point in my development, I was unclear about what a character defect was, never mind my readiness to have it removed. When members alluded to "character defects" in meetings, what they often referred to was the manifestation of these defects. Smoking is not a character defect. Playing the lottery is not

a defect of character. Eating chocolate, which one well-meaning member assailed for about fifteen minutes when she spoke on this Step, is not a defect of character. Like this woman, I was confronting my shortcomings such as I understood them at the time. But nothing much needed to be done about them. The responsibilities and commitments of my new sober life were considerably more than I was used to, but they didn't amount to much, and so my own defects of character weren't really in the way of what I was seeking to accomplish. This was about to change. As a natural result of my attempts to practice the principles of the program, my life got bigger. I married a beautiful girl. We were blessed with a daughter. My career appeared to be moving forward--and the manifestation of my character defects persisted. In particular, the one that our literature tells us leads the parade: Pride.

I can offer a couple mundane examples: After our daughter was born, my wife went back to grind it out at her nine-to-five while I took to the local playgrounds with our bouncing baby girl. Even in a city thought to be on the cutting edge of social change, most of the playground parents were moms. I felt out of

place, alienated, distant, ostracized. I should note that nobody *made* me feel anything. I manufactured these emotions on my own.

The small talk among folks I became acquainted with--I saw them sometimes twice a day--naturally centered on child care and education. I discovered right away that my own opinions veered wildly from the playground standard, and I took every opportunity (often forcing opportunities where they didn't exist) to articulate those distinctions. It was all about me being right, of course, and them being wrong.

I felt compelled to make it clear that I was destined for big things, great things; my ambition surpassed anything as pedestrian as raising a child. So when the subject of what I "did" came up (and it often would), I outlined in great detail the number of exciting projects I had in the works. One sympathetic mom asked me how I was doing; I gave her a resume. My aim was to make sure that everyone--in some cases a total stranger--was acutely aware that I was not merely a goateed, bespectacled

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Convention
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LESSON 1: REGISTRATION SUPPORTS CONVENTION.
DON'T "STEAL" IT, EVEN FOR ONE DANCE.

The first convention I attended, I was still actively drinking but dating an alcoholic in recovery. Popping in at convention was a way to spend a little time with him. Of course, I had no desire to attend any speaker sessions, but I wanted to go to the dance. Convention IDs were being checked at the dance room door. No problem. My boyfriend's friend Gus let me wear his ID and go into the dance for a bit while he hung out in the lobby. It worked. For a half hour or so, I was Gus.

Fast forward six years. Convention is coming. I am having a conversation with my sponsor and relay the story of my first convention and being Gus. Little did I know that 9th Step action was required, but my sponsor knew. She saw it as an opportunity to remind me of the importance of paying registration for any convention events one attends and then suggested that I pay a convention registration for someone who might not be able to afford it as my amends for my first convention dance as Gus.

LESSON 2: YOU DON'T HAVE THE TIME UNTIL THE TIME IS HERE

I have an April anniversary, so when convention comes around I usually have X years, 11 months and some days. At the fifth convention I attended sober (*let's just not count that one when I was dancing Gus*), I was sitting near a home group member who was celebrating his anniversary the day after the sobriety count down. I watched him stand up for the year he had on the night of the sobriety count down, not the year he would have the next day. That stuck with me.

LESSON 3: SOME OF THE BEST CONVENTION MOMENTS ARE IN THE LOBBY

I've always found the hotel lobby to be a great place to experience convention. When I moved from Gloucester County to Burlington County, the convention lobby became a place to reconnect with friends from my early recovery. We could settle into some chairs, chat and people watch. After all, who doesn't like trying to guess if the other people are alcoholics or "normal" hotel guests. This convention however there was a special treat. A pair of sober musicians gathered in the lobby with their guitars and there was some time to listen to them jam. The joys of recovery can be witnessed in lobby experiences.



LESSON 4: JUST BECAUSE I'M AN ALCOHOLIC DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T POP IN ON ALANON

The Area 45 convention offers not only opportunities for alcoholics to hear the message of unity, service, and recovery but Alanon members as well. For the first twelve years of my recovery, I essentially ignored the Alanon component of convention. However, I would sometimes hear other alcoholics saying things like "Did you see the AIAnon skit?" or "I could relate when the AIAnons . . ." I began to get curious and about four years ago decided to pop in on an AIAnon session. It was the skit. I didn't need to make comparisons as I watched, as I was able to identify with components of it. Now, I try to attend one AIAnon component of convention each year and see what I can learn.

I'm sure if my drive home from lunch on Mother's Day was longer, more lessons might have come to mind. I'm also pretty sure the newsletter committee would love to see things you learned at convention so they can share it in future newsletters. ;)

Robin M.
Hainesport Serenity

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

Fri. May 20 - Manahawkin Young People of AA will celebrate their 3rd anniversary at 6pm. with food and speaker to follow. At St Mary of the Pines Parish Ctr. 100 Bishop Way Manahawkin, NJ

Mon. 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

Mon. May 23 - Burlington Big Book presents R.O.O.T.S. (remember our old timers story) from 7pm - 8:30pm @ St Mary's Guild Hall 145 W. Broad St. Burlington.

