

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

APRIL 2014

The AA Big Book: 75 Years Young

A newcomer recalls how the Big Book was key to his recovery

See Also:

- **A Brief History of the AA Big Book, Page 3**
- **Who is Bill W.?, Page 4**

When I found out that this April is the 75th anniversary of the first publication of the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous, I knew I needed to share what the gift of the Big Book has meant to me. Here is my story. When I fell, I fell fast.

For years I had cloaked my alcohol abuse in the guise of socializing. I played the connoisseur of fine wine, artisan beer and top-shelf liquor, all in the name of taste and sophistication.

Of course, the cheap bottle of blended whiskey I kept in my home



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A Willing and Persistent Effort

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

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

I guess that the key to the relationship between Steps Three and Four is in the first few paragraphs of Step Four: without a willing and persistent effort to take inventory, “faith...is still out of reach.” I need faith to work Step Three. Faith is what enables me to turn my will over to the care of a higher power, secure in the thought that that power will arrange things; “things” which really get me drunk if I mess with them!

How does Step Four give me faith? Step Four tells me that I can take a realistic look at myself and still go on. When drinking, I also took a look at myself—and promptly (i.e., nightly) drowned what I saw in liquor. Now, sober, I can take a look, a long, hard look, and deal with what is there. Faith gives me the strength and the capacity to do this. It allows me to go on living with my defects (and my assets) with the knowledge that I am on the right path; that I can work things out through the remaining Steps and get to a better place.

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75 Years Young

(From page 1)

office didn't fit in with that image, so I hid that. That was for later, when no one was looking.

Once my excessive drinking caught up with me, I found myself teetering on the edge of a cliff. Either get help now, or fall off and lose everything. Somehow, I stumbled on to the side of getting help. But it wasn't until I was given my first Big Book that I felt I was truly on the road to recovery.

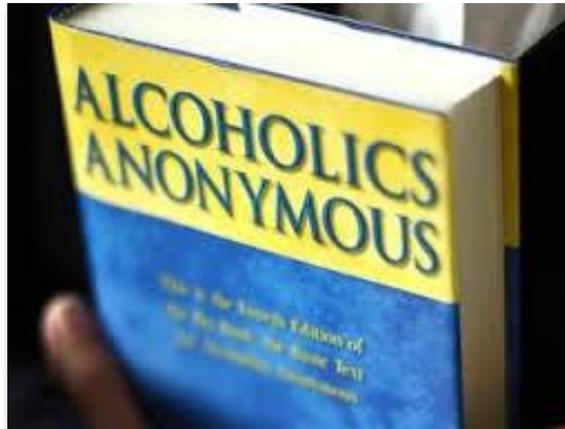
By the time I landed in rehab, I felt like the proverbial deer in the headlights. I had just spent five days in detox, standing in line with hardcore drug addicts for my daily dose of phenyl barbitol. It was a different world, and I had been unprepared for it.

More than that, I felt like a failure. All I could think of was, "I am not the guy who winds up in rehab." I was the steady, go-to guy that everyone could count on. I had a successful professional career and a happy marriage to a wonderful woman. I could not get over the thought of how I had let down friends, coworkers and family and how disappointed in me they must have been.

In rehab, I accepted what they were trying to teach me, but I had not really engaged in recovery. I was just going through the motions.

Part of the program was regular AA meetings. After a week, I decided to share at one of these meetings. It was my first time.

I only talked for a minute or so, saying that I was new to AA, was still trying to get a handle on what I had to do. I thanked people for sharing their stories because it gave me a lot to think about.



Afterwards as our group was being herded out to the van, one of the leaders of the AA meeting came running up to me. He had an envelope with a phone list, meeting schedule and a few pamphlets inside. And a brand new Big Book.

It was then that something clicked, and my recovery really began. That night, I opened the Big Book and started reading and didn't stop until I fell asleep. I read Dr. Silkworth's letters, dove into Bill's story and then started on the program's text. So many passages gave me a new perspective on things.

In the rehab program, I tackled my recovery work with a new energy and optimism for the future. I felt like I was at the beginning of creating a new and better life.

That was 10 months ago. Today, I am still sober, and I am still going to meetings.

I wish I could say it was the words of the Big Book itself that saved me. But looking back, I believe it was that act of reaching out that gave me the spark I needed. The fact that a room full of strangers was pulling for me to get sober somehow got my brain pointed in the right direction.

I have begun the long, slow process of reassessing so many events in my life through the lens of recovery and sorting through decades' worth of rationalizations that need to be reconciled with reality. And the Big Book has served as an invaluable guide.

