

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

November 2018

Part of the AA Herd: Long-timer Discusses Spirituality, Freedom and Service

Ed Note: Al B has an approach to sobriety that is based in spirituality. That spirituality has been forged through extensive seeking, with an open mind, and much meditation as well as immersing himself in AA literature.

He started on this road with his sponsor, Eddie J, 35 years ago and they are still in the sponsor/sponsee relationship sometimes reversing roles! Al said to me he could not remember them ever having an argument! They are like peanut butter and jelly! What a blessing!

How did you first learn about A.A.?

I was forced into AA by the court system as part of my parole. I was a public nuisance, always in trouble, spent time in jail. I was 26 years old, a man with al-

coholism on both sides of his family. My father was put in an orphanage. He died in a bar fight probably due to untreated alcoholism. I used to come to meetings drunk, cursing. I was loud, obnoxious, lacking in social skill,

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On Complete Defeat and a Sense of Gratitude

In the beginning, it was more like total frustration on where my life was heading rather than complete defeat. Were it not for work and the occasional get together with my two children, most of my life was totally centered on a social life that was tied in with having a drink.

Even though my "Irish twin" brother was taken down by alcohol, I was not convinced that the same could happen to me. But this knucklehead could see that that I was sliding down a slippery slope, and the good Thinking back to that first meeting I set out for I can remember being more intrigued than fearful. And believe me, I was prepared to pick it apart

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Inside This Issue: ♦ SJI Trivia ♦ 11th Step Poem ♦
What's the World Coming To? ♦ Opportunities for
Service ♦ Announcements and Things to Do

AA Geeks in Boots

What better way to kick off a National AA Technology Seminar than with the 12 Concepts? It was so interesting hearing them presented in the context of AA tech service that I couldn't help but think about how I can apply them in my own professional life. Apparently the Concepts are where technology & spirituality mix.

The traditions presented themselves frequently throughout the seminar as well. There was a lot of discussion on autonomy versus collaboration and anonymity (more accurately known as confidentiality in this case) versus carrying the message.

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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

A.A. Trivia

What do you do when you can't make your H&I commitment?

Answer to October's question:

Who was A.A.'s first friend in the field of psychiatry? Hint: he spoke at A.A.'s twentieth anniversary celebration.

Answer:

Dr. Harry M. Tiebout was A.A.'s first friend in the profession of psychiatry.

To learn more, check out chapter IV Medicine Looks at Alcoholics Anonymous in the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Comes of Age: A Brief History of A.A. available at the Intergroup office.



Step 11 Poem

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

*In our 11th step, we pray, and pause,
Seeking to understand;
A Power that is greater than ourselves,
Wanting to take our hand,*

*And lead us to a knowledge
We have not found while on our own:
So that we will no longer need to be
On this journey all alone.*

*All we need to do is Ask, and then Listen
For what to do;
And with new found Faith and Courage; Act,
As God's Power sees us through.*

What's this world coming to?

Pricey coffee, bumper-to-bumper traffic, and everyone wanting a tip. It's enough to keep someone up all night

Even after all these years in the program, I still worry about that endless list of things that can go wrong but that very rarely do. Add on all the "little stuff," the broken shoelaces of life, and you can see why I'm sometimes up all night writing crazy emails. Here are examples of some of my latest resentments and the things that helped me.

1. I went to pick up a pair of pants I'd left at my neighborhood cleaners. After twice trying to remove a stain on the pants, the store owner claimed that it couldn't be removed. And, get this, he insisted that I pay for him for his efforts anyway! Grudgingly, I paid him, vowing never to return. I took my still-stained pants to another cleaner, who removed the stain on the first try. I was so annoyed at having paid twice, my day was ruined. But I then ran into someone I knew from AA whose husband was just diagnosed with cancer. Suddenly, the stained pants "problem" that had been ruining my day no longer seemed so bad. I'd gladly have a "pants problem" any day.

