

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

**SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP**

**February-March 2014**

## **He Thought His Differences Would Not Let Him Stay, but Tradition Three Said No Way**

When I came to AA at age 21 I had to overcome not one, not two, but three obstacles that made getting sober more challenging than it needed to be. The first hurdle was that I was too young. There were nothing but older folks in my first few meetings, leaving me feeling alone and very different. The average age in the room was more than double mine.

Second was that I was gay. I knew I had to be the only gay person in AA for sure. Everyone was talking about his or her spouse, while I hadn't even had a real adult relationship yet.

Finally, I considered myself to be either an agnostic or an atheist. As a result of my religious upbringing, I entered AA with feelings of worthlessness,

*(Continued on page 3)*

### **A Message from the Newsletter Committee**

*As you all know, our Newsletter is published monthly, with each issue devoted to one month only. This current issue of the Newsletter is a combined issue for February and March. We are doing this so that the April Newsletter can come out in March and every issue after that can come out in advance of the month that it covers. That way and hopefully, everyone will be reading current news and announcements and our membership can stay right up-to-date on Intergroup and Group announcements and activities. We really hope this helps everyone and improves the Newsletter.*

*Sincerely,  
The Newsletter Committee  
Marty, Marissa and Steve*

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### **“None but a Higher Power...”**

*Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

*Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*

According to Step Two, “...none but a Higher Power can remove our obsession.” As I recall, not only did I have an obsession with liquor, I had an obsession with myself: my thoughts and feelings, my plans and schemes, the people and institutions I was constantly battling. Step Two says, quite plainly, I had to stop fighting!

Why did I have to stop fighting? Because, just as Step Two tells me, when I surveyed the wreck my life had become, the fallacy of my defiance was revealed. That fallacy was precisely this: at no time had I asked what God's will for me was. Instead, I had been telling God what his will for me ought to be. That, I submit, is a formula for insanity, and practicing Step Two restores me to sanity.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Grapevine Exclusive

# Into the Wide World

*An old timer talks about how vital service was for her in staying sober and rebuilding her life*

You won't find any exact quotes in this article. This isn't about what I can recite, what book I read, what meetings I go to, or even what Step I'm on.

It's about staying sober and what has kept me on that path. I do service work—that dirty part of our sobriety that most don't want to do. I think it's a very important part of my sobriety. It has kept me alive. I have been involved in service work of one type or another as I have trudged across four states for the past 29 years. Oh, the lessons I have learned ...

When I got sober, the first thing I thought was, "Oh my god, I'm never going to have fun again. I can't drink. My life is over!"

I was 27 years old, and very active: playing sports, dancing, going places. I wasn't ready to sit around a table drinking coffee (which I hated then), smoking cigarettes, and telling war stories of how it was back then, especially not with a bunch of grey hairs (like I am now).

I thank my HP that back then there were people around to show me that life was more than just going to meetings. We had meetings after meetings, dances and skating parties, camping trips and poker runs, dinners and picnics, and just about any other thing you could think of that could be done

without drinking. They taught me how to live sober with the tools of this program, one day at a time.

I have been lucky enough to serve as Intergroup Rep, GSR, Committee Chairs, Group Secretary, Coffee Maker, Door Greeter, and Ashtray Cleaner, to name a few.

I've chaired more meetings than I can count and started a few groups. I've attended meetings in three countries, watched the sunrise at a meeting on the beach and even had a home group that was outdoors year round.

I've been asked to leave a meeting because I was making too much noise, and have told someone to shut up during a meeting because I couldn't hear. (That's karma for you.) And I was taught that no matter what the position, where the meeting, or who was there, to never forget where we came from, why we are here, and what keeps us together.

I learned what the 12, 12 and 12 are, and why they will always be so important for everyone. I made mistakes, learned from them, made more mistakes, shared about them, and continue to make mistakes, admit them, and learned to pass all of it on. And it was always about AA, with AA, for AA, because of AA. The good of AA was more important than the good of the one when it came to the group, and AA as a whole. And because of that I stay sober.

But now that road I love to trudge has so many boulders it looks impassible at times. Negativity is the buzzword, what is wrong is more important than what is right or being happy.

