

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

DECEMBER 2013

Brothers and Sisters

This family shows that although alcoholism often runs in families, we can also help each other get sober.

Before my last slip, I'd sworn to never cross my sister's doorstep again. Being with more than two of my four brothers or sister gave me panic attacks and we'd argue because my older brother would say to me, "You are proof AA doesn't work!"

After going through DTs in the hospital, I made a decision to do more than mentally turn my life and my will over to God as suggested in Step Three of the Big Book. Shutting out the background noise of family, my husband's alcoholism and my daughter's off-and-on resentment over my drinking, I committed to 90 meetings in 90 days, read the Sponsorship pamphlet and found a sponsor to guide me with her experience through the Steps. In 14 months I participated in two 16-week-Twelve-Step workshops at a treatment center's public meeting room. My sponsor, Melinda K., also had me going to Al-Anon due to the dysfunction at home because of my husband's continued drinking.

You might say, "What an order, I can't go through with it!" I was willing and that made it a short order. After 33 years

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The Divine Paradox

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Recently, I "suggested" to my sponsee that it was time for him to give serious consideration (translation: "get moving!") to sponsoring others. He nodded somewhat tepidly and I noticed the look of apprehension in his eyes. He was afraid of something; but what?

After casting about in my thoughts for what he might be afraid of, I hazarded a guess: he was afraid that, in devoting his sobriety to another, he might lose some of it himself. Not that he would get drunk, but that some of the wisdom he had worked so hard to accumulate these past years, might, in the process of sharing with another, leave him.

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What my sponsee didn't realize, and what I myself didn't realize when I started to work with others, was that, through the "divine paradox" mentioned in Step Twelve, the more time spent working with another alcoholic, the more (not the less) wisdom one gets to accumulate and keep. Thus the saying, 'you cannot keep it, unless you give it away.'

Of course, part of this "paradox" (and this is perhaps what makes it "divine") is that one usually doesn't really believe it until one tries it for himself. The initial reaction is, how could this be? How could you get to keep (and even increase) something, by giving it away? The only answer is to encourage one to try it and see. There is no logical explanation for the phenomenon and again, this is what makes it

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

How to Interview a Potential Sponsor

So you're at a meeting and you think you may have found a sponsor. It is recommended that you ask the following questions, and if he/she gets angry then you know they are not for you:

Have you worked the 12 Steps from the Big Book?

Do you have a sponsor?

Are you active in service? If yes, what do you do?

Does your sponsor allow you to sponsor?

Are you enjoying your recovery?

The man/woman who says yes to these questions has a need to give what he/she has. Their need is every bit as important as yours. You are not giving up power by asking for help. Actually, you are assisting them in their recovery. If they agree to be your sponsor, promise to do whatever they suggest and then keep that promise!

When should you change sponsors?

This is the question that plagues every newcomer. Fortunately the answers are simple. You should change sponsors if you are doing everything they ask and still feel like you aren't growing. Change if you lose respect for your sponsor.

How do I go about changing?

First, follow the above process, and get a new one! Next, thank the old one. Say something like, "Thank you for all you've done for me. Thank you for all I've learned from you. Thank you for all the time you've spent with me and all the sacrifices you've made on my behalf. God and I both know you've been a tool in His hand in my life. I think it is only fair for me to tell you that I've asked someone else to be my sponsor.

Adults announce, children explain. If he/she is angry and explodes, then you have definitely made the right decision because they've got their ego tied up in sponsoring you. Also, they have a sponsor they can work with to process this if necessary. You don't have to answer any questions but can choose to after discussing with your new sponsor.

When you can ask your sponsor the same question you asked yesterday because you've forgotten the answer, you have a sponsor. Stop trying to manage what your sponsor thinks of you. All of the lessons aren't for you. Maybe the reason you can't remember the answer is because your sponsor needs to hear himself/herself say it again.

