

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

January 2019

Long-timers Profile: A Woman of Strength

Ed Note: I met Joanne at Morning Glory many years ago. We also worked in the same building for a while. It's a comfort to know we could talk to each other during the days, and help keep each other on track. Joanne is a woman of strength, who carries herself with dignity and grace. AND she is also our poetry contributor to this very newsletter! It has been and will continue to be my blessing to know her.

How did you first learn about A.A.?

My husband's Aunt was an active member of AA. I was inspired by the way she communicated with her husband. My husband was an alcoholic, and I went to Al-A-Non. After several months, my sponsor there stepped me into AA. My first meeting was on a Friday night in Moorestown. I chose an AA sponsor that was tough and very hard core!

I became, early on, a true believer in "carrying the message in all my affairs." I have always loved the WAY of our program.

Experiences and people in AA

There are too many people throughout my years of sobriety to mention who have played

important roles in my life. I do especially remember Clancy, and have always been moved by the speakers at convention.

I have been through a lot in my sobriety. I lost my first



husband, had to take over running our business and raising 4 children. I eventually remarried, and lost my second husband as well. The program, the people in AA, and my High Power have been my sources of strength throughout the years, helping to keep me sober through all that was "life on life's terms."

In the beginning, I was way more eager to share my enthusiasm with everyone

about the program, but became in time very discreet. I believe many people did not and still do not wish to understand what we are really about.

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Sharp Decline

As I looked across the boardroom table, I had to smile. Only a couple of years ago, I would have been terrified to even be in the room, overcome with shame and certain of impending looks of disgust. Restructuring can be a tough business, but I never realized until I had to face it personally just how painstaking and liberating it could be.

I knew from a young age that I wanted to be a leader in whatever field I pursued, and I had the determination, intelligence and defiance to carry it out. I had the perfect career path all planned. I pursued the right education, secured the right internships, learned the right languages, made the right contacts and had the right work ethic.

The fact that I was a woman trying to reach the top of a male-dominated industry did not sway me; in fact, it furthered my determination and

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Decline

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and perseverance. I was mobile; I was global; I was social; I was confident and smart. I set my goals—both long term and short term—and I diligently worked to achieve them. There was only one thing for which I had not planned: alcoholism.

I had been a heavy drinker since I was young, and I thought as long as I succeeded in other aspects of my life, I deserved to blow off steam at the end of the day or week and indulge in some drinking debauchery. This was my definition of good balance. I never realized until I entered recovery that for an addictive personality this was an unhealthy balance of extremes destined to fall off kilter.

After receiving my master's degree in international business, I entered the world of corporate finance. Soon I was promoted and sent on an international assignment. I found it easy and fun to get along in other cultures and enjoyed the opportunity to interact in the local language. From a professional standpoint, being overseas provided a greater sense of autonomy and responsibility, which fueled my independence, ego and inclination for control.

I worked hard and continued to get promoted, but my drinking was starting to escalate to new levels. I'd occasionally drink in the morning, or if the hangover persevered, I would go out to "lunch" to

remedy the situation. I felt justified in doing it, as it was commonplace to have wine or beer during the day. I had the opportunity to live in and travel to several countries, and negotiated deals with government officials. I had arrived.



Returning to the U.S. was a significant adjustment after being overseas for eight years. I was grieving the loss of my international lifestyle, and I felt stifled by the confines of corporate America. I knew I had to watch my step with my drinking (which only meant I had to conceal it even more). However, I was not aware of my disease's progression.

For some years I was successful. Every once in a while I'd receive the casual comment or caution from colleagues regarding my drinking, but they were quickly dismissed, as I was able to pour myself into my job to overcome any serious suspicion of a problem. At the age of 38, I was promoted to executive level—another goal accomplished. I was one of few women who were able to break through those elusive barriers, and I was proud. Behind the scenes, however, I was terrified. I was scared that people would discover my secret. I was supposed

to lead by example, yet I felt like I was living a lie.