We're more interested in talking about the problem and we

forget the solution. We're so worried about the label of who is sitting next to us, we forget about who is trying to make it in the doors or if they are going to stay. We don't want to take the time to reach out in person; it's too easy to post, blog or tweet, sign off and to heck with anonymity.

We see members having heated discussions about the Traditions and Concepts, and we walk away, calling it controversy. It's always so easy to walk away. Yes, no one wants to live in the middle of a house of discontent, but if we can't learn how to discuss our differences, how will we ever learn to grow.

Imagine how much discussion took place when the original material was written for our program! What would have happened if they had just thrown their hands up and walked away? Would we even have a program of recovery today? Learning how to have heated discussions and come out the other side with a smile, that is the growth I look for today.

I can tell you that you don't have to grow stale in this program, glued to a chair with a coffee cup in your hand. If I can't learn from what is going on in AA, trying to find out how I can be of service, making sure the hand of AA continues to be here, then I will grow old and blind to the sunlight of the spirit.

Do I want the program to cloud over in my area? Am I being responsible to those coming in today, wondering if their lives are over? Am I responsible to that newcomer, that beginner, to provide accurate information they need to start down their spiritual path of recovery.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Service

*(From page 2)*

It is not a path limited to a chair in a room for just one hour. It is a path that leads us back into the wide world, as we become members of society again, learning how to function in a world that is sometimes scary, sometimes overwhelming. We socialize, we interact, we form relationships, and we become human beings again. That's what was passed on to me, by my sponsors, by the people in the program that have touched my life, and I was told to pass it on to you.

So will you dance with me so we can invite the sunlight to shine bright again? I know there's enough room on this path for all of us. So what if the road looks a little rocky, boulders can be rolled off to the side. We just have to reach out that hand....

– *Cindy T.*

## Third Tradition

*(From page 1)*

fear of rejection and shame. Meetings often closed with the Lord's Prayer, and were filled with numerous references to God. I thought there was no way this Fellowship was going to be right for me.

But I was desperate and had nowhere else to turn. In one of those early meetings someone said, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." That, I surely had. My drinking was daily and around the clock. And even though I was "too young," I was consuming mass quantities of alcohol and having blackouts all the time. So even though I felt terribly unique, I needed what AA had to offer to stop drinking. So I stayed.

It's been 32 years since those early days, and it's almost embarrassing for me to admit that only in the past year have I been completely open about my identity in mainstream meetings. I feel a growing obligation to share about the hurdles that held me back in those early days of my recovery. Now I can share this for those who may struggle similarly—and for myself. My openness is the best indication of my own self-acceptance.

So dare to be as authentic as you can. Sameness is boring. I am grateful my terminal uniqueness didn't chase me away from AA. Today I celebrate the differences that made the beginning of my recovery difficult. The Fellowship made me feel like I belonged for the first time in my life. I owe a debt of gratitude to those who supported and accepted me as I am. As a result, I'm at peace with myself and life is good. Thanks to the Third Tradition.

– *Jack B., Oakland, N.J.*

*(From the online edition of Grapevine Magazine)*

## Steps 2 and 3

*(From page 1)*

The idea of defiance leads me naturally to Step Three. My constant narcissism, misshapen ideas about "reality", and obsessive battling, all became an intolerable burden for me—a burden which I drowned nightly in alcohol and a burden which, if I was to go on living, must be let go of. I had to make a decision to turn my will over to the care of God, as I understood God. I did this at my first AA meeting and promptly proceeded to unleash a flood of tears (tears of sheer relief) that lasted for the next two weeks.

The "decision" referred to in Step Three calls for affirmative action and our reluctance to practice that decision on a daily basis is a cousin of sorts to Step Two's "defiance." The reliance on our "intelligence backed by our own will power" of Step Three, had to go the way of Step Two's "defiance" (reliance and defiance, a deadly pair!).

