

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

NOVEMBER 2013

Surrender, Not Submission

After a relapse, she changed the way she practiced the program

After a weekend long relapse, I realized a couple of things. I needed a new sponsor, one who worked the Steps. I needed to go to some different meetings, women's meetings in particular. I needed a home group. I needed to be more careful around people, not wear my heart on my sleeve.

I had to figure these things out for myself; no one told me.

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Surrender felt completely different than submission. It

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The Structure of Step Eleven

Step Eleven: 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.

Being a Professor of English, I am given to looking for the structure in a composition—meaning, what are its formal elements? There is a structure to Step Eleven and the Step itself tells us: "There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation and prayer." Exactly in what does that "linkage" consist of?

In one way or another, the Step indicates that meditation comes first. I quiet myself and try to clear my mind for meditation. I don't edit, I just see what thoughts come and go. I watch myself processing images and thoughts. Thusly, I am examining myself. I am looking and observing. I am not judgmental. After a time, I propose to myself some things to pray for. Note that I do not pray for the things that I want to pray for, or the things that I think I should pray for; I just consider certain things to pray for.

Of the things that I consider to pray for, I need to ask myself, are these selfish prayers? Are they things that I want or things that I think might be good for others? If they are, then I must discard them as prayers I want to address to my higher power. Why? Because the Step tells me that I am to pray only for knowledge of my higher power's will, not my own.

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An Old Timer's Observation on Sponsorship (Part One)

I have, so far, found six characteristics of an effective sponsor:

1. A good sponsor is a member of my own sex. Sponsorship is not about relating to another individual. It is about getting better someone else's way. It doesn't matter if I relate more to members of the opposite sex. I must take the sexual component completely out of this relationship.
2. A good sponsor has worked the 12 Steps. A sponsor's primary job is to coach me through actually working all 12 Steps. Every good coach I have ever heard of was at some time on the field playing the game.
3. A good sponsor has a sponsor himself. Hopefully this means he has surrendered and someone else is running his program. Definitely it means we have a plan when I bring him a question he can't answer. This also indicates he is a follower, which is an important spiritual principle. This is evidence he is not in charge anymore.
4. A good sponsor will tell me the truth I don't want to hear. He can't be interested in what I think of him. He must be willing to risk the relationship by telling me the unvarnished truth. He must be willing to say things to me like: "You are not doing the (following) and I don't think this is going to work. Or, "I am afraid for you because..."
5. A good sponsor is active in service work. All of the winners I know are actively carrying the message. They all go out of their way for the fellowship. For example, the show up early at their home group and make coffee and make the newcomers welcome.
6. A good sponsor laughs a lot, enjoys life, and is not a complainer. A complainer is still in charge. Spiritually awakened people just seem to laugh a lot. It does not mean they don't cry or have hard times. They do. It means they are generally happy people.

How do I find one of these? (By the way, one is the correct number of sponsors!)

The best place to look is literature studies limited to people of your own sex (such as a Big Book or Step meeting). People who are serious about recovery frequent these meetings. Next, look for someone who seems to know the literature and who always talks about his experience in doing whatever is being read, rather than his opinion on it. Also look for someone who seems to smile and laugh a lot.

Do NOT look for someone you can relate to. If you are new you know little about recovery and therefore can only really relate to others who know little. You need someone whose directions you will follow. The only reason I allowed my first sponsor's directions was that I wanted to feel how he looked. That is, he was sober and happy about it.

-- submitted by Mike L., St. Bart's Group



involves the sense of willingness, as opposed to compliance. I no longer had to comply with the rules; I understood or was willing to try to understand why they were the way they were, and to incorporate them into my ways of thinking and acting. I was not doing this to please someone else; I was doing it to save my own life. The needed change came naturally; I was less needy once I surrendered.

Surrender is a sort of reframing of my thoughts. We tend to think of it having to do with war, but when it comes to our obsession with alcohol, we cannot win against our body chemistry. That is the physical part of the disease, and that is beyond our power to change. What we can change is our thinking, so when I surrender, I am changing my thinking about alcohol.

I now surrender my will to a Power greater than myself, in all things large and small, one by one. I don't need to know what that Power is, except that it can keep me sober.

The tricky part for me, then as now, is to distinguish between what is my will and what is my HP's will. The phrase "life on life's terms" is so helpful. I have found that it is my will for everything to be easy all the time. It is not that it is my HP's will that I have chronic illness and physical pain; it is life on life's terms.