Then came what I consider to be one of my professional "God Shots." A manager came to me one morning with an issue. One of her employees had confessed his drinking problem, and she wasn't sure what to do. Nor was I, but I went with instinct: I asked the man to come to my office, and we talked for close to two hours. My heart went out to him. He was asking for help. I was impressed with his courage and reassured him that he was taking the right steps. The nurse who was familiar with the case came to my office that day and thanked me for the way I had handled it. Then she asked if he had just left my office, since it still smelled like alcohol. We laughed a little, and she thanked me again and left. My heart sank. My office smelled like alcohol because I had been drinking that day as well.

That year my company filed for Chapter 11, restructuring with the U.S. bankruptcy court. It was a large industrial bankruptcy filing, so it made the news. I focused on the job at hand, and within two years I was promoted again. Shortly thereafter, I was off to another overseas assignment. I thought that maybe the change in location would be good. It'd give me a chance to reverse my growing trend of morning, noon and night drinking. More important, it'd get me out of town before anyone noticed what was happening.

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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

Home to Stay



I have repeatedly been a prodigal son, to Our Father, unless the pain, too great to handle, of Him Did I did not bother. In a life of instant pleasure, there always is a fee, And when the price, too high to pay, "Please, dear God, help me." It's only now, as I look back, my heart knows He did, Time to get, what I deserved, to Him I ran and hid. Now another crisis, He surely got me through, I know that He has done this, as to Him, I say, Thank You."

Back on the road of life, He seems to fall behind
And in my endless rush to nowhere, he has left my mind.
When I rush ahead, I always trip and fall,
And when I drink, from Him I turn, to be like him called Saul.
Saul was self-appointed to make all Christians pay; he considered it his duty to persecute, his way.

On the road to Damascus, Christ had struck him blind, from that day onward, Saul was left behind. For three days he was blind, and I think him lucky, 'cause I've been blind most of my life, and it has been real yuckie.

But there were times that I could see, and my eyes were open, then they were shut; I turned away, inside I stopped hopin'. When I stopped praying, again I did get lost, and more pain and suffering, always was the cost.

And self-will run riot, ego-maniac named Saul, the gift of his free will to God, he's now known as Paul. Only God can change a heart, and with prayer we ask. For a smile goes much further than our anger mask.

Michael D.

Trusting Faith

Disease is a reality that we all dread
And rather than face it: we turn our head.
But many refuse to have its sting
destroy the good that acceptance can bring.
They unite with their healers fighting bravely the war,
showing all those around them what the battle is for
They show inspiration, and fight, where they must,
and find their courage by putting faith in their trust.

Joanne M.



January Service Opportunities

Public Info:

If any groups could please help with literature distribution in their local areas it would be greatly appreciated. Please email publicinfo@asj.org and we will meet with you and discuss where to go etc. It's a great service commitments and helps spread awareness to those who may need it.

Social Events Chair:

Social Events committee will be having a meeting on January 6th 2019 at the Intergroup office at 4pm. If

anyone would like to join us in planning our next event, please just show up! This is a great way to get sponsees involved.

District 3: Join Area 45 District 3 and your local Intergroups for a service fair. Many committees will be available to tell you how you can get more involved with AA service. St. Stephan's Episcopal Church, Beverly. February 9th at 6 pm.

Speaking Commitments

Ed Note: Please bring these to your groups. H&I needs all of our support.

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.