We do not abandon our intelligence and our will—indeed, we need these to survive—we place them in God's care and attempt to make them conform with God's will for us. Not our own plans for us, but God's plan for us. As the Steps tell me later on, we have a new employer and hereinafter, we shall be his agents and he our principal. Step Two tells me I will come to believe, more and more, that God can and will continue to restore me to sanity. Step Three helps me make that daily decision, to turn my will over to his care and allow him to guide it where he will. It's very hard to think of a more perfect recipe for living.

– *Masonville Marty*

## **A Message from the Chair**

*The elections for the 2014-2015 Term of Service were held in December and it is my honor and privilege to serve as your chairperson for South Jersey Intergroup for the upcoming two years.*

*Your elected panel is as follows:*

Chair: Tina O. – [chairperson@aasj.org](mailto:chairperson@aasj.org)  
Vice-Chair: Joe C. – [vchairperson@aasj.org](mailto:vchairperson@aasj.org)  
Treasurer: Joe M. – [treasurer@aasj.org](mailto:treasurer@aasj.org)  
Assistant Treasurer: Catherine E. – [treasurer@aasj.org](mailto:treasurer@aasj.org)  
Secretary: Esther C. – [secretary@aasj.org](mailto:secretary@aasj.org)  
Assistant Secretary: Brian C. – [secretary@aasj.org](mailto:secretary@aasj.org)

*We are off to a fantastic start with lots of new faces chairing the various committees. The AA Spirit of Rotation is in full swing! There are, however, some vice-chair positions still open and almost every committee is looking for committee members looking to do service!*

*You can contact those committees directly is as follows:*

- Answering service – Lisa S. [answeringservice@aasj.org](mailto:answeringservice@aasj.org)
- **ANSWERING SERVICE IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A VICE CHAIR! \***
- Archives – Brett & Lauren C. – [archives@aasj.org](mailto:archives@aasj.org)
- Bookers – Mike M. & Carrie M. – [booker@aasj.org](mailto:booker@aasj.org)
- Budget & Finance – Steve C. & Holly A. – [budget@aasj.org](mailto:budget@aasj.org)
- H&I – Becky P. & Pat O. – [handi@aasj.org](mailto:handi@aasj.org)
- Literature – Janet I. & Cate – [literature@aasj.org](mailto:literature@aasj.org)
- Meeting List – Traci K. & Kelly B. – [meetinglist@aasj.org](mailto:meetinglist@aasj.org)
- Newsletter – Marty & Marissa – [newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org)
- Public Information – Gail V. & Jim S. – [publicinfo@aasj.org](mailto:publicinfo@aasj.org)
- Social Events – Ed S. – [socialevents@aasj.org](mailto:socialevents@aasj.org)
- **\*\*\* SOCIAL EVENTS IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A VICE CHAIR! \*\*\***
- Unity – Ron S. & Terry – [unity@aasj.org](mailto:unity@aasj.org)
- Website – Dave P. – [webmaster@aasj.org](mailto:webmaster@aasj.org)

You can also email the office manager, Marge, at  
[sjintergroup@verizon.net](mailto:sjintergroup@verizon.net) or [info@aasj.org](mailto:info@aasj.org)

*We are all anxious to get busy serving the AA Groups of South Jersey. Come out and get involved! Intergroup meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month at St. Bart's Episcopal Church, 1989 Route 70 East in Cherry Hill at 8:00 p.m.*

*Yours in Service,  
Tina O.  
South Jersey Intergroup Chair*

## Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey. 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:

South Jersey Intergroup Association, Inc.  
PO Box 2514  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08035  
Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446  
Email: [Info@aasj.org](mailto:Info@aasj.org)  
Website: [www.aasj.org](http://www.aasj.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 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church  
1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

## Join Us to Celebrate 50 Years!

*Area 45 Southern New Jersey 50<sup>th</sup>  
Annual General Service Convention*

**March 21, 22, & 23 of 2014**  
**The Crowne Plaza Hotel**  
**2349 Marlton Pike (RT 70)**  
**Cherry Hill, NJ 08002**

It's that time of year again! Fun, fellowship, and the gifts of sobriety packed into one weekend. Marathon meetings will be held on a continual basis throughout the weekend. Speaker meetings, old-timer's meetings, and young people's meetings will all be taking place! This is a weekend of spirituality, fun, and sobriety that people cherish every year. Friday and Saturday night there will be a DJ & Karaoke. Make sure you bring your dancing shoes!



