

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

September 2018

Conversations with Longtimers: Theresa B. Proves She Is Not Incapable of Getting Sober

Judy P sat down with Theresa B on 7/16/18. Theresa's sobriety date is 1/5/1981, and her current home groups are Chews Landing Step and the Living Room Meeting.

Ed Note: I met with Theresa, whom I have known for a few years now. I sat across from a woman who articulated herself with ease, exhibited a passion for her profession, and radiated a zest for life. This was in severe contrast to the woman she described to me prior to 1981 and coming to AA. Another testament to how the program works if you work it.



to AA. At confession, Fr. Coat told me to go to 3 AA meetings as penance. I did end up going to a meeting with the Father, who is in recovery, along with my dad (who died with 7 years sobriety). I was in therapy. When I came out

of a blackout and started speaking somewhat rationally, the therapist told me to go to an AA meeting around the corner.

I knew I had a problem, even went to rehab. I couldn't understand AA verses treatment. I had a fancy job, a nice car, an apartment and a girlfriend. I just had to slow down. At 42, when coming out of a blackout, there was a new lease and a stereo in my car. I decided to give myself 6 months to get it together.

I ended up in rehab, and ten days out I ended up in JFK in a straight

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Experiences with the Ninth Step

My experience with this step was a little daunting at first, to say the least. I have 11 brothers and sisters, and at the time I believe 25 nieces and nephews and that was just the start! Boy did I feel overwhelmed! I talked to my sponsor and asked- "how can I do all of those amends, it will take me forever?" She very kindly said, "you just do one at a time." What a novel idea.

I can say that her guidance and patience with me was so wonderfully gracious. We worked on them together and I will be forever grateful to her.

The process was not just "I'm sorry for what I did", it's really about making things right again. Rebuilding my relationship with all of those I had harmed. Admitting I was wrong was a hard pill to swallow.

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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@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

SJ Intergroup AA Trivia



September 2018 Trivia Question: How does a group submit an AA event for the Intergroup website calendar?

Answer to August 2018 Question, What happened at Intergroup in July that also happens when you work your steps?

In July our Literature Committee took inventory. Of course, counting books is probably a little easier than most of our 4th step inventories.



Now I Get It: Shaking and Scared, a Newcomer Recalls His Mom's Early Days in AA

It's September 15th, 2013, and I feel like hell. It's almost 7 P.M. and I'm sitting in the basement of a church I've never been in before. I'm hunched over in my metal chair with a styrofoam cup in one hand and my cell phone in the other. On my lap rests this blue-colored book. The weather is beautiful outside, but from the sweatpants, thermal shirt and wool skullcap I'm wearing, you would've thought it was snowing.

I'm nervous. I know that I'll have to speak in a few minutes. And even though it will only last a minute or two, I'm afraid of what everyone else in the room will think. I'm afraid they might judge me. I only have 10 days of sobriety, and I'm surrounded by old-timers who have 10 and 20 years sober. The lady on my right has 42! Most of them got sober before I was born.

I'm craving a drink right now. I'm actually sitting near the three main spots where I bought most of my alcohol. The liquor store down the street was for my whiskey; the supermarket across the street was for my six-packs of beer; and down the road is the gas station where I'd buy cheap malt liquor in the morning for my ride into work.

My mouth is literally salivating now. It's no surprise that I landed here in the basement of this church after more than 15 years of drinking and a good six years of

drug abuse. But as I'm sitting in my chair, trying my hardest to fight the urge to leave this church



and go to the bar next door for a double shot of whiskey on the rocks, I can't help but think that I want to help other people like me. I've only been sober 10 days, but I want to help someone who has only nine days. I want to give back to certain people in my life things I took away from them. I also want to give back to the people who are sick like me—people who are hurting. But first I have to go back and remember the person I hurt the most. And my mother is the first one who comes to mind.

I can remember it like it was yesterday. It's actually one of the few clear memories that I have as a child. I was living at my grandmother's house and my mom called to let me know she was coming for a visit. It was her weekly call. During the divorce, she had lost custody of my brother and me. She was coming over to my grandmother's to pick me up for the day, to hang out and spend some quality time with me. There was only one condition: I'd have to kill an hour of time with her at

an AA meeting in our neighborhood church in the Bronx.