- **Ancora Psych Hosp** – Hammonton Dec. 20, 27, 31, Jan. 17, 21, 28, 31 7-8pm, 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton
- **Cooper Psych Unit** Dec. 25, 29, Jan. 1, 5, 26, 29, 8-9 pm, 1 Cooper Plaza Camden
- **Daybreak** - Atco NJ – Jan. 10, 24, 31, 10:30-12:00 noon, [368 White Horse Pike, Atco](#)
- **Delaware House** – Westampton NJ Jan 1, 15, 22 2-3 pm, 21 Ikea Drive Westampton
- **Jefferson Psych Unit** – Cherry Hill Jan. 23, 7:45-8:45 pm, 2201 Chapel Ave W, Cherry Hill
- **Jefferson MICA Unit** – Cherry Hill Dec. 19, Jan. 2, 16, 30 12-1 pm, 2201 Chapel Ave W “new building”, Cherry Hill
- **My Friend's House** – Woodbury Heights Jan. 2, 16 7-8 pm, 371 Glassboro Rd, Woodbury Heights
- **Maryville Women's** – Williamstown Dec 11, 25, Jan 1, 5, 7, 18 8-9 pm, [1903 Grant Ave Williamstown](#)
- **Maryville Men's Post House** Dec. 31 8-9pm, 610 Browns Mills Road, Pemberton
- **Northbrook MICA Unit** – Blackwood Jan. 9, 23, 30 8-9 pm, 425 Woodbury-Turnersville Rd, Blackwood
- **Solstice Counseling Services** – Pemberton Jan. 1, 16, 22, 29, 30 7-8 pm, 300 Birmingham Road, Pemberton
- **Unity Place I** - Cherry Hill Dec. 19, 26, Jan. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 12:40-1:30 pm, [1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill](#)
- **Unity Place II** - Hammonton Dec. 20, 27, Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 2-3 pm, 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton

Strong Woman

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AA changes over the years

There were many meetings in existence when I came in, mostly topic meetings. Someone would suggest a topic and we would all share on it. I spent several years at Moorestown. They had daily meetings at various times – Thursday afternoons, Friday night candle light were 2 of my favorites. Al-A-Non was held at the same time. After the meetings we would go across the street to Friendly's.

There was a lot of growth in AA, with new meetings being formed. I witnessed several people starting "home" meetings when, for them, need would arise. These seemed to be very helpful to many.

I don't think as many people who come to AA stay for the "long haul" anymore. However, I am a firm believer that no one totally loses any time they

spend in our meetings. We never know what they take with them (relapsers)— and many return!

Contributions to AA

On a personal note, I shared poetry, I sang at the convention. I sang and played guitar with Kathy D and had get togethers with members always ending with a meeting.

Service in AA:

I sent 2 years as an intergroup rep, but did not like controversy so I made the decision to not get involved in any AA politics. I did serve as the co-chair for the Convention Marathon meetings one year. My service remains at the group and personal level.

Thoughts:

On the subject of multiple addictions and addressing these at meetings: I personally, I believe addiction is addiction, and never believed anyone should be turned away, but far too often I witnessed people being driven out of the very place they needed to be by insensitive behaviors towards them.

Decline

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Soon I began to lose control. I frequently "worked" from home, and even took conference calls from the back room of the local pub. I was often sick, and when I did go to the office I had to have something to get me through the day. My husband—who had quit drinking a couple of years earlier—voiced his concern often, and most discussions ended in arguments. He'd say, "You've worked so hard to get to where you are, and now you're going to lose it all to booze." I'd respond that as long as the job got done, I'd be fine.

I moved back to the U.S. and things went completely to hell. I had no idea how to stay sober. I was so sick that it was hard for me

to focus on anything. My colleagues, employees and superiors took notice. My "stock price," as I call it, began to decline sharply. Just as my company was emerging from bankruptcy, I was entering it, not financially but spiritually, emotionally and physically. One of my bosses sat down with me and expressed his concern about what was happening. I tried my best to moderate my drinking and improve my attitude and performance. Despite my willpower and determination, the effort was short-lived, and my drinking took another turn for the worse.

I knew I needed help. At the request of a therapist, I started making calls to treatment centers. I just could not bring myself to face my bosses to tell them what the problem was, or that I needed

help. I would say to myself, You have to go, but not until you get through this project or that project.

By the end of that year, it was no longer my choice. My boss, who had been my mentor and a personal friend for years, called me to discuss my evaluation for the year. For the first time in close to 20 years, the discussion was a disaster. When he said, "We don't know if you and the company have a future together," my heart sank. The gig was up. That was my moment—the absolute lowest point in my professional career—that was the first ray of hope in what had become a hopeless situation. I did not have to hide anymore. I wanted to tell the truth. I

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went home that evening not knowing if I had a job or not, but I knew what I had to do. I called a treatment center. I discussed it with my employer and found that they wanted the best for me. I'd always been a supporter of second chances, and now I was receiving mine.

