

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

MAY 2013

## Will I Open the Door to the Truth?

*Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

When I first came into AA looking for help, after I'd been around about a month my sponsor suggested that I take the Fifth Step. The suggestion annoyed me. Of all the Steps, the fifth appealed to me least. So I told myself, "I'm doing okay with the other Steps, I'll get to the fifth--eventually." Two months later "eventually" had still not come, and I slipped. I did not plan to drink; I did not want to drink; I did not believe I would drink; but I drank. Fortunately I bounced right back to AA. I reluctantly took the Fifth Step, and by the grace of God I have been sober ever since.

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## A Mother's Reprieve

*After nearly losing custody of her only child, she was able to come back to AA and get sober again*

I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous in June of 1987 after my second divorce. I had been drinking alcoholically since my first drink at age 19 in 1976. I loved drinking. I became someone else—someone I really liked; but I didn't think I was an alcoholic. I thought I was just a nice, Irish girl who drank a little too much. I wasn't an alcoholic. My dad was the alcoholic in the family. I compared myself to him constantly in order to justify my drinking: I hadn't been arrested, I hadn't been in bar fights, and I hadn't lost job after job due to drinking. I told myself and others I was nothing like my dad.

I went through a 30-day, in-patient treatment program, and then upon my release, I attended AA meetings regularly and put together 11 months of continuous sobriety. I had never gone without alcohol for more than a day. This was a very different way of life for me. I wasn't sure I liked it. I was very uncomfortable. I couldn't imagine living the rest of my life without alcohol. I wasn't the party girl anymore, and I missed her. I drank again. For the next year, I was a 90-day-wonder—I was in and out of AA every 90 days. Finally, in 1990, I quit attending meetings altogether and returned to drinking.

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*I said, "Hi, my name is Lori, and I'm an alcoholic. It's been 9 years since I've said that it's been 9 years since I've been to a meeting. I can't stop drinking. AA helped me stop once before and I desperately need help now."*

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Several years later, I remarried and became a mother. When my son was almost four years old, I was going through my third divorce. My son's father intended to sue for full custody of our son because of my drinking. I tried to stop drinking myself, recalling the information I had learned in AA, but I couldn't do it alone. I was going to lose custody of the person I loved most in this world. I needed help. I knew I needed to change. I knew I needed to return to AA.

I called the local AA hotline for the times and locations of

*A Mother's Reprieve continued on page 3*

I don't mean to imply that the Fifth Step in itself carries any guarantee of sobriety. But in my case it was a turning point. And I have since come to see it as a turning point with many newcomers and long-time slippers. The reason it is so important, I believe, is this: most of us coming up to it for the first time don't like it, are afraid of it, would very much like to avoid it. As a result we have a flat disagreement between our own way and the AA way. If we cling to our own way here, we can't help spoiling our relationship with the rest of the Steps--especially Step Three. So there's no way we can say "no" to the Fifth Step without putting ourselves off the whole program. As chapter five of the Big Book puts it, "Many of us have tried to hold onto our old ideas, and the result was nil until we let go absolutely."

Admission is the process that Step Five is all about. Step One is about the same process. Since so much stress is placed on admission, it is useful to have a pretty solid idea of what exactly it does take to admit in the sense that the First and Fifth Steps suggest. The dictionary defines admit as: to grant entrance to, to receive, to acknowledge, to let in. Admission can be withheld, partially granted, or totally granted. For example, say I am an executive with office facilities. At the front door I have a guard stationed. In the outer office sits my secretary. I myself work in the inner office. If an undesirable character comes to the front door, the guard has instructions to keep him out. In such a case admission is withheld. If a rather unimportant client shows up he can wait in the outer office, but he may or may not get to see me in the inner office depending on my schedule. Getting into the outer office constitutes only partial admission. In a certain working sense it is no admission at all. That is to say, the client has not been satisfied unless he gets to see me. If my most important client arrives, I have left instructions that he is to be shown directly into the inner office. In a certain philosophical sense this is not total admission because I probably would not discuss with this client my religious beliefs or the details of my sex life--but in a practical, working sense this client has gained total admission.

The Fifth Step is about total admission in this practical working sense; what is being let in is the exact nature of my wrongs--not a client I like, but one I must deal with if I am to ever come to terms with him. As long as he sat outside the front door or in the outer office his

presence made my life miserable. He grew strong on my fear of him. The inner office that I let him into is the deepest, sincerest part of my consciousness. A partial or outer office admission won't do here. In other words, to say in a general way, "Oh, yes, I have some resentments" is not enough. Also the process of admission is not just to say, "I admit." It is to say "I admit" and then to open the door.