I was about 10, and I kind of thought I had an understanding of what an alcoholic was and what the meetings were for. But I just didn't understand the severity of her situation. All I knew was that I really didn't respect my mother because she was a drunk. It was my father who actually told me not to respect her. He said

that drunks were "loser-type" people. Those words came from his mouth, which on any particular day would reek of rum, vodka or stale beer.

I was happy to see my mother only on weekends, because we blamed her for the divorce. She would literally have to buy back my love, after the years of misery and drama that our family had gone through. But I had no understanding of the true nature of alcoholism as a disease. I really didn't want to go to another meeting with her, for this was not my first and certainly would not be my last; but I figured that I'd make the best of an hour, plus it would be worth whatever toy she bought me later on that day.

The two of us arrived at the church of Saint Margaret's of Cortona in the school I was attending in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. As my mother grabbed her coffee and made herself comfortable in her chair, I waited inside the

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room with her. But due to my impatience and fidgetiness, I soon found myself outside. I got really bored, so I walked over and looked back inside. There was my mother, sitting in the middle of a group of complete strangers who I automatically disliked and felt no compassion for. I associated every one of them with my mother. I figured that if she was hanging out with them, then they must all be loser-types too. I hated them. All I could think about was waiting for the meeting to end. I wanted her to hurry up. I wanted to get the hell out of there. I didn't give a second thought to my own mother's sobriety and health. I looked through the little window on the meeting door and banged on it as hard as I could to get her

attention. She came over and told me to be patient and please behave. I kept banging on the door until she stopped looking over at me. I finally calmed down and waited outside for her.

I hid when the AA meeting came to an end. I'll never forget the look of disappointment on my mother's face when she found me. She didn't yell or lay a hand on me; she just gave me a look that ate away at me for years. There she was, trying to get sober for her two children in order to get back into our lives and become a positive role model and, most of all, a better parent. And there I was, taking that away from her.

Fast forward to now. My mother has seven years of sobriety under

her belt, and I'm 10 days sober today, cold, shaking and salivating for a beer. I finally understand what she was going through. I can feel her pain—at least some of it—and I can feel her ups and downs and the endless relapses. Now I'm sitting here holding this cup of coffee and praying that I won't relapse tonight.

I may only have 10 days under my belt, but I'm starting to do what my mother told me to do that day well over a decade ago—I'm finally behaving.

-- Ricky D.
Rochester, New York

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Ninth Step

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swallow for sure, but so very necessary. Asking them how I could make things right again, and then doing whatever they asked, whether I liked it or not. And believe me, sometimes I did not like what was asked of me, probably most of the time! Then having to listen as they had their chance to share with me the hurt I had caused them, and I had to be quiet and just listen! Wow, for an alcoholic of my type that is not an easy task! In my mind I would say. but uh I...and you can all fill in the blank. That's when I knew it wasn't about me anymore, it was about them. Being kind, considerate and compassionate. It was a healing process for them and for myself as well.

To say I grew spiritually from this step is an understatement. The changes that occurred within me were truly unbelievable. I didn't even know myself that the changes had occurred until I started to have more love and compassion for those around me. I truly felt the love of God and those around me, something I had never thought I would feel ever again.

Our literature talks about having a vast change of feeling and outlook, and I can tell you that is exactly what happened to me.

I have heard some folks say, How free do you want to be? After this step, I truly was free. Free from shame, guilt, and embarrassment of my behavior. Free from worry about what others thought of me, and of what I thought of myself.

I have also heard that the steps that will take you back out are 5, 9 and 12. Well I can assure you that had I not completed – and continue to be willing to make amends, I would not be where I am today, a free woman.

What a great experience. What a great life I have today, all because I really did follow a few simple (but hard) suggestions.

God bless you all.
Peace and Love,
Patti S.



September Service Opportunities

Answering Service:

We are in need of volunteers to be placed on the 12-step list to replace the many names that are going to be removed. If you or anyone else you know would

like to volunteer to be added to the new list please contact us via answeringservice@asj.org.