I wouldn't say it's been easy, but I no longer feel like a failure. I now know that the friends and family I felt I had let down were actually pulling for me the whole time. I also know that I have a community of AAs who are just a phone call or a meeting away.

I have had so many blessings. I still have my job and financial security. My wife has stayed by my side the whole time. Our marriage is stronger than ever.

All thanks to the grace of God, who put me in a room full of strangers, who gave me the gift of a 75-year-old book, and saved my life.

Steve W.
Masonville

Do you have a story about the AA Big Book you would like to share? Drop us a line at info@aasj.org. Send it to the attention of the Newsletter Committee.

“We of Alcoholics Anonymous...”

A Brief History of How the Big Book Came To Be

Today, the A.A. Big Book is the seminal work in the treatment of alcoholism and addiction throughout the world. Its 12-step program has served as the basis of recovery for millions of alcoholics and has been adopted by some 200 other recovery programs, from drug abuse to over-eating. It is considered a critical development in viewing and treating alcoholism as a disease.

Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism is the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Yet when it was first published on April 10, 1939, it was hard to see how it would survive to become one of the best-selling books of all time.

By that summer, Bill and Lois were out on the street, the publishing company's office was in the hands of the Sheriff and the company itself was on its last legs. In short, “we were absolutely and utterly stone broke,” Bill Wilson would recall years later.

The idea for the book Alcoholics Anonymous began in 1937. It was part of a grand plan of the first AAs for a series of hospitals for alcoholics as well as a missionary service to spread the word.

The effort began promisingly. They had an “in” with the Rockefeller Foundation and even got a meeting with wealthy businessman John D. Rockefeller, Jr. himself. But Rockefeller refused to bankroll the project, feeling that money would ruin it. He put up \$5,000 to get things started

and said he wanted to be kept informed, but not to ask him for any more money.

Throughout this time, Bill continued to work on the book, writing a good portion of it from his own personal experiences. After getting to Chapter 5, though, he decided, “We finally got to the point where we really had to say what the book was all about and how this deal works.” Alcoholics Anonymous needed a definite statement of concrete principles, he reasoned, and he thought the best approach would be to break it down into little pieces.

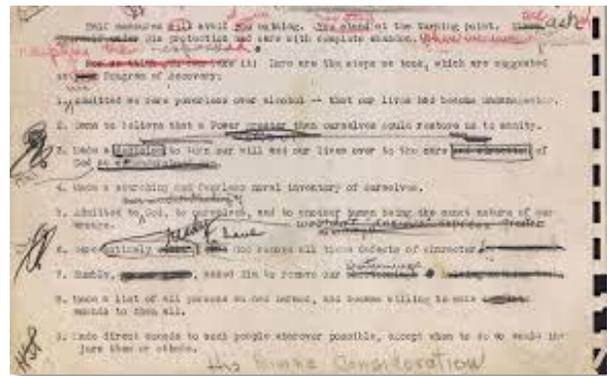
He wrote them down on a piece of yellow paper. Then he numbered them, and the 12 Steps were born.

That's not to say writing the book was all smooth sailing. It seemed everyone had an opinion. Some thought it should be a religious book, others a psychological one. Bill said that he would continue to write rough drafts and share them with the AAs in New York, playing umpire as they argued about what he had written.

“So we fought and bled and died our way through one chapter after another,” Bill said.

Out of that fighting came one of the most important ideas of the program.

When he first wrote the 12 steps, Bill was happy to see that he had put God upfront. But the ensuing meetings with the AAs turned into pandemonium. Many were upset about changing the program, and especially putting God so prominently up-



Original Big Book page with crossouts, inserts and notes, presumably based on feedback from about 400 hand-picked outsiders

front, which many thought would scare off alcoholics. However, “The idea of ‘God as you understand Him’ came out of that perfectly ferocious argument,” Bill explained.

By the beginning of 1939, the book was mostly written, but they still had to get it published.

A few months earlier, a promoter who was helping them at the time came up with the idea of selling stock at \$25 a share. They purchased blank stock certificates from a stationary store and simply wrote “World Service Publishing” across the top. Many alcoholics purchased

the notes, paying \$5 per week to be a part of it.

Bill W. and his supporters also began promoting it.

One of Bill's contacts led to Readers Digest magazine, which agreed to plug the book once it was ready. Another had a contact with a national radio program, which had agreed to interview one of the alcoholics who had been helped. To take advantage of the national exposure, the group decided to have post cards printed where people could order copies of the book and mailed them to "every physician east of the Rocky Mountains."