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*I am not alone when I let the exact nature of my wrongs into my inner office; I am accompanied by God as I understand Him and an understanding friend--preferably, I feel, someone in AA who has himself already taken the Fifth Step.*

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I am not alone when I let the exact nature of my wrongs into my inner office; I am accompanied by God as I understand Him and an understanding friend--preferably, I feel, someone in AA who has himself already taken the Fifth Step.

People often ask, "Why the third party? If I admit to God and myself, isn't that enough?" For people like us the answer is "no" for reasons that are not too hard to understand. As an alcoholic I have a history of self-deception, so clearly I must have a "Third Party" present to get as clear a look at my problems as I need. The only reason that that perspective can't come from God alone is that my faith in His reality and nearness at this present moment is not deep enough. To illustrate: If I acknowledge to myself that in anger I have hit my young child in the face and hurt her, that is one thing. If I then sit alone in a room and say as sincerely as possible, "God I admit to you that I hit my child in the face while in a rage and hurt her" that has sort of the same feel. But if another human being is listening to me say that in anger I struck and hurt the baby, I am more deeply affected. The truth about the exact nature of this particular wrong gets into the inner office only when the other human being helps me to open the door.

The purpose of admitting the exact nature of my wrongs is to get and keep enough freedom from them to let me live a sane, meaningful life. By doing it in the controlled setup provided by Step Five I get the strength to then put the problems aside and go about the daily business of functioning in society without taking one drink.

--T.P., Jr., Hankins, NY  
(From the October 1966 edition of Grapevine Magazine)

## Keep the Door Open

*Group members take stock after a burglary.*

I received the phone call about 10 A.M. Friday at work. It was Jenny W. "As secretary of the Steering Committee, I wanted you to know that the hall has been broken into . . . again!"

She explained that this time they had busted out one of the front panes to gain access. They stole the pay phone, tore up the soda machine, and tore open cabinets looking for money.

The literature cabinet is always the first place hit. It has a padlock on it, which may lead someone to think that valuables lie within. The padlock was busted to pieces. Fortunately, the cash box held no money, because we had instructed our literature people to drop the money from sales into the safe.

I left work and arrived at the hall a few minutes later. Bill T., Paul K., and Michael L. were already there. They were coordinating with the landlord and the police to get all particulars of the break-in recorded. I took some pictures, chatted a bit, and then headed back to work.

During that day, I went through a variety of emotions. My first reaction was to feel anger. How could they? I thought. Feelings of violation and victimization wanted to run riot through my brain. But why shouldn't I be angry? I thought. That hall has helped countless lives, and this is how some sick person treats us?

Then the Fifth Tradition hit me: "Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." A minor inconvenience of a few stolen dollars or replacing a piece of machinery is a small expense compared to all the good our hall has accomplished.

That night, at our speaker's meeting, Murray N. pulled me aside and said, "The thief didn't realize what is of value around here. If you want to talk about tangibles, how about the plaque commemorating Vern S., one of our club's founding members? What about our podium, donated as a memorial to one of our deceased members? But the intangibles are far more important. What about the love we have for each other that no one can steal? What about the camaraderie and the fellowship?"

Before the Lord's Prayer that night, I spoke briefly to our members about the break-in. I encouraged all to keep it in perspective. As practicing alcoholics, we have all been "victims" and, at times, perpetrators of injustice. The important thing was to continue in the spirit of Tradition Five--continue to reach out to the still-suffering alcoholic.

*--Rick R., Lee's Summit, Missouri  
(From the March 2008 edition of Grapevine Magazine)*

*A Mother's Reprieve continued from page 1*

meetings being held that very evening. I walked into the meeting that night and stopped in the doorway. I couldn't move. I was frozen with fear. A kind gentleman saw me, walked over and asked if I needed some help. I told him I was looking for an AA meeting. He said I was in the right place and asked me to follow him into a meeting room. I don't remember much about that meeting. Folks were sharing their views on the night's topic. I was shaking. The man beside me started to speak, and then it was my turn to share. I said, "Hi, my name is Lori, and I'm an alcoholic. It's been 9 years since I've said that it's been 9 years since I've been to a meeting. I can't stop drinking. AA helped me stop once before, and I desperately need help now." The chairperson responded, "Welcome back, Lori. We're glad you're here. Keep coming back." After the meeting, several of the women gave me their phone numbers and asked me to call them. I felt a great sense of relief driving home that night. I knew I had done the right thing.