Newsletter:

Please continue to send articles, thoughts, things you heard in the rooms that you would like to share. All contributions are welcomed and appreciated.

Social Events:

The Social Events Committee is looking for new members and a co-chair. Come out and make the fun happen! Please e-mail socialevents@asj.org for more info.

Speaking Commitments

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities:

Please contact Frank or Debbie at handi@asj.org if you are able to take one of these commitments.

Sunday

Inspira Psych Unit – Sep 2; 4-5pm: 509 N Broad St, Woodbury NJ

Monday

DayTop Young Peoples Community – August 27, Sept 24; 7-8pm: 9 Harding Hwy Rt 40, Pittsgrove NJ

Ancora Psych Hosp – Sept. 24; 7-8pm: 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton NJ

Maryville Womens – Sept. 3; 8-9pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown NJ

Tuesday

Maryville Womens – Sept. 18; 8-9pm: 1903 Grant Ave., Williamstown NJ

Delaware House – Sept. 4, 11; 2-3pm: 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton NJ

Wednesday

Jefferson Psych Unit – Aug. 22, 29; 7:45-8:45pm: 2201 Chapel Ave W Cherry Hill NJ

Jefferson MICA Unit – Aug. 29; 11am-12pm: 2201 Chapel Ave W Cherry Hill NJ (NEW BUILDING)

Unity Place I – Aug. 22, 29, Sept. 5, 19, 26; 12:40-1:30pm: 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill, NJ

Solstice Counseling Services – Sept. 5, 19 12-1pm: 300 Birmingham Road, Pemberton NJ

Northbrook Behavioral Health – Aug. 22, 29, Sept. 12; 8-9pm: 425 Woodbury-Turnersville Rd Blackwood NJ

Thursday

Ancora Psych Hosp – Sept. 27; 7-8pm: 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton NJ

Unity Place II – Aug. 16, 30, Sept. 6, 20; 2-3 pm: 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton, NJ

Daybreak – Aug. 16, 23, 30, Sept. 13, 20, 27; 10:30-12:00 noon: 368 White Horse Pike, Atco, NJ

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Theresa B.

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jacket, from an overdose. By this time, I was having seizures. I was taken to the hospital 3 times in one week for seizures. The people in my apartment building didn't know it was me, so I did not offer any information. One neighbor said she was thinking of moving, as the neighborhood was doing downhill!

I also started to believe that I was constitutionally incapable of getting sober. I could follow some of the rules, like taking people to meetings, but then I would go and drink. I knew I had a problem but I didn't know what to do with it or about it. I had a step book, which sat on my shelf. I didn't read it or do any of the steps. (That would come later.)

Who were the people important in your sobriety?

I was 12 stepped again and taken to Our Lady of Lourdes hospital. While I was waiting to be admitted, I went into a grand mal seizure. This one left me with a loss of cognitive power. I couldn't talk, I couldn't read, and I had trouble following a conversation. I could

hardly walk, and usually dragged my right leg around after me. As I stood outside debating whether to go to another rehab, a security guard named George came up to me. I was shaking so badly, I had to hold onto the railing. He was

Never in my life did I think I would be sitting here being interviewed about my experience in AA! I thought I would have died many years ago. I was not able to speak, to read, to understand much of anything.

afraid I might try and jump. He offered his help. I asked what kind of help could he possibly give to a person like me? He said Let's go and he walked me to the 1550 detox in Camden. This was my first spiritual experience in the program. George told me he was a recovered alcoholic, with 25 years of sobriety and I could get that too. He waited until I went inside before he left.

From the detox I went to Riverside rehab in PA, and could not wait to escape! I even considered walking across the river to NJ at night when the river froze. But the darn ships came every morning and crushed through the ice! From there I went to a Halfway House,

where we attended AA meetings every day. My first sponsor was Minnie Pearl, a 6'2" woman of African American descent. Most people were afraid of her but I just looked up at her from my 5' frame and loved her. She had all the answers, she did not take any of my BS, and she made sure I got to a meeting every day. Minnie Pearl didn't scare me. I am a southern girl, still have my accent, and I remember going to the Baptist church in town where I lived. I loved hearing the singing. I had to sit outside, as I was white. Later on in my life I did finally get to go to service, and it was beautiful!