2. I love a certain popular brand of coffee. Unfortunately, it's just too strong for me. It always gives me acid reflux. But, hey, I'm an alcoholic who never fails to think that the next time will be different. So, fully aware of the consequences, last Tuesday I had a cafe latte. Four lousy bucks and it didn't even include antacids! I

headed to my AA meeting at the local clubhouse. Once there, I met some homeless alcoholics who



couldn't afford a cup of coffee of any type. My \$4 coffee-induced acid reflux suddenly seemed like a very luxurious problem.

3. A new type of ice cream store is popular here in my town. In the store, you're handed an empty cup that you fill with the ice cream from self-serve machines and then you add toppings of your choice. At the register, you pay for the ice cream by weight. But here's the irritating part. At the counter, a sign reminds you to tip the attendant. I got so irritated. I had made my own sundae. Why would I tip the attendant? They should tip us!

Again, I ran into an AA friend. He had lost his job and now he had a new job that wasn't much better than ice cream store

attendant, and I thought of that tip sign. C'mon Steve, how about showing a little compassion.

4. My friends and I ate at one of my favorite restaurants in New York City. I ordered pasta. But it cost \$28, which seemed an insane amount to pay for "noodles." A few days later I was walking on Manhattan's Upper East Side. I noticed a line of men and women stretching around the corner. Was it a movie? A sale? A concert? No, the people were lined up for a food pantry run by a local church. I thought about the exorbitant prices I pay at restaurants. I realized I am lucky to be able to afford them.

5. I walked into my neighborhood grocery store, where a bottle of water costs as much as a gallon of milk! And it was water—without even any scotch in it! While I was fuming about this, I noticed that the woman behind me in line wore sunglasses to cover her bloodshot eyes. She was buying beer at 8:00 in the morning. I stopped complaining about the prices, thinking of the old line, "There but for the grace of God, go I."

6. One day I was trapped in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Long Island Expressway. I had to get off the highway. The idiot in the next lane wouldn't let me in. Finally, just as I was about to hit

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World

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the horn and scream a profanity, I realized that his car was in a funeral procession. A gratitude list? Maybe it's about time. For me, that's what puts everything in perspective.

Thank God for the people and tools of this program. PS: Do you think I should do the Steps again? Probably wouldn't hurt. And maybe make a call to my sponsor as well.

—"Definitely" Steve, Roslyn Heights, N.Y

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Defeat

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should it not meet my expectations. If alcohol as I know it now were by my side that evening and walked right up to that meeting room with me, I would like to think it said, "Wait here for me. I'll be back in a few."

Upon entering that meeting I experienced what Bill describes in the Big Book on page 17: "there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful." And I get that more and more as I frequent these rooms. Today and every day since then I am so grateful for those that welcomed and embraced me "*as I was*" into this wonderful fellowship.

As for my friend that I left waiting for outside of the meeting room—well, I have the utmost respect for him. That friend is still waiting, not like a cold, shivering and unfed dog, but as a play-mate if I so choose to play with him. One day at a time, with the help of this fellowship, I can leave him outside.

Long-timer

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and had a very limited vocabulary! I thought I was beyond human aid, what I call now one of the hopeless variety that could never get sober.

Malverne. He picked me up and put me in Camden detox. On July 4th he took me to Malverne, where I stayed for 42 days. One night, Ken at Bellmawr looked at me and said "I See your dumb --- didn't die. Welcome back." I stayed sober ever since.

Experiences and people in AA

At 30 days I was feeling sicker than if I had been drinking. I saw Eddie J at a meeting and asked him to be my sponsor. He had nine months sobriety at the time, and had already been through the steps. I had not even started any work, step or otherwise. Eddie took me through the steps in the Big Book, just as he had been taught. (This was a change, from using the 12 and 12.)