The meeting I attended that night was 10 years ago. My son's father moved away 7 years ago after a very long custody dispute. My son has lived with me all these years. He is now 14 years old and will be a freshman in high school next month. He has grown up with a sober mother. He has attended AA picnics and parties for 10 years and has countless AA "aunts" and "uncles" who have watched him grow up. They have also watched me grow up.

I was sitting at high school orientation yesterday, and whispered to a fellow mom, "I wish I could go back and go to high school again and do my life over." We both giggled. Later that day, I was driving to one of my favorite meetings and the thought occurred to me, "I don't need to wish for high school in order to do my life over again. I have been re-doing my life for the past 10 years. I already have that second chance at life because of God, AA and the people around the tables."

*—Lori Y., Augusta, Mich.  
(From the May online edition of Grapevine)*

## Attendance or Participation?

AA meetings offer a multitude of life experiences, if one is open to them. The feeling of belonging that fills every meeting room is one of those happenings. Being able to identify with what is being said (shared) is yet another of the blessings afforded by meeting makers. Sharing one's own life journey with others can be at once humbling, freeing, cathartic, unifying--and can lead to a beautiful sense of serenity. Service opportunities abound at AA meetings: one can be a greeter; put out chairs and/or literature; pass out preamble, steps and how it works placards; chair a meeting; share at a meeting; help in the clean-up after the meeting; be a part of the "meeting before the meeting" or the "meeting after the meeting;" or offer a ride to one who does not have his/her own transportation. You can probably think of other forms of service for which meetings provide a catalyst.

The difference between being able to participate in these life experiences is the difference between meeting attendance and meeting participation. Some of the signs of those who practice meeting "attendance" (although we may all exhibit some of these signs) include preoccupation with one's own i-Phone or other form of electronic communication and/or stimulation' absence of eye contact with the chairperson, or with those sharing; closed eyes for extended time frames; fidgeting or movement of one's body extremities.

Meeting participants attempt to actively engage in all phases of the meeting, especially being attentive to whoever is currently sharing one's own experience, strength and hope. One may choose to share his or her own life experiences with the group. Such sharing may be for a multiple of reasons--to rid one's self of some pressing fear or worry; to share one's own good or happy news; to relate one's own experience in overcoming some life problem that another has shared with the group; or maybe just because the meeting has become too quiet.

So if you have been a meeting attendee why don't you try to become a meeting participant? In so doing, you may find unexpected rewards.

--A Work in Progress Alcoholic

## Welcome, Newcomer!!

*In our April issue we asked the question, "What do you emphasize to the newcomer about AA?" We are overwhelmed and so happy that so many of you wanted to contribute answers!—Patty and Angie*

I think one of the most important things to instill in a newcomer is to not rush through the steps haphazardly but to walk through them with a sponsor (preferably with someone that has knowledge of the steps and has been through them their self). Remember, enjoy the process don't rush through it. --Wayne, Happy Hour Group in West Deptford



Just put that fear of being unable or for that matter even how long will one be able to put the drink down aside, and just remember that it works one day at a time. -- Helene R., Literature Volunteer

Shared off the floor..."Not to put too much worry into tomorrow; you need only to focus on today."--Jimmy S., LMST

OMG you won't believe how many new friends you'll have. --Colleen L., Calvin Hall Friday

Encouraging a newcomer in Oaklyn: "See how good you're feeling now? You can feel this way again tomorrow by just coming back."--Joe C., LMST

Take from the meeting what you need and leave the rest behind. The Group will take the rest. -- Joey H.

You're always welcome here, all we ask is that you just listen for a while and then find out if you belong. OK? -- John F., Audubon

You don't have to feel that way anymore, Welcome to a new life.--Jere D.

Listen you can do this. In fact if I could, anybody can!-- Frank, Friday Night Calvin Hall.

If you're new or just coming back just stick around and give it a chance.—Sue S., LMST

*You too can contribute to our question of the month. Check out this month's question on page 6 and send your answers to newsletter@aaaj.org.*

## Cruising Through Sobriety

Before I got sober, my family and I planned a vacation on a cruise. Then I went to rehab for my out of control drinking and I learned about AA. During my first six months of sobriety, I stressed my concern about going on this cruise because I knew there would be a lot of drinking and partying among the passengers. I got great advice from my sponsor and friends through the rooms of AA. I thought I could handle it but as soon as the ship left port they had a big Bon Voyage party. The booze was everywhere and it seemed like everybody was drinking but me. I remembered the phrase "one day at a time" and with that I made it through that day sober but it was really hard.