Along with my many ailments, was a major anger issue. I would go to meetings, curse, throw tables, told people off in a most colorful way. All y'all did was tell me to keep coming back. You told me you would love me till I could love myself. I did not think then that time would ever come!

I had a counselor helping me with my cognitive and speech problems. But it was the rooms of AA that gave me back my life. I used to sit and listen to the steps, and

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Speaking Commitments *From previous page*

Friday

Jefferson Psych Unit – Sept. 28; 7-8pm: 2201 Chapel Ave W Cherry Hill NJ
Maryville Women's Williamstown – Sept. 21; 8-9pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown NJ
Maryville Men's Post House – Sept. 7, 14, 21; 8-9pm: 610 Browns Mills Road, Pemberton NJ 08068

Saturday

Cooper Psych Unit – Aug. 18, Sept. 15, 22, 29; 10:30-11:30am: 1 Cooper Plaza Camden NJ
Inspira Psych Unit – Sept. 29; 4-5pm: 509 N Broad St, Woodbury NJ
Maryville Men's – Sept. 29; 7-8pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown NJ

Theresa B.

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How It Works. I ended up memorizing much of what I heard, just in case it might be my turn! There was a member Pete, who would sit next to me and help me read. He would tell me the words I couldn't recognize, and very gently helped me gain confidence as well as be able to read again.

Tell me about the growth of the fellowship and your contributions:

I was still living in PA at his time, and there were not a lot of Big Book meetings. I was told that there was an Artist's Group meet

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time. When I tried to discuss relationship issues at regular meetings, it was not met with a lot of tolerance. So Joyce and I started this meeting, even though we had no clue how to run a meeting! The meeting finally grew to about 75 women and lasted 15 years. I stayed for about 5 years. (In 1982 there was the first gay roundup convention in OA, and about 650 people attended.)

This meeting provided a place to promote lesbian women and we also started our own social gatherings, tubing, retreats in the Poconos, and BYOS (steak) dinners. As society started changing and the gay/lesbian culture became more enmeshed with regular meetings, the need for our women's group was not as strong.

At 18 years sober, I moved to New Jersey where I found a lot of Big Book Thumpers. I made Monday night Collingswood and the Sunday Spiritual Brooklawn meetings my home groups. Ilene, who had 17 years sobriety, started a Big

Book study group. I eventually made my way to the Friday Audubon Big Book study meeting which is still a favorite of mine.

Have you been involved in service, Intergroup, etc?

I was involved with Matt Talbot Retreats, and became co-chair for many years. Back then there were only 2 retreats, January in PA and October at the shore.

How AA has changed: I see from the newcomers how AA has changed. There are a lot more meetings, and my interpretation is that people don't have to go and listen as only the dying can. They just get up and go to another meeting!

Never in my life did I think I would be sitting here being interviewed about my experience in AA! I thought I would have died many years ago. I was not able to speak, to read, to understand much of anything.

Now I am back in the field as a psychiatric counselor, with a humility that is the direct opposite of my previous overinflated egotistical self! I am able to help those who want it. I understand all about wanting it, and I remember listening as only the dying can, cause I was dying for real. My spirituality today is strong, and is reflected in my daily life. There have been so many wonderful people that have helped me on my journey, some whose faces I can see, maybe not the names. Today, I love giving back what was so freely given to me.

Step 9 Poem

Made amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

We make our amends to these persons
By confessing where we have been wrong;
Confessions alone, don't always atone;
So we must change, as we keep moving on.
We need to be careful how we treat others
Those we know, and those we still are to meet;
To continue to grow in this program,
Hurtful actions, we strive not to repeat.



Third Step Prayer

God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would

Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good & bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you

Spirituality on the Go

Clip and save these A.A. prayers that we can keep with us for those times when we need a little spirituality.

Eleventh Step Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace--that where there is hatred, I may bring love--that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness--that where there is discord, I may bring harmony--that where there is error, I may bring truth--that where there is doubt, I may bring faith--that where there is despair, I may bring hope--that where there are shadows, I may bring light--that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may