

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

February 2018

Fourth and Long: This Former Football Player Finally Found His Way to AA

My story begins in the housing projects of the Big Easy--New Orleans. The Big Easy is well known for its celebration to drinkers: Mardi Gras.

Growing up in the Deep South during the "separate-but-equal" times, my father had two laws for my brothers and sisters and me: pray and get an education.

Daddy believed that praying kept you close to God and that education was the key to a better way of living. The whole household lived by those two laws. My mother was a Southern Baptist with that "Good Old-Time Religion," so that is what I became. That was the beginning

of the many religions that I would call my salvation.

It was during my elementary school days when glimpses of my disease surfaced. For holidays, my dad

would bake delicious three-layered chocolate cakes. To get all six of his children to go to bed early, he'd cut big chunks of cake then pour table wine onto the chunks. Well, my three brothers and one sister would immediately go to bed;

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There's Nothing Normal about Drinking Like a Normal Person

"I wish I could drink like a normal person."

How many times have we heard that one in the rooms? The sentiment is understandable: none of us started drinking because we wanted to become alcoholics; we did it because it was fun. For normal people it still is, but many alcoholics assumed that the days and nights of having fun were over when we put down the bottle.

Fortunately, we realize that plenty of fun and enjoyment can be found in sobriety. At a recent meeting, however, I came to the realization that I in fact did drink like a normal person. The key word there being, "like." There was nothing normal about my drinking, but I could make it look that way.

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From the Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to say how grateful I am to be of service. I hope our relationship will be happy, joyous and free in many senses of these words!

February is Step 2 – Came to believe a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. When I fist came to AA, I did not even understand how I was going to be restored to sanity. Wasn't I OK already, just had a drinking problem? I'll fix that and be fine! Little did I know.... My first higher power experience in AA came from the rooms. There was something there, a calmness, a feeling of hope, a happiness that kept drawing me back. My second was my sponsor. She gently led me to the realization that I was not, in fact, sane – yet!

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Normal

From page 1

When I was drinking, I made sure I learned about wine and fine spirits, particularly how to pair them with food. This made it easy to incorporate drinking when going out with friends—a ready-made, socially acceptable reason to drink a lot.

Instead of being an alcoholic, I could present myself as a connoisseur. I had standards. I had taste. Of course, I also had bottles of cheap Canadian whiskey stashed all around the house, but as long as no one found out about them, I was fine. On the surface, at least, I drank “like” a normal person.

Sure, like me, a normal person will go out and get drunk on a Saturday night. The next day, they would be nursing their hangover, and you wouldn’t see them out drinking for a couple of weeks. For me, I would get drunk again that night. And if I could not engineer a social situation where drinking would be “like normal,” then I would close myself off in my office, where I would say I was doing work. And I would get drunk again the next night. And the next. Eventually, being hungover became my natural state.

I don’t know how many people I actually fooled doing this, but it worked pretty well on me. The fine wine and spirits bit helped me hold on to denial for a lot of years. I even functioned well enough that people

would at least give me the benefit of a doubt. I needed to drink more and more each night. On weekends, I had begun sneaking nips here and there during the day. Then I was drinking non-stop on any day I was not at work. Eventually, I reached the point where I couldn’t deny my alcoholism any longer. So I simply ignored it.

Once I had some time in sobriety, I found that I really didn’t miss drinking. My wife and I still go out to wonderful restaurants with amazing food, and I really don’t miss the wine. In fact, we can actually afford to go out a lot more now because we’re not spending so much on booze.

We have learned that bartenders love the creativity that comes from making “mocktails,” which are even becoming a bit of a thing these days. For us, it’s just an alcohol-free way we can add something to the experience.

But while I may not miss having a glass of wine with dinner, my obsession of alcohol has not gone away. In sobriety I have learned that I don’t miss having a drink; what I miss is getting drunk. While I was pretending to drink like a normal person, I was in reality drinking like an alcoholic, which is what I wanted all along.

And there’s nothing normal about that.

Steve W.

Football

From page 1

however, my baby sister and I would always have seconds. It was my first experience with alcohol.

Our family moved from the projects to the center of New Orleans. My education was going along just fine, and I was a straight A student. At thirteen, I was six feet and three inches tall. My height led me to play basketball, in which I excelled. My life was really good. That is when I saw her—that beautiful cheerleader. My intentions were to go over, say hello, and to

ask for a date. My shyness never let that happen. What happened was a series of events that started me down the road to the drinking solution.

I devised a plan whereby the cheerleader's friend would speak on my behalf and ask my cheerleader to talk to me. It was a great plan (I thought), but the flaw was that I was even too shy to talk to the cheerleader's friend. To solve the defect, I drank rum and cola. The problem was solved. I talked to the cheerleader's friend, who in turn talked to the cheerleader,

who in turn became my girlfriend. It was just that easy.

Well, I attended an all-boys Catholic high school where three things in my life changed: my religion, my education, and my drinking. My drinking became my relaxation. I played football and won many honors. I could buy my own alcohol at anytime and anywhere. On graduation night, I barely remembered staying out all night. I did remember eating grits off the floor of my friend's home. It was a great night!