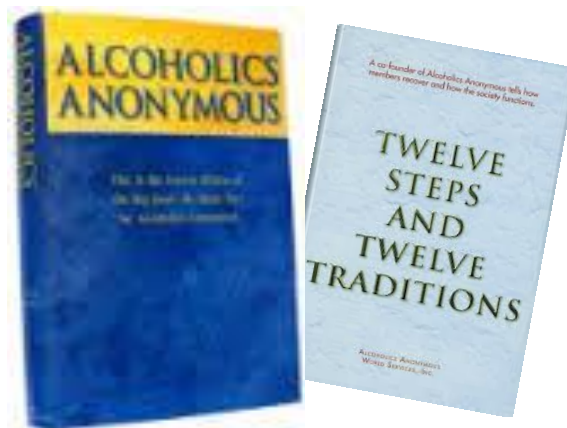
I had no religious upbringing. The closest I got to church was when I robbed the Catholic Church, at age 12. I had no religious baggage, and so learned spiritual principles from spiritual people. My first higher power was the people in the rooms.

I became part of "the herd," and went with a bunch of men to meetings every night of the week. There was Eddie, Mad Dog (Steve K), Dino, Blue and some others. Of this core group, one died, and the rest of us are

still sober. I learned from these men what it meant to be a real man.

AA changes over the years

When I came in, there were fewer meetings, the meetings lasted longer, and there was smoking. There were more open discussion meetings and less Big Book meetings. I started to notice that at Big Book meetings people were not talking about what they



read, but about anything else. (This may be due to rehabs, which encourage this). Also people were not being brought through the Traditions. I feel we need to educate the newcomers on AA etiquette. Traditions 1, 3, 5 and 10 linked together are guidelines for the newcomers.

Another big change I see is participation. When I came in, and for many years, people were fighting to get phone commitments in Intergroup. Service is not emphasized as it used to be.

Contributions to AA

Eddie J, myself Dino and a few others started the Ashland Men's meeting. Eddie's mom asked the priest if we could use the building. We were given a 6 month trial basis, starting in a

classroom upstairs, and ending up in the basement where we couldn't mess with anything! Despite football, the meeting grew fast and has become a central homegroup for many men.

I had a discomfort with how meetings were going/not going. People were coming in who were not really alcoholic, seeming to lead people to things they don't need; not keeping on topic in discussion groups but saying whatever is on their mind. I didn't want to beat up people with the Big Book anymore, so I meditated on how to be an Elder Statesman rather than a Bleeding Deacon. I started working Back to the 40's classes.

Service in AA:

I have done numerous jobs in AA, but I feel my sole purpose is to teach people about the 12 steps and 12 traditions. The most important thing I do is work with others. I give back what was so freely given to me. And I remain teachable.

Thoughts:

What AA has done for me is set me free. I can go anywhere, do anything, because I am on firm spiritual ground. My daughters have never seen me drunk; I have gone back to school and have a Masters degree. I have buried most of my family while in AA. In 1979 my brother died and I got drunk. In 1996 my 26 year old brother died in a motor cycle accident. I was the one who went to tell our Grandma. This program has changed me from the inside out.

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November Service Opportunities

Public Info:

Should anyone wish to help distribute literature to local police depts, libraries or doctor offices please email publicinfo@aasj.org.

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@aasj.org.

Literature:

We'd like to recruit & train a couple Sales Volunteers so that we have substitutes when needed. See Carl or myself after the meeting. 1 year of solid sobriety required.

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.

Sunday

Maryville Men's Unit – Nov. 18, 2-3pm 1903 Grant Ave, Williamstown NJ

Inspira Hospital Psych – Nov. 4, 4-5pm 509 N Broad St, Woodbury NJ

Monday

Ancora Psych Hosp – 9, Nov. 26 7-8pm 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton NJ

DayTop Young Peoples Community – Nov. 26, 7-8pm 9 Harding Hwy, Pittsgrove NJ

Tuesday

Delaware House – Nov. 27 2-3 pm, 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton NJ

Wednesday

Northbrook Behavioral Health – Nov. 14, 28 8-9pm 425 Woodbury-Turnersville Rd Blackwood NJ

My Friend's House – Nov. 28, 7-8pm 371 Glassboro Rd, Woodbury Heights NJ

Thursday

Ambrosia – Nov. 22, 7-8pm 287 Old Marlton Pike, Medford NJ

Ancora Psych Hosp – Nov. 15, 29, 7-8pm 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton NJ

Unity Place II – Nov. 1, 15, 29, 2-3 pm 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton, NJ