On the other hand, and this is where the reframing comes in: I am very blessed. Parts of me are working better than ever. I am so blessed to have eyes to see and read. I am so blessed to have fingers to type. I am so blessed to have a heart and mind to take in all of this and make use of it, to love all of you, my friends in recovery.

I am blessed with my very human life, with all its frailties and pitfalls, with its alcoholism and everything else, because my spirit gets to experience life.

Life comes with a lot of beauty and goodness. When I can be aware and grateful, I am probably experiencing my HP's will for me.

Right now big fluffy clouds float in a bright blue sky outside my window. It is early fall and I have been too sick to get out much. But it's my favorite time of year. I'm sober, I can appreciate beauty and goodness, and I can smile and laugh. I am not suffering from the effects of my alcoholism today; I am enjoying the benefits of my sobriety.

—Gigi, Springfield, Ore.

Thanksgiving is Gratitude in Action

This piece was first published in the Grapevine 1954 by AA's founder Bill W. His humble words do not feel dated to any Alcoholics I know. Enjoy.

We not only feel grateful, we say so with the joy of prisoners set free. We thank God for his light whereby we now see; and for the gift of his grace by which we breathe and live in a wondrous new world.

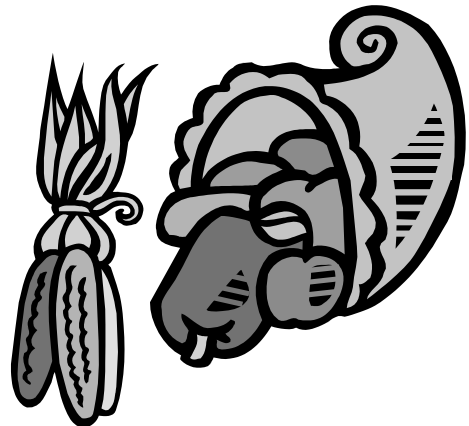
The pilgrim creators of Thanksgiving Day never found a more promising land than ours. They gave thanks for their better chance of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We, too, give thanks for those blessings and for many more. We give thanks for all the pains and trials of our mysterious malady, alcoholism. For out of these sufferings have come our incredible gifts of faith and freedom, together with such an opportunity for serving God and man as few societies have ever known.

We are at peace with ourselves and all about us. Our land of freedom is today the whole world where we are citizens of nearly every race and clime. At last we belong, and we are not alone anymore.

So we say to each other, "Happy Thanksgiving." Few can guess how greatly we AAs treasure those words.

—Bill W.



Tradition Eleven

Tradition Eleven: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

We did not receive a submission this month for this tradition, but that's okay—when in doubt or in need of words of wisdom, I always go to the source.

In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill W. writes: "We alcoholics are the biggest rationalizers in the world. Fortified with the excuse that we are doing great things for AA, we can, through broken anonymity, resume our old and disastrous pursuit of personal power and prestige, public honors, and money—the same implacable urges that, when frustrated, once caused us to drink."

He's talking about high-level attention. In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill is supportive of breaking anonymity at the personal level: "As a rule, the average newcomer wanted his family to know immediately what he was trying to do. He also wanted to tell others who had tried to help him—his doctor, his minister, and close friend. As he gained confidence, he felt it right to explain his new way of life to his employer and business associates. When opportunities to be helpful came along, he found he could talk easily about AA to almost anyone.

These quiet disclosures helped him to lose his fear of the alcoholic stigma, and spread the news of AA's existence in his community. Many a new man and woman came to AA because of such conversations. Since it is only at the top public level that anonymity is expected, such communications were well within its spirit."

In *As Bills Sees It*, which you can purchase at the SJIG office (along with all of the books I'm quoting), I found a familiar story about anonymity that's worth repeating, especially for newcomers who might not have heard it yet:

"Dr. Bob was essentially a far more humble person than I, and anonymity came rather easily to him. When it was sure that he was mortally afflicted, some of his friends suggested that there should be a monument erected in honor of him and his wife, Anne—befitting a founder and his lady. Telling me about this, Dr. Bob grinned broadly and said, "God bless 'em. They mean well. But let's you and me get buried just like other folks."

In the Akron cemetery where Dr. Bob and Anne lie, the simple stone says not a word about AA. This final example of self-effacement is of more permanent worth to AA than any amount of public attention or any great monument."

-- Patty H.

Here is the "linkage" that the Step speaks of. In order to examine myself and my motives for praying, I must meditate first. Meditation clears the air, clears the ground for self-examination to take place. It is only within the confines and space of meditation that I can begin to see what my motivations for prayer are and where those motivations are different from what my higher power's will for me is. Wherever I suspect this difference, I discard the self-centered prayer and replace it with a prayer for knowledge of God's will.