Thurs. May 26 - West Deptford "A New Day" group will celebrate their 4th anniversary at Southwood Baptist Ch. 11 Griscom Lane West Deptford. Starting at 7:30 AM sharp with a continental breakfast and meeting as usual. more info call Wayne @ [856-534-0104](tel:856-534-0104)

Thurs. May 26 - Sewell The Honesty Room meeting of AA will celebrate its 4th anniversary. Food at 7:30pm, speaker meeting at 8:35pm. Anniversary will be at the large meeting space across the parking lot from the regular (basement) meeting location. Please share and bring a friend! Church of the Holy Family, 226 Hurffville Rd, Sewell, NJ 08080

Sat. June 11 - KISS Club is sponsoring a canoe trip & picnic - Our Caravan will be leaving from the K.I.S.S. Club:818 N. Broad St. Woodbury, NJ 08096 @ 7am sharp, and head to Mick's Canoe Rental:3107 Rt. 563 Chatsworth, NJ 08019 See Steve or call him to reserve your spot- 609-502-4065THIS TRIP MUST BE PAID FOR BY JUNE 1st!!Tickets: \$25 per adult, kids under 10 years of age FREE be at the KISS Club 7:00 am sharp, June 24, 25 and 26 - 5th Liberty Bell Roundup, Philadelphia Woodstock of AA. Registration: \$40

Lincoln

From page 1

to the temperance society and Lincoln proved that he was a hundred years ahead of time in his thinking. His following quotation is indeed noteworthy.

"Indeed, I believe if we take the habitual drunkard as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison with those of any other class." Also, "those who have suffered by intemperance and have reformed are the most powerful and efficient instruments to push the reformation to ultimate success." Again, "if you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend."

One of the many articles that can be found in the AA Grapevines.

Bruce B.

Jersey

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Irish/Catholic stereotype! I felt a strong "Big Book" influence up here, where speakers were focused on the basic principles for long term sobriety – no BS, join a group, get a sponsor, clean house, and service. Keep it simple!

One meeting I attended used the book "Back to Basics" by Wally P. At first I was skeptical, as this book is not AA literature, it is the author's study of early AA and how people were brought through the steps. It is documented that early newcomers were taken through the steps, all of them, in one weekend. Reading the accounts of these early AA's generated very healthy discussions on the differences of how we operate now and the importance of keeping the past fresh in our minds. After the meeting my AA roots felt stronger, and I will have this book on my shelf. This wound up being an excellent meeting for me!

Shawn M.

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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Website: www.asj.org
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444

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

Go Forward

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childcare provider of the progressive new breed; I was a mover and a shaker with his eyes on the prize. I would keep talking until the person turned away, bored or offended. I became embarrassed on two counts: Number one, the person was not necessarily impressed, and number two, I was informing her of my career arc, letting her know who I thought I was, out of pure pride. As Bruce Willis asked Ving Rhames in *Pulp Fiction*, "You feel that sting, big boy? That's pride."

I felt that sting. I became painfully aware of that defect of character and duly mentioned it, with great specificity, to the Higher Power. I let him know that he ought to remove it just as soon as possible. I had become, according to me, entirely ready.

Guess what? The next time I was asked how I was doing on the playground, I answered in precisely the same manner. Pushing my daughter's swing with my left hand, gesticulating with my right, I expounded on all my plans for the immediate future. My target's reaction was also the same. Her eyes glazed over while she looked frantically for something else to occupy her time.

"Entirely ready" took on a new meaning. I had created as much willingness as I could on my own. The continued manifestation of this defect helped me realize that the remaining willingness--the short hop between the end of Step Six and the beginning of Step Seven--was in the hands of God alone. That was the point when my relationship to the Step, and to that nasty defect of character, pride, evolved yet again for the better. Today, on the playground, when somebody asks me how I'm doing, I say, "I am very well, thank you. How are you?" Period. If somebody inquires about what I do, I tell them. In one word. Pressed. I say, "Oh, I've got a lot going on." And that statement is truer now than it has ever been in my life.

-- Pete P.

New York, New York

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Dr. Bob

Bill W.

Founder's Day 2016

June 10, 11 and 12

Room is still available for the 8th annual bus trip to Akron, Ohio., the birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous! There will be meetings every hour on the hour, historic AA sites, and phenomenal speakers sharing their journeys to sobriety. Meet people in our vast fellowship from all around the world!

Trip includes:

- Round trip transportation
- Modern air conditioned video-equipped bus
- Accommodations at the Akron City Centre Hotel
- Continental breakfast
- Registration fees for the conference
- Transportation to Doctor Bob's gravesite.

Departure:

- First Pickup- Trenton, New Jersey/ Friday at 3:00am (morning)
- Second Pickup – 4021 Clubhouse/ 4021 Walnut Street (University City)/ Friday at 4:00am (morning)

Total Price - \$325.00 per person (based on Double room occupancy)

For more information contact: Robert T. @215-430-3389 or Ed R. @215-802-8973

Please send all monies to:

Edward Robinson
P.O. Box 46151
Philadelphia, Pa. 19160

Make checks payable to Edward Robinson

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Address _____

Amount enclosed _____

City/State/Zip _____

Roommate's Name _____