You know you have a great sponsor if after "interviewing" them and you ask them to be your sponsor, they have some requirements for you, such as: an agreed upon number of meetings per week, required readings out of the Big Book, taking the steps from the book and service commitments. Lastly, if he/she says something like, "the last requirement is after 3 days, 3 months or 3 years, you feel the need to get another sponsor, you are required to do so. You have my blessing and I will be happy for you!" Then you can be sure you've found the right one.

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

since my first step through AA's doors, I finally read the Big Book with another human being, stopping to read and understand what "a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness," meant.

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After hours of writing mini-inventories on what my part was in my family issues, I learned to not engage. My emotional highs and lows, even with a drunken husband's tirade nightly, were replaced with reading my sponsor's chosen selections from the literature, followed with writing. I was eager to have her read my writing but she didn't need to as it was evident I'd done the work by the changes in me. In short order, my 17-year-old daughter modeled her behavior after mine and became less antagonistic towards her stepfather when he was drunk. Things got better for us.

In 2009 my brother Mark from Northern California told me he had gone to a few meetings. I forgot I'd mailed the Big Book to three of my brothers and my sister in 2007 after they converged upon me with an intervention as I was leaving the detox at an Orange County hospital. He'd read the first 164 pages and decided to try it.

To have my family soul mate go to meetings pleased me as I wanted all of them to understand alcoholism. I thought it would help them understand me, our dad and some of their issues as it is a family disease. We'd see each other every two or three months. Our father had cancer and I would drive the 35 miles to West LA to spend most weekends caring for Dad, often driving back during the week to drive him to chemotherapy. About every 8-to-10 weeks, Mark would do the 7-hour-drive on his motorcycle and spend two or three days at Dad's too.

We talked a lot about the past couple years and why I couldn't be with all the family who had tried to commit me as I left the hospital. I wasn't angry at any of them anymore; that had dissipated as I stayed sober.

My dad died from cancer that September. Two years of sobriety gave me the gift of spending quality time caring for him with hours of precious talks in which he'd occasionally take out his 20-year-old AA chip, proudly displaying it to me. Dad had made amends to family back then but after a couple years, he'd gone back to drinking. I did not judge my father and he did not judge me except to say he admired my commitment to AA and quitting drinking as well as my husband, who had also gotten sober. He and my dad had many fine afternoons together because of the common bond of alcohol. It did not matter one of us was still active in disease. We all three went to see 'The Bill W. Story' at a local playhouse.

One of the gifts of sobriety that I treasured the most was my brother's sobriety. In July of 2010, Mark called me and excitedly told me, "I've been going to AA for over a week now." The validation and elation of having a brother in the program was just huge for me. If I was ever angry or resentful about something, Mark would ask me if I'd done a personal inventory to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. We talked almost daily between 5 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. What a way to start the day!

I finally asked my brother if my being in the hot seat in 2006 with the family had anything to do with his joining AA. Mark hadn't hit that low of a bottom and our younger brother often questioned him about whether he was a real alcoholic.

"It's a program of attraction, not promotion," Mark answered. "You had more to do with my quitting drinking than you'll ever know." Hearing that was so important to me.

I have walked through many positive changes in AA. I had been able to help my father during his last two years. I was there for my brother during two serious surgeries. Today, I have a great relationship with my sober husband and with my sister. She and I had never had this good of a relationship before. All of this is the result of working the Steps with my sponsor.

The hardest thing to face in my life came a few months ago. My beloved brother, Mark, was killed in a motorcycle accident almost instantly. He lived long enough to say to a woman who came to his side, "Tell my family I love them."

More than 200 friends and family came to the celebration of his life last October. God gave me the courage to

Making It Comfortable for the Newcomer

On arrival with the SJIG Literature Road Show last month it came to my attention there was this "fellow" studying the lay of the land as the Home Group was preparing for their Anniversary. I asked him if he would like to help in carting the boxes and bins with the books, and he was happy to do so. So" there is" happiness in service. As my wife Karen and I displayed the items I continued to converse and share with him about Literature and the Road Show. He was listening and looking the whole time; but then hunger and cakes set in, so I lost him for a while. But we managed later to sit and do some sharing with desserts and coffee. I had this feeling that in just hanging around the table that he felt welcomed and a part of this whole and he had just leant a hand. We made it attractive and we can only hope that someday Early Earle will scope us out again.