Pre-registration ends March 7. You can register online at [snjaaconvention.org](http://snjaaconvention.org). There is a \$35.00 registration fee- This is good for the entire weekend. If you would like to purchase a package to stay overnight at the hotel I would get that done as soon as possible to keep the cost down! There are packages for Friday and/or Saturday night ranging anywhere from \$68.00 to \$364.00, depending if you want to share a room. You can register in advanced, or at the door. The only thing that is not included in the registration is a Friday and Saturday evening buffet. Hope to see you there!

# Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

February-March 2014

## Meeting Needs Support

Oaklyn Step by Step Group, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1 E. Haddon Ave., Oaklyn. Sundays at 7:00 pm.

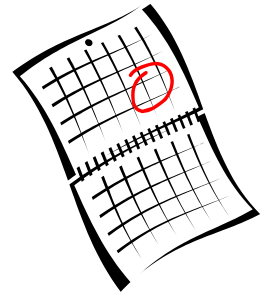
## Special Notice

Area 45 Corrections Committee LIPS Donations should be sent directly to Area 45. Please send checks or donations to: P.O. Box 3724, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034. Payable to: Area 45 Corrections Committee-LIPS. Please include your group's info (group name, town, group number from GSO) on the check. Any Questions contact: Corrections Committee Chair - Kathy Jo S. at 609-790-3740 or kjswersky@gmail.com

## 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The Bridgeton Wednesday Night Group celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Wednesday, February 5 with a special speakers meeting and food at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Bridgeton. Congratulations.

## Mark Your Calendar!



**Saturday, February 15**--District 14 Unity Event. Dinner-Speaker Meeting followed by Music and Dancing. Trinity Episcopal Church, 800 E. Wood Street (Corner of 8th & Wood), Vineland, NJ. Dinner at 6:00 pm. Meats Provided - Bring Sides & Desserts. Meeting at 7:30 pm. AA Speaker: Peter M. - Colts Neck, NJ. Al-Anon Speaker: Luba D. - Freehold, NJ. DJ Music at 9:00 pm. Bring Your Dancing Shoes! Tickets Now Available: \$8.00/\$10.00 at the door. Information: Greg C. 856-238-8488 ghc01@comcast.net or Jessica S. 856-896-5583 jniz1@msn.com.

**Monday, February 24** – “The Language of the Heart.” Join us in celebrating our One Year Anniversary Trinity United Methodist Church, 284 Cedar Road, Mullica Hill, New Jersey 08062. Speaker: Stella J. Coffee & Dessert. 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm. For more information contact: Kirsten O. 856-223-1038, Jim C. 609-319-2192 or Sue K. 856-906-2546.

**Friday, February 28** – Wenonah Friday Nite 40th Anny. 7:30 pm EAT / 8:30 pm. Two Speakers local. - Episcopal Church, N. Monroe & Poplar Ave.

**Saturday, March 1**—The Sponsorship Game: District 22/23 and District 3 present a *Mini-workshop > Dinner > Dance* Saturday, March 1st at Hope Hose Fire House, 150 W. Burlington Road Bordentown NJ 08505, Registration at 6:00 pm.

- Skit/Workshop begins promptly at 6:30
- Pizza Dinner at 7:30
- Dance from 8-11

Workshop and Pizza FREE! Suggested Donation for DANCE only: \$5. Dessert donations welcome! Questions? Contact Kelly W. (609) 968-4440 or Jessica S. (609) 954-5672.

**Sunday, March 9**—District 13 NITE OUT: Harlem Globetrotters at the Wells Fargo Center. 5:00 pm. Book by December 10. Contact: Justine S. 609-315-1214. Check new price change.

**March 21 – 23 – Area 45 Southern New Jersey 50<sup>th</sup> Annual General Service Convention**—The Crown Plaza Hotel, 2349 Marlton Pike (Rt. 70), Cherry Hill, NJ, 08002. See page 5 for details.