The next day on the daily schedule I saw a Friends of Bill W. meeting at 9 a.m. I went and no one was there. No literature, nothing! I saw an older gentleman who was also looking for the meeting. He looked like he had many years of sobriety and had sponsored many men like me—he can help me! I told him I had only six months of sobriety and I use some sound advice. He told me had only two weeks. I thought I was done—only two weeks, how could he help me? We talked for a while and I realized it only takes two alcoholics to make a meeting. We exchanged cabin numbers and it turns out we were just 10 doors apart, and there's about 1,200 people on the ship.

He told me he didn't bring any literature with him. I did, however, bring my Big Book with me, so I went back to my cabin to do some reading. While I was reading I had a spiritual experience, even though I didn't realize it at the time. I started thinking how this other man could really use my help. I started thinking of his sobriety and how I could help him stay sober, and my own obsession to drink was lifted.

I loaned him my Big Book to read for the rest of the cruise and we both stayed sober that week through the grace of God and two alcoholics helping each other. That was by far the best and most memorable vacation I ever had so far, thanks to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

--Dave C., *Last Mile Step and Tradition*, Audubon, NJ

## Quagmire

*(A thought for contention among contentions, but please don't be offended.)*

My feelings exactly, but I would have included this or that, yet maybe not as strongly with respect to such and such, however I know just what you mean. What? Explain it to me later, like a year later, at least.

When I look back at my history of sharing and my maniacal editor who I pay nothing and was sick of hearing, the explanation is mute, yet the sharing was me, striving to express myself in a realm that before recovery was a medium to express bull, support bull, and effect bull so as to maintain chaos and justification to have "a" drink. That Sunny Thought! Yeah, sure! Until this sun wasn't shining and I was passed out.

Oh, what was I talking about? Oh yeah. The quagmire.

Like oral composition, the butterflies are there as I compose and deliver my first share. Yes, it was a fledgling effort, but I just got better at it the more I did it. No matter how good I felt in early sobriety, my editor and I sadly agreed. We had to set boundaries. So my editor told me to keep on sharing and believe I would get better and better. He was right and I was insane with no boundaries, needing form. I'm taking shape and express myself more freely, and my editor, God, and I have a great relationship. When in doubt, I defer to him. In front of man and God, I share, share, share until I walk the talk. God is my friend. You are my friends. We'll leave the light on for ya! How else would I get home?

--Tom S.

THE ABILITY TO LIE IS A  
LIABILITY  
SHARED BY JOEY

## Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey Intergroup (although we welcome readers from other areas!). Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either AA or South Jersey Intergroup. Quotations and artwork from A.A. literature are printed with permission from AA World Services, Inc., and/or The AA Grapevine, Inc.

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.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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PO Box 2514  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034  
Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446  
Email: info@asj.org  
Website: www.asj.org  
24 Hour Hotline: 1-856-486-4444  
Toll Free Hotline: 1-866-920-1212

SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

## Happy Anniversary Marlton Group!!

The Marlton Group was founded in May 1994. This group originally held their meetings at the Hampton Behavioral Health Center, and then relocated to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church on Route 70 and Cooper St. in Marlton. They hold a variety of meetings (i.e., step, beginners, Living Sober, Big Book, and speaker/discussion) five days a week, Monday through Friday. Their meetings are held at noon every day except on Wednesdays--the Wednesday meetings are at 6:30 am. The Marlton Group is celebrating their 19th anniversary on Friday, May 17th, 2013, beginning at 11:00 am.

--Jenn C., Archives Chair

## Announcements

The chair and co-chair of the newsletter committee (and many others) will be rotating out at the end of the year. Now is your chance to get involved in service at the Intergroup level. If you think you might be interested in taking over the newsletter, we're happy to help you make a smooth transition. Please contact Patty or Angie at newsletter@asj.org for more information.

## Question of the Month

For next month's issue, we'd like to get your response to this question:

*Why did you select your home group?*

Please email your replies no later than Friday, June 14, to newsletter@asj.org.

## DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

June, Step and Tradition 6	Friday, June 14
July, Step and Tradition 7	Friday, July 12
August, Step and Tradition 8	Friday, August 16
September, Step and Tradition 9	Friday, September 13
October, Step and Tradition 10	Friday, October 11
November, Step and Tradition 11	Friday, November 15
December, Step and Tradition 12	Friday, December 13

For each month, we'd love to get your submissions on the step or tradition that corresponds. In addition, we are always looking for AA's to share their Experience, Strength and Hope (ESH) in print. We try to publish one ESH each issue, and as always we welcome any and all ideas.

## Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do

*May-July 2013*

Friday, May 17 - 482 Club at Barclay Ave & Rt. 130 Pennsauken, NJ - G.O.Y.A. 2nd anniversary. FFF. Meeting at 8:30pm, with food to follow.