--Jimmy P. and Karen S. (alias Roadies)

EDITORS'NOTE: The SJIG Road Show is a good way to do service and spread the word about the great literature World Service and the Grapevine have to offer. Please see the Literature Committee Chair for details, or to schedule a Road Show commitment for your home group!



"divine."

Step Twelve tells us that "even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic." And this works, the Step tells us, "whether his brother has yet received anything or not." Thus, the second thing I tell my sponsee: don't get discouraged if the first two, three or six people you try to help, don't get better. Just keep going (remember, Bill W. and Dr. Bob combed through hundreds of alcoholics before finding "the man on the bed").

It will take the experience of helping others and working on a long-term basis with others, before the fear of losing one's own sobriety is replaced by the joys of gaining more sobriety than one had before and before "he somehow knows that God has enabled him to make a mighty beginning, and he senses that he stands at the edge of new mysteries, joys, and experiences of which he had never dreamed."

--Masonville Marty

share about him during the ceremony.

I know my brother is at peace. I felt his presence as did his wife for weeks after his death. While he left us all so abruptly, I know that because of AA, he had been able to make his amends to the people in his life. I do not question God's will.

I like to think that, as a good friend said, "Maybe the reason he helped so many people and gave so much to everyone in so little time was that God knew he didn't have much time left."

Even with the untimely death of my younger brother, today, I "comprehend the word serenity and...know peace." A "new freedom and a new happiness" along with all the rest of the promises have come true for me.

—Anne J., Whittier, Calif. (From the December online edition of Grapevine Magazine)

The Spiritual Significance of Anonymity

The Twelfth Tradition: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of Anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him Who presides over us all.

ONE may say that anonymity is the spiritual base, the sure key to all the rest of our Traditions. It has come to stand for prudence and, most importantly, for self-effacement. True consideration for the newcomer if he desires to be nameless; vital protection against misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous at the public level; and to each of us a constant reminder that principles come before personal interest--such is the wide scope of this all embracing principle. In it we see the cornerstone of our security as a movement; at a deeper spiritual level it points us to still greater self-renunciation.

A GLANCE at the 12 Traditions will instantly assure anyone that "giving up" is the essential idea of them all. In each Tradition, the individual or the group is asked to give up something for our general welfare. Tradition One asks us to place the common good ahead of personal desire. Tradition Two asks us to listen to God as He may speak in the Group Conscience. Tradition Three requires that we exclude no alcoholic from A.A. membership. Tradition Four implies that we abandon all idea of centralized human authority or government. But each group is enjoined to consult widely in matters affecting us all. Tradition Five restricts the A.A. group to a single purpose, i.e. carrying our message to other alcoholics.

Tradition Six points at the corroding influence of money, property and personal authority; it begs that we keep these influences at a minimum by separate incorporation and management of our special services. It also warns against the natural temptation to make alliances or give endorsements. Tradition Seven states that we had best pay our own bills; that large contributions or those carrying obligations ought not be received; that public solicitation using the name Alcoholics Anonymous is positively dangerous. Tradition Eight forswears professionalizing our Twelfth Step work but it does guarantee our few paid service workers an unquestioned amateur status. Tradition Nine asks that we give up all idea of expensive organization; enough is needed to permit effective work by our special services--and no more. This Tradition breathes democracy; our leadership is one of service and it is rotating; our few titles never clothe their holders with arbitrary personal authority; they hold authorizations to serve, never to govern. Tradition Ten is an emphatic restraint of serious controversy; it implores each of us to take care against committing A.A. to the fires of reform, political or religious dissension. Tradition Eleven asks, in our public relations, that we be alert against sensationalism and it declares there is never need to praise ourselves. Personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and film is urgently required, thus avoiding the pitfall of vanity, and the temptation through broken anonymity to link A.A. to other causes.