Prayer itself is the last stage of the "linkage" in Step Eleven. Prayer is the outcome of the meditation and self-examination that have taken place prior to the prayer. At this stage, the prayers that I actually make to God have been "filtered" through meditation and self-examination and are the kinds of prayers that the Step envisions.

Thusly I maintain and improve my conscious contact with my higher power. My higher power (here I speak only for myself) is witness to my efforts to meditate (not an easy practice by any means) and then to my self-examination: to my efforts to sort out the difference between what I might want and what my higher power intends for me. The Step is fairly clear: I am seeking knowledge only and nothing more, except the power and courage to carry out God's plans for me.

--Masonville Marty

COMING IN MARCH OF 2014

Area 45 will host its 50th Annual General Service Convention March 21 – 23rd, 2014, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cherry Hill, NJ.

More information at <http://www.snjaaconvention.org>. Convention chair Frank Z: 609-780-3365. Registration chair Sharon T: 856-261-4266.

Question of the Month Gets Great Response!

In October, we asked you for your favorite quotes from the Big Book, and we were happy to see the response—keep it up!! Look for the November question in this edition of the newsletter. We'd like to give special thanks to our roving reporter, Joey C., for gathering these answers for us.

In no particular order:

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation." – page 568 (Kenny T., AC Young People)

"To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek." – page 46 (Tracy, Friday Night Lawnside Group)

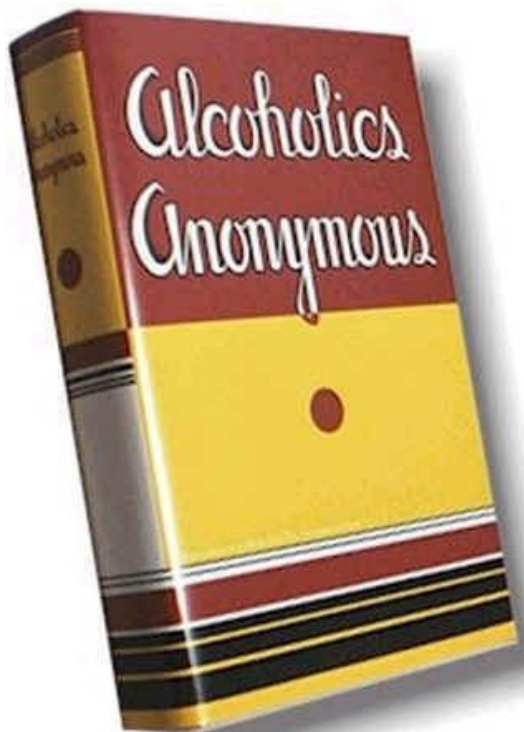
"My serenity is directly proportional to my level of acceptance. When I remember this, I can see I've never had it so good." – page 420 (Stephanie C., LMST Group, Audubon)

"Love and tolerance of others is our code." – page 84 (John K., LMST Group, Audubon)

"If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic." – page 44 (Jen, Trudgers Group of Absecon)

"If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life." – page 132 (Tina O., Masonville Group)

"We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." – page 85 (Pat R.W.)



"In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves." – page 70 (Anonymous)

"That's what we're talking about. Just twenty-four hours at a time." – page 188 (Joe C., LMST Group, Audubon)

"Above everything else, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!" –page 62 (Connie Y., Florence Group)

"We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed." – page 25 (Chris C., Florence Group)

"To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss." – page 89 (Patty H., Willingboro Group)

"When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't."--page 53 (Angie Y., Collingswood Monday)

Page 88, Line 8. (Jimmy S., LMST Group, Audubon)

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 AA 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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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!

The "Millville Thursday Night Group" (formerly known as the "Millville Group") was founded in November 1947. This was the first AA group formed in Millville--the founders started this meeting to help alcoholics in this area. This is an open variety meeting, held on Thursday evenings at 8:00 pm--the first week of every month is a speaker meeting; the second week of every month is a Step meeting; the third week of every month is a Tradition meeting; and the fourth week of every month is a Big Book meeting. Their current location is the First Presbyterian Church on 2nd and Pine Streets.

Here are some AA "fun facts" for this month from the Archives page from our Intergroup website: www.aasj.org:

November 1934: Ebby T. carries message to Bill W.