Daybreak - Atco NJ – , Nov. 8, 15, 22, 29 10:30-12:00 noon 368 White Horse Pike, Atco, NJ

Lourdes Psych Unit – Nov. 29 8-9pm 218 Sunset Rd, Willingboro NJ

Friday

Maryville Men's Post House – Nov. 16, 30, 8-9 pm, 610 Browns Mills Road, Pemberton NJ 08068

Saturday

Maryville Men's – Nov, 24, 7-8 pm 1903 Grant Ave., Williamstown NJ

Cooper Psych Unit – Nov 3, 17, 24 10:30-11:30am 1 Cooper Plaza Camden NJ



Please join us at our next

H&I Meeting

Monday, October 29 at 7 pm
South Jersey Intergroup Office
5090 Central Highway, Suite 3
Pennsauken



Enjoy some AA Halloween fun and pick up some spooky commitments!

Current group reps, individual commitment takers
and everyone else in AA is welcome to attend.

Costumes encouraged but not required

Long-timer

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What I think I'm looking at isn't always what I'm looking at. I went through a marriage and divorce in AA. My divorce became a gift in that I got to do Back to the 40's.

I still keep an open mind, and continue to seek for more spirituality in my life. The more I'm consciously connected, the smoother things go.

Funny Story: Diaperman

I was on a 12th step call with some other guys. When we knocked on the door of the house, we were met by a guy who said "I'm wearing my mother's diapers." Turns out she had died about six months ago. He was living in her hospital bed, in a room with one light bulb, wearing her diapers, so he did not have to get up and spoil his drinking! Blue said he had 30 days to get out of the diapers. About fifteen of us took him to a Phillies game with us. He stayed about 6 months.

Get Out and Get Involved

Saturday, Nov. 19 – Gratitude Dinner Dance, 6-0 pm Nicolosi's. \$20 per person.

Tuesday, Nov. 13 – The Maple Shade Group will be celebrating its 56th Anniversary at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Forklanding Road and Helen St., Maple Shade. This is an eating meeting, with food served at 7 pm and the meeting to start promptly at 8. As always we will feature a mystery guest speaker, and other fun stuff.

Saturday Jan. 19 – Woodstown Grp. will celebrate their 64th anniversary. Eating begins at 6:30pm speaker to follow @ 8pm. Local: Woodstown Presbyterian Ch 46 Auburn Rd. Woodstown.

How It Works Meeting Moved

The Thursday 8 pm How It Works meeting has moved from Oaklyn to Calvin Hall, 18 W Merchant Street, Audubon.

Geeks

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advice from a member of the Professional Community set me on my journey.

There was 8th tradition discussion on when technology work should be paid for.

Richie & I had our own late night discussion on tradition 6 and the difference between endorsing a vendor or using their services. While the question of whether our traditions hinder our progress seemed to be an underlying theme of many discussions, everybody present seemed to place a high value on honoring the traditions.

Working with others has also been an important topic of conversation. There was much to be said about the importance of how well we communicate about our technology goals so that everyone involved can understand and embrace the new ideas. There was similar talk about how we communicate with the vendors we do business with that have no understanding of our AA lingo or traditions. For example, while we may have “suggestions” for those we sponsor, it is important to have “requirements” for those we hire to perform our technical work.

I can't think of a better way to sum up our technology adventure than to share the 12 Statements of Technology (provided by NAATW):

1. We suggest implementing technology where it supports our primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
2. We are responsible and assess value when using self-support funds for technology initiatives
3. We are responsible where anonymity is more vulnerable to a wider audience with increased speed or new sensation.
4. An informed group conscience is paramount to technology decision-making.
5. We strive to understand where individual versus Group values are different
6. We perform due diligence and rely on demonstrable A.A. experience.
7. We record non-technical requirements before making technology choices.
8. We take care to understand the property value and legal implications of technology used for A.A. purposes before making binding decisions.
9. We are responsible for transparency in discovery, process, & implementation.
10. We use technology to make information available, not to limit it.
11. We communicate and support the intended service level.
12. We consider how best to Pass it On.