Tradition Twelve, in its mood of humble anonymity, plainly enough comprehends the preceding eleven. The "Twelve Points of Tradition" are little else than a specific application of the spirit of the "Twelve Steps of Recovery" to our group life and to our relations with society in general. The Recovery Steps would make each individual A.A. whole and one with God; the Twelve Points of Tradition would make us one with each other and whole with the world about us. Unity is our aim.

Our A.A. Traditions are, we trust, securely anchored in those wise precepts: charity, gratitude and humility. Nor have we forgotten prudence. May these virtues ever stand clear before us in our meditations; may Alcoholics Anonymous serve God in happy unison for so long as He may need us.

--Bill W. (from the Grapevine Digital Archives, written in November of 1948)

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.

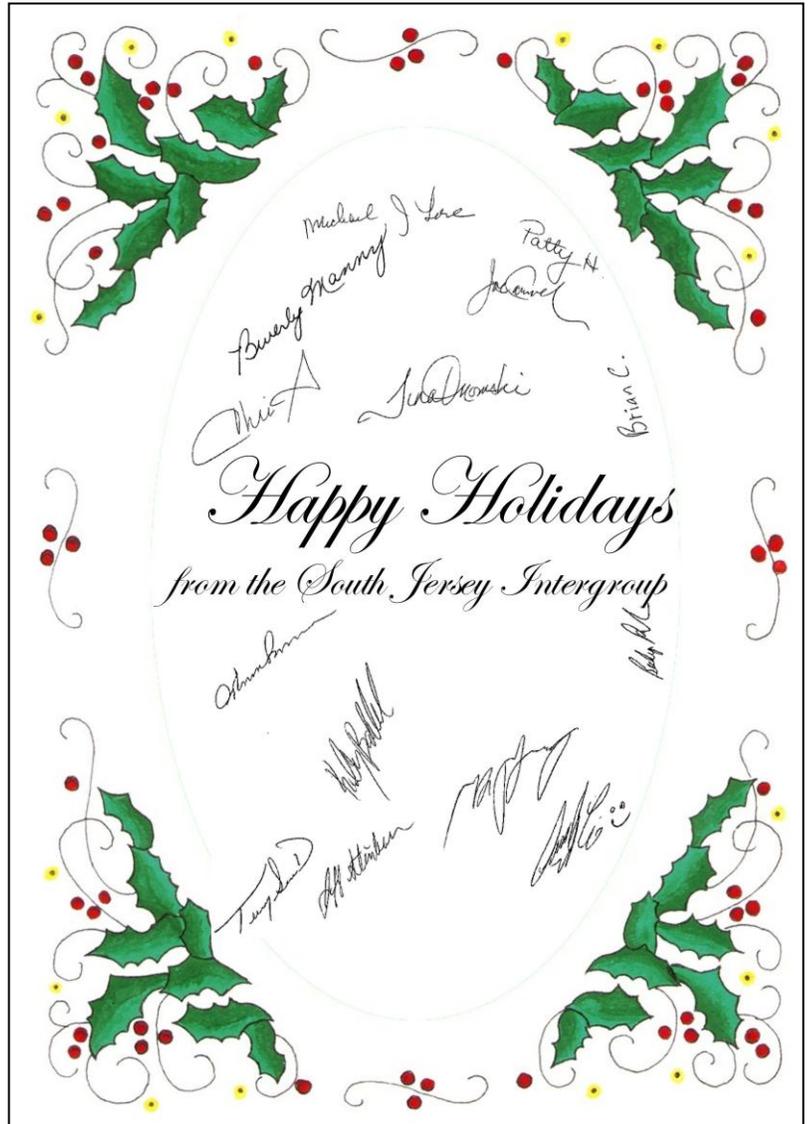
Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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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



Thank you, South Jersey

This edition of SJ Anonymous is our last one; our two-year commitment is up and it's time for someone else to take the reins. We have been honored to bring this newsletter to you each month; in doing this work it has helped us learn more about the Big Book, the Twelve Steps, and Recovery. We have been incredibly blessed to get to know some of you through your submissions and help.