Coming back to the office after treatment was another challenge. I had a job, but there were consequences, and I came back to a different position. I was feeling better physically, but I was devastated with shame. My confidence was shattered. Throughout my career, I had a good reputation; I was destined for great things. Now I had lost their trust and respect and felt I had a banner over my head that said "Loser."

Thankfully, I had Alcoholics Anonymous. This was my first experience with the Fellowship, but through the support and the Steps, I slowly but surely started to get back on my feet. Rather than trying to balance the exhaustive pace at work and the exhaustive drinking schedule, AA helped me focus on a balance between job, family and recovery. Also, coming back to a position with slightly less stress and fanfare allowed me to focus more on recovery, which in turn allowed me to perform my job better than I had in years.

Reflecting back on what my company had gone through during those years of Chapter 11, I saw that the restructuring we underwent closely mirrored my own. At first we were reluctant to accept the true state of our business and

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continued to manage perceptions. Then we could no longer hide from the truth. We had to admit that things were no longer manageable: we were bankrupt, and faced with liquidation (no pun intended) or transformation.

It required us to take things one step at a time. It required honesty and disclosure. It required humility and acceptance and a willingness to revalue our assets, to repay our debts and to ask for forgiveness from those we could not repay. And the process could not be done alone. It was at times painful. There were setbacks, and we did not emerge as quickly as we wanted, but it was achievable as long as we persevered. In the end, it became an incredible learning experience, where we were able to understand better our shortcomings and strengths. Little by little, we restored value in our company and emerged better positioned for the future. Slowly people wanted to invest in us. Then we continued to practice

what we had learned, expressed our gratitude and began to give back to shareholders, employees, our communities and our industry.

I no longer feel the stigma I felt when I came back to work, and I hope that through example I can remove some of the stigma that others have about alcoholism. I've slowly but surely regained my employer's confidence and my own. I'm present, and I try to do the best job I can every day, practicing the princi-

ples of AA in all my affairs (admittedly some days better than others). Even within the company, I try to carry the message, spending time with other employees who find themselves in the same or similar situation as I found myself, reassuring them that they're not alone and that their careers do not have to end because of this disease.

I'm grateful to my employer for their support, and particularly to that boss who helped save my life by confronting me with my problem. I'm grateful to my family, who stayed by my side. I'm grateful to AA for helping me to regain my life. I can now do God's will and help others. This is the greatest job I'll ever have.

-- Donna G.
Rochester Hills, Michigan

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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.

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

Mon. Dec 31 – Florence Alcathon starting at 5pm - last meeting at midnight. food and refreshments starting at 5pm first meeting 6 pm. Local: Florence United Methodist Ch.

Mon. Dec. 31 – Pennsauken 482 Social Hall will have a New Year Day Alcathon starting at 8:30pm. plenty of food and speakers till Jan 1 approx. 8pm.

Sat. Jan 12 – Area 45 will host an Application Wksp from 1pm - 3pm at First Presbyterian Ch 320 N Main St Highstown,NJ more info call Scott: 215-415-8499.

Sat. 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.

Sat. Jan 19. – Technology Workshop

Mon. Jan. 21 – Collingswood will celebrate 74th anniversary FFF. @ Haddon & Fern Ave., Collingswood. Parking available in bank lot across the street, also church parking lot available with entrance from Fern Ave. Doors Open @ 6:30; Dinner @ 7:00 – Speaker @ 8:00.



Spirituality on the Go...

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 & MY FELLOWS. GRANT ME STRENGTH, AS I GO OUT FROM HERE TO DO YOUR BIDDING.

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 HELP OF THY POWER, THY LOVE, AND THY WAY OF LIFE. MAY I DO THY WILL ALWAYS!

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 SEEK RATHER TO COMFORT THAN TO BE COMFORTED--TO UNDERSTAND, THAN TO BE UNDERSTOOD--TO LOVE, THAN TO BE LOVED. FOR IT IS BY SELF-FORGETTING THAT ONE FINDS. IT IS BY FORGIVING THAT ONE IS FORGIVEN. IT IS BY DYING THAT ONE AWAKENS TO ETERNAL LIFE.