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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@aasj.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

Trivia Question

February 2018: How many meeting lists did we sell in 2017?

Answer to last month's trivia question: When was the aasj website designed?



Our newest website was designed in 2017 and launched on Jan. 12, 2018 thanks to the successful efforts of our website chair, Josh V. Josh and his new co-chair Richie M continue to work hard to make improvements and bring our website up to today's standards. Please be patient and check back often to see what the website has to offer. www.aasj.org

Work on our prior website began on 6/11/05. We've estimated the launch date to be in 2008 and the oldest newsletter still posted is dated August 2009. (Thank you to Andy E and Janet I for contributing information for this answer.)

Editor

From page 1

But with a little help from my friends and some work I just might get there. So I embarked on my journey with all of you and began to trust again.

My definition of sanity changed, my life began to change, but most of all my outlook began to change. Honesty, openness and willingness became my mantra. I was not afraid of hard work, so I dug in.

The blessings I have received are too numerous to mention! I'm still working on improving my sanity(!) but I have a good feeling if I stick around with all you wonderful people I just might make it!

Judy P

Football

From page 2

The college I attended was in the desert. It was the first time I'd gone to an integrated school. Although my educational background surpassed most of my college mates, I felt insecure. So I got baptized a Baptist. My relief from insecurity did not come from that baptism. There was more than enough relief available in religion, yet I never desired to get it. I'd discovered that two things relieved my insecurity: Mad Dog 20/20 and tequila with the worm in the bottle. My drinking escalated and led me to smoking marijuana. I met my first wife.

Now at the age of twenty-one, my life was complete. I was a baptized Baptist. I had a wife, a house, dogs, and cats. Life was almost grand--"almost" being the hole in the pit of my stomach that only scotch whiskey could fill. So I strolled over to the liquor cabinet and got what I needed. All was well until I was compelled to do it again, again, and again. Alcoholism had me. My wife and I began having fights like Ali and Frazier. Her prize was credit cards. My prize was alcoholism.

Professional football called me to the Land of 10,000 Lakes. It was fulfilling to know that I'd be on television and in the newspaper every day. Celebration was the order of the day. I popped open Asti Spumante and the good times rolled. I was on top of the world. I thought that I was God's gift to the world. Then I was told by my head coach that I would have to sit on the bench for three to four years before I could play. I was furious.

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Coach had no idea who I was and what I had done. Coach told me simply, "There was a pro team here before you got here. There is a pro team here now that you are here. And there will be a pro team here when you leave here." They were true words, but I could not hear them. The top-shelf liquor was telling me: this does not apply to you.

Well the first year, we won the division and our playoff games. Super Bowl VIII was exciting for me, but we lost. My only thought was that we would have won if I had played.

I went back to the desert to a wife who had learned how to fix me a drink and leave me alone. I got fat in the off season. I weighed 245 pounds. To lose weight, breakfast and lunch consisted of scotch and a fruit cocktail. For dinner, I ate anything I wanted. I lost the weight and my wife in the process.

My wife gave me a kiss at the airport as I left for my second year of professional football. Two weeks later in training camp, I received divorce papers. I was devastated. How could she do that to me? I loved her. But I caught a plane to the desert, signed the divorce papers, and was free of that problem. Although my life was in disarray, all was still okay. I had my religion (I was a Muslim by then), my education (three years of college), and my football career (bench warmer).

The second year of professional football proved to be the very best for me. I started at corner back.

We won our division and playoff games again. Superbowl IX was played in my home town, New Orleans, and I was starting. This year's outcome would be different. We would win because I was playing. Well, we lost again, yet I felt fairly good because the press praised my excellent playing. Life was good again. My drinking career got a boost from the people whom I associated with. The card parties, discos, the nights out on the town all became fuel for my alcoholism. I became more and more an alcoholic, although no one could tell me this fact.

By my third year of professional football, I was caught up in the full grip of selfishness and self-centeredness. I believed I had arrived.

My material life was good (a new house, live-in partner, cars, etc.); however, my thinking was off. I thought that the team could not do anything without me. I was wrong. Upon arriving for training, I was told to sit back on the bench; I would not be starting. I freaked!

My explanation on how well I had played did not influence the coach. The fact was I had only started because another player had a broken arm. They had no one else to put there. I refused to accept that fact; so I demanded to play or be traded. I ended up on a team on the east coast. My attitude changed from "Yes, all is well" to "Why are they doing this to me?"

I started at free safety. Again, life was fun. I was still doing the same things: drinking, partying, and having fun. The thought of finishing

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HELP WANTED

FEBRUARY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Answering Service: The answering service chairperson is updating the volunteer schedule for the hotline. Please contact Tracey to confirm your shift or to request one if you are interested in serving. answeringservice@aasj.org

Literature: Literature volunteers are always welcome, especially for

the morning shifts. Please e-mail literature@aasj.org for more information.

Newsletter: Articles welcome! Please submit by Friday, February 9th for the March newsletter.