Friday, May 17 - Moorestown 58th anniversary at the Community Center in Moorestown on Main St. Food starts at 7pm followed by two speakers at 8pm. Dance 9pm till 12.

Friday, May 17 - Marlton Group (POP) Anniversary. 11:00 AM. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Rt. 70 & Cooper St. ¼ mile east of Rt. 70. Two Speakers.

Sunday, May 19 – The Area 45 Assembly/Committee Meeting will be held at Elmer Grange Hall, 535 Woodstown-Daretown Road, Pilesgrove, NJ 08098. 8:30 am Registration, 9:00 am New GSR/DCM Orientation, 10:00 am Assembly Meeting. Followed by lunch, then Committee Meeting finishing at 2:30-3:00 pm.

Monday, May 20 - Masonville Big Book/Step Meeting anniversary; located in Mt. Laurel at the Masonville United Methodist Church, Ark Rd. (Masonville-Centerton Rd.), off Marne Highway. Food will be served at 6 PM and two speakers at 7 PM.

Thursday, May 23 - West Deptford - "A New Day" group will celebrate their first anniversary with a continental breakfast and guest speaker. Located at Southwood Baptist Church, 11 Griscom Lane, West Deptford, NJ. More info call Wayne at 856-534-0104.

Monday, May 27 – Memorial Day Alcathon sponsored by SJIG and hosted by the Palmyra group. 8am - 8pm at Epworth United Methodist Church 5th St. & Morgan Ave. Palmyra, NJ. For more info call Joanne: 856-364-8260.

Monday, May 27 – Memorial Day Alcathon sponsored by SJIG, held at the Intergroup Office in Pennsauken. First meeting at 8 am, last starts at 8pm. Volunteers needed, contact Unity Chair Joe at [jwtusmc@verizon.net](mailto:jwtusmc@verizon.net) or [unity@assj.org](mailto:unity@assj.org).

Monday, May 27 - Vineland will host an Alcathon from 8am - 8pm at 800 E. Wood St. Vineland.

June 7th-9th - Philly 4021 club will be sponsoring a trip to Akron to celebrate Founders Day cost is \$325 per person which includes round trip transportation on a modern air conditioned bus - continental breakfast - accommodations at Akron City Centre Hotel - registration for the convention - transportation to the grave site and a visit to the NFL Hall of Fame. Bus departs from 4021 clubhouse, 4021 Walnut St. Philadelphia - Friday at 3am (early morning) payment due in full asp. Make check out to Ed Robinson mail to 1 Thru 12 4021 Clubhouse 4021 Walnut St., Phila. PA. 19104 more info call Ed at 215-802-8973 or Wayne at 856-534-0104.

Sat., June 8 - District 14 Workshop. 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Join us for an afternoon of fellowship and fun as we take a nostalgic journey back in AA's past while viewing the film, "Bill W." Popcorn, candy, and soft drinks. 1st Presbyterian Church, 2nd and Pine, Millville.

Friday, June 7 - Sun, June 9 - NERF (Northeast Regional Forum). 7pm Friday - noon Sunday. Crowne Plaza Hotel, 100 Berlin Rd., Cromwell, CT 06416 (use group code: ZA1). No reg. fee, but pre-registration is encouraged at [AA.org](http://AA.org) or General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, NY, NY 10163.

Sat. June 15 – SJIG's Social Committee is sponsoring a Back Bay fishing trip at Somers Point. 1pm - 5pm (34 person capacity). \$30 per person includes rods, tackle, bait, & mate's tip. More info: Mike at 856-779-1830.



## NOTES


***Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do*** continued from page 7

Sat. June 22 – SJIG will host a Founder's Day Picnic at the Subaru Pavilion in Cherry Hill. 1pm start. Volunteers and donations welcomed.

June 28 - 30 - Second Annual Liberty Bell Roundup. The Philadelphia Woodstock of AA. Ramada Inn - Airport, 76 Industrial Hwy, Essington, PA 19029 (Soon to be Clarion) 610-521-9600. Registration: \$35.00  
p/p.[www.libertybellroundup.com](http://www.libertybellroundup.com)

Sat. July 13 - Parvin State Park - Matt Talbot annual family picnic at pavilion A & B -- COST: \$10 kids under 7 free. TIME -- 11am till dusk. See a Matt Talbot member for tickets.

Tues. July 23 - Mt. Ephraim "The Living Room Group" will celebrate their 7th anniversary at Mt. Ephraim Methodist Church, 201 New Jersey Ave., Mt. Ephraim, NJ. Starting time is 6:30 with plenty of food and fellowship - all are welcome.