Thank you so much for this opportunity, and we wish nothing but the best for the next Newsletter Committee.

In loving service,
Patty H. and Angie Y.

Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do

December 2013

Friday, December 20 – Area 45 Dance. 9:30 PM – 1:00 PM. St. Charles Borromeo Church, 176 Stagecoach Rd., Washington Township, NJ. Admission: \$5.00. DJ: Philly D. Children under 14 Free.

Tuesday, December 24 – Last Stop Annual Christmas Dance. 9:00 PM – 1:00 AM. DJ Megan. Last Stop Recovery, 2440 Kensington Ave., Philadelphia. Info: Chris 267-444-2780. laststopaa@gmail.com NON AA

Tuesday, December 24– Christmas Eve Open House. 113 Cobblestone Lane, Westville, NJ. 8:00 AM – 10:00 PM. All are welcome. We'll have breakfast, lunch, and dinner served. Santa visits between 2-3 PM. If you send a newcomer, just pin a phone number to them so we can return him at the end of the night. Come visit or spend the day. Contact Jimmy Rogers for more info: 856.842.3060. Hope to see you there and Merry Christmas!

Tuesday, December 24 - Christmas Alcathon hosted by the KISS Club, 818 N. Broad St., Woodbury, NJ 08096. 856-854-5477. Starts on Tuesday, December 24 at 6:00 PM, and runs straight through until Christmas Day at 6:00 PM. Speakers every hour. Food donations are welcome. NON AA

Wednesday, December 25 – Christmas Day Alcathon hosted by Vineland Group & Nooner's Group. 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM. Last meeting starts at 7:00 PM. Trinity Episcopal Church, 800 E. Wood St., Vineland, NJ. (located at corner of 8th & Wood). Desserts Welcome. Info: Marci R. – 856.776.3149.

Wednesday, December 25 – Christmas Day Alcathon hosted by the 482 Social Hall. 12:00 Noon – 9:00 PM. New meeting every hour. Last meeting starts at 9:00 PM. 7550 North Crescent Blvd. (Rt. 130), Pennsauken, NJ. 856.356.2852. For GPS users: Be sure to use address: 7550 N. Crescent Blvd.

Saturday, December 28– “Tools of Sobriety” I will celebrate their Anniversary @ 4 pm. with speakers and desserts. St. Stephen's Church Hall, Rt. 45 north of Chatham Lane, Mullica Hill, NJ, on right next to book store.

NEW 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, 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!

Wednesday, January 1 – New Year's Day Alcathon hosted by Vineland Group & Nooner's Group. 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM. Last meeting starts at 7:00 PM. Trinity Episcopal Church, 800 E. Wood St., Vineland, NJ. (located at corner of 8th & Wood). Desserts Welcome. Info: Marci R. – 856.776.3149.

Saturday, January 18 – District 13 Workshop. Woodstown Presbyterian Hall, 46 Auburn Rd. 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM. 3 Speakers/FOOD/RAFFLE / Q&A-Chairs: Kathy P: 856.678.9412 & Donna Lee B. (Time Change)

Saturday, February 15 – District 14 UNITY Meeting/Dinner/Dance Pre\$8.00/\$10 at the door. Trinity Episcopal Church, 800 E .Wood St. & 8th St.

March 21 – 23rd, 2014: Area 45 will host its 50th Annual General Service Convention 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.

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1 *Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season.* Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



2 *Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers.* If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



3 *Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time.* If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



4 *Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations*

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



5 *Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about.* Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



6 *If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.*



7 *Don't think you have to stay late.* Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



8 *Worship in your own way.*



9 *Don't sit around brooding.* Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



10 *Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations.* Remember—"one day at a time."



11 *Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy.* Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



12 *"Having had a . . ."* No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

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NOTES