Website Committee: looking for people with IT experience to get involved with creating and maintaining the new website. Please contact Josh at webmaster@aasj.org for more information.

SPEAKING COMMITMENTS

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities: Please contact Frank or Debbie at handi@aasj.org if you are able to take one of these commitments.

Monday

Ancora - 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton. Jan. 22, 29, 7-8pm
Maryville Women's Unit - 1903 Grant Ave., Williamstown. Feb. 26, 8-9pm
Princeton House Behavioral Health Unit - 351 New Albany Road, Moorestown, Feb. 19, 9:30-10:20am

Tuesday

Virtua Psych Unit - 175 Madison Ave, Mt. Holly. Feb. 13, 8:30-9:30pm
Solstice Counseling - 1561 Rt. 38 W, Lumberton. Feb. 13, 27 7-8pm
Delaware House - 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton. Feb. 6, 27 2-3pm
Unity Place I - 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill. Feb. 7, 21 12:40-1:30pm

Wednesday

Seabrook Women - 133 Polk Ln, Seabrook. Jan. 31 7:30-8:30pm
Solstice Counseling - 1561 Rt. 38 W, Lumberton. Jan. 24, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28 12-1pm
Northbrook Behavioral Health - 425 Woodbury-Turnersville Rd, Blackwood. Feb. 14 8-9pm

Thursday

Ancora - 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton. Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 15, 22 7-8pm
Unity Place II - 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton NJ - Jan. 18, Feb. 1, 15 2-3 pm
Daybreak - 368 White Horse Pike, Atco NJ - Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 8, 15, 22 10:30-12:00 noon

Friday

JFK Psych Unit - 2201 Chapel Ave. W., Cherry Hill. Feb. 9 7-9pm
Seabrook Women - 133 Polk Ln, Seabrook. Feb. 16 7:30-8:30pm

Football

From page 4

my education, of my religion (I had none), and of my football career was all second to my life style of drinking. Then I was then sent to Los Angeles where I had the freedom to do whatever I wanted to do.

Superbowl XIV was the last professional football game I played. We lost. Suffering from the delusion that I was supposed to win, I was furious after the game. In the locker room I vaguely remember telling the owner some obscenity.

For the next ten years, I couldn't figure out why I wasn't playing professional football. Professional football *owed* me. So did my family and friends. I thought everybody owed me.

I was so empty the only solution that I came up with was not to drink, and to control my not drinking, I went to cocaine. Not in my worst time did I ever believe I'd use that stuff; yet alcohol told me I could control it.

I thought living in the Big Easy was my problem. I tried to leave and ended up sleeping under a bridge. Eating out of trash dumpsters and lying to family and friends was my life now. I was helpless to work so I got on welfare (they owed it to me). I was hopeless because all my education and my religion could not solve the problem.

It was at this moment that I became willing. When a local newspaper photographer found me under that bridge, the clarity of the hour struck. Earlier I'd asked God

to help me. That humble prayer was answered. That faint spark of God's presence in me ignited into a fireball of hope.

In the following days, God worked in my life. My story appeared in the newspaper and help came from every-where. My college friends, my high school friends, my family, all sought me out. Treatment was suggested to me. This was a foreign idea to me. Never did I dream that many foreign ideas would be suggested to me.

At the treatment center, I didn't identify myself as having a problem. I was no longer 175 pounds, dirty, and smelly. I was groomed and my old self after ten days. One of the counselors saw me trying to be special and stopped me. I thank God she was doing her job. She asked me one question which knocked my specialness down to the ground. She asked, "If you are so special, so intelligent, so different, how come you couldn't stop drinking and were sleeping underneath a bridge?" I was silent. She had asked me a question I couldn't answer. Having my attention she threw the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous at me, and I fumbled it like that drunken bum football player I had been. She said, "Read it, study it, and do what it says."

From that moment on my life has changed for the better. Upon careful reading I discovered how hopeless I had become. That my life was doomed to an alcoholic death. That no matter how hard I tried to do anything, I lacked the power. That alcohol is cunning (drug use), baffling (why I did not

play football anymore), and powerful (told me it would be all right to be sleeping under a bridge).

Immediately I applied the Twelve Steps of AA to my life. The results are wonderful. First, I no longer sleep underneath bridges. Also, I have a relationship with a Higher Power whom I call God Almighty. It is that power that solves my alcoholism. By cleaning my house, I have something to offer someone else. My new wife is loving and caring as a result of my new ability to be loving and caring to someone else. My new home is a gift from God. All that I have today is a result of Alcoholics Anonymous. AA has taught me how to live with me (The Steps), with you (The Traditions), and with the world (The Concepts). I have a home group that knows my ups and downs.

AA's program of recovery is the best thing that I could have done for my life. There are other plans of recovery; there are very good treatment centers, religions, education--and all helped me, yet none arrested my alcoholism one day at a time.

As one of my AA friends consistently says, "I feel simply marvelous." Marvelous is defined as "miraculous, or of the highest quality." That is exactly what AA has done for my life.

-- Anonymous
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