November 10, 1940: First AA group formed in Minneapolis, MN
--Jenn C., Archives Chair

Letter to the Editor:

The impending holidays—the urge to drink sets in. Holiday stress, seasonal depression, short days and dark weather. I used drink to alleviate the blues. I had my moments. It's a struggle with sentimental feelings and memories; a lot of emotions come up. —Eric H., LMST Group, Audubon

Editors' note: This is the time of year where three holidays—Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve—make sobriety a struggle for many. Please keep in close touch with your friends in the fellowship and your sponsors—they can help you keep perspective. Call someone before you pick up a drink!

Announcements

The newsletter committee is looking for volunteers. You can write, edit, format, interview—whatever you like doing, you can probably do it and perform a valuable service for your fellow AAs. Please contact Patty 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: *What are you giving thanks for?*

Please email your replies no later than Friday, December 13, to newsletter@asj.org.

Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do

November-December 2013

Saturday, November 23 - District 12 Workshop "The Twelve Concepts for World Service" (To understand the spiritual principles that undergird A.A.'s structure and how the parts work together). Presenters: John K. and Bill N. 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Free continental breakfast and lunch. St. Charles Borromeo Church - Borromeo Hall (basement), Johnson and Stagecoach Rds., Sicklerville (Washington Twp.), NJ. Contact Joe H, DCM, District 12 (856) 562-7548.

Sunday, November 24 - Area 45 Corrections Committee Meeting. 1:00 PM sharp. New Centenary United Methodist Church, 151 South White Horse Pike (Rt. 30) Berlin, NJ 08009

Thursday November 28 - Thanksgiving Day Alcahthon at the 482 Club in Pennsauken, NJ. 7550 North Crescent Blvd. Meetings begin at 8 am, with a special Thanksgiving speaker at Noon, followed by a Thanksgiving feast at 1pm. For more information call Traci at 609-280-9640. This is a non-AA event.

Thursday, November 28 - Allentown Ellisdale "Back To Basics" Thanksgiving Gratitude Breakfast 9-11AM. Ellisdale United Methodist Ch., 926 Provinceline Lane, Allentown, NJ 08501 Brian B.609.423.9367/ Merri M.609.618.1857

Saturday, November 30 - Magnolia Saturday Night 42nd Anniversary. Dessert meeting with two speakers. 8:30 - 10:00 pm, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Bldg. in Rear, Evesham and Warwick Roads, Magnolia, NJ. Dessert contributions welcome.

Wednesday, December 4 - 16th Annual "Friends of Bill" Christmas Dinner. 6:00 pm at Nicolosi Catering, Hessian Ave. & Route 45, West Deptford, NJ. Tickets: \$40.00. Proceeds support the Hope Hall VOA Children's, Christmas Party & Last Stop Mission. Men are encouraged to bring new toys. Attendance limited to 225. Tickets: Jack H. - 856.304.7001, Frank H. - 856.375.4233 or Kevin W. - 609.760.7337. This is a non-AA event.

Saturday, December 7 - Matt Talbott Group 19th Annual Christmas Dinner/Dance at Nicolosi Catering, 1 Hessian Avenue, West Deptford NJ. 6:30-10:30PM Tickets: \$35.00. Formal attire requested. Door prizes, DJ. Please contact John R: (856) 649-3378 for more information or you may see ANY Matt Talbot member. Proceeds Benefit Matt 19 Retreat Scholarships. This is a non-AA event.

Saturday, December 7 - Haddon Heights "A Daily Reprieve" will celebrate their 12th Anniversary with a light breakfast starting at 9:00 AM, with speakers to follow. New location: 18 White Horse Pike, Haddon Heights. St. Mary's Episcopal Church.

Saturday, December 7 - Thorofare Group Anniversary. Food at 7pm, speaker at 8pm. Side dishes welcomed. St Paul's United Methodist - 74 Church St & Evergreen Av Rte. 295 So. EXIT 20 Thorofare Rte. 643/Woodbury Rte. 660, LEFT onto Mid Atlantic Parkway, Right onto Rte. 44, 1st right on to Church St.

Tuesday, December 31 - CAIG New Year's Eve Dinner/Dance. 6:30PM. \$20.00 p/p. United Methodist Church, 100 Pitney Rd. Absecon, NJ. Marathon Meetings (Free) downstairs 7:00, 8:30, 10:00PM, 12:15AM.

Tuesday, December 31 - New Year's Eve Feelings In Sobriety/Steps In Succession 6th Anniversary. 1st Presbyterian Church, 3550 Nottingham Way, Hamilton, NJ. 5:30PM Round Robin Meeting. Pizza/Soda/Chips/Amateur DJ Your Choice/Dance Lessons FREE 6:30-9:30PM. Ken P 609.847.4959. ALL Family/Friends WELCOME!