But it didn't work out as planned. The Readers' Digest plug fell through. And while the national interview went well enough, it did not lead to sales. They received 12 post cards back, 10 of which were illegible.

Ever resilient, Bill was able to secure an article in Liberty Magazine featuring AA. And a New York businessman, himself a recovering alcoholic, agreed to put his business up as collateral for a \$1,000 loan that allowed

them to hang on through the summer. The article was reasonably successful, generating some 800 inquiries and enough sales to allow them to squeak by for the rest of the year.

Then in 1940, John Rockefeller came to the rescue.

Although he and his people had not had any contact with the group for three years, Rockefeller had been watching them the whole time. He organized a dinner for his friends, many of them wealthy bankers, so they could hear for themselves what the group was about.

Afterwards, Rockefeller ordered 400 of the AA Big Books, which he then sent to 400 of his banker friends with a personal note. "Gentlemen, this is a work of goodwill," the note said. "It needs little, if any, money. I am giving these good people \$1,000." With that, donations began coming in and slowly Alcoholics Anonymous got up and running, with revenue from Big Book sales sustaining the operation for many of the early years.

Today, more than 30 million copies of the AA Big Book have been sold.

In 2011, *Time* magazine placed it on the list of the 100 best and most influential books written in English since 1923, and in 2012, the Library of Congress designated it as one of 88 "Books that Shaped America."

Those are all wonderful accolades. But at its heart, the true success of the book is in the millions of alcoholics and addicts who were able to reclaim their lives because of the ideas and principles the Big Book puts forth.

Editors Note: The source for most of this material are the words of Bill Wilson himself, as recorded in "AA History and How the Big Book Was Put Together," A Talk By Bill Wilson, Fort Worth, Texas, 1954.

Special thanks to Intergroup staff and officers who provided helpful information for this article

Steve W., Masonville

Who Is Bill W?

I was at my home group meeting on a Monday night recently, and during sharing on the Third Tradition one of our members mentioned that Bill W. was quite a writer. A newcomer, who had already introduced herself earlier, raised a hand after that and asked the chair if she could ask a question. It's unusual to do that, but that night's chair nodded her head.

"Who is Bill W.?"

You could have heard a pin drop as all of our jaws hung open. One of our elders said after the meeting that it's the first time he's ever heard that question in 29 years of sobriety (he was smiling when he said it).

But then I thought about it. How many of us really knew much about Bill W. when we came into the rooms? And isn't it a sign of successful anonymity if we think about AA, rather than AA's founder, when we first come in. When I came in, I barely knew about AA and I certainly didn't know who Bill W. was. Pull out your copy of the Big Book—Bill's name isn't on the cover! (And that's how he wanted it.)

I've come to see that it's more important to pass along his message than to fill someone in on who Bill W. was. If she keeps coming back, she'll get to know Bill really well.



■ Joe C., Audubon

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@asj.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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PO Box 2514
Cherry Hill, NJ 08035
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 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

Around The Rooms

By Riss

My heart is full with love when I leave an AA meeting that is exploding with laughter. I thought I had forgotten how to laugh when I first



entered the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. It had been **years** since I smiled, let alone laughed. I was broken. I could not find joy in the most beautiful things on this earth. But these people were laughing, and I wanted to laugh, too.

The camaraderie and the ability to connect on a deeper level are like nothing I've experienced in my life. The fellowship in the rooms is something I have come to cherish in my sobriety. For the longest time I believed that I was the only one who had twisted thinking. I thought I was so unlike everyone else in the world. I couldn't get my head to shut up and I couldn't talk to you because then you would find out how crazy I am.

I'll never forget my first AA meeting. I couldn't believe that people were being so "vigorously" honest about their faults. I would never dare tell anyone what I had done while I was drinking, let alone what I did sober.

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Sober Voices: Meetings by Phone

There's a new meeting in town and it's no place and every place! It's called "Sober Voices" and it takes place entirely on the telephone. The meeting is listed with the General Service Office and you can take part. For more information, call Tim at **702-767-8291 or visit their website:**

<https://sites.google.com/site/aatelephonemeetings/home>.

Editor's Corner: Readers' Comments Welcome

The Intergroup Office received a letter critical of the use of the phrase "our message" rather than "the message." As this editor agrees with Nietzsche that "God is in the grammar", this is no small point "The message" points to something beyond any one individual or group and speaks of something spiritual; something other than ourselves. "Our message" may not be appropriate in this context.

In the spirit of untrammelled and free speech, we invite one and all to submit their viewpoints and opinions to this Newsletter for publication. There will be no undue censorship, and we pledge to publish whatever it is that is on our members' minds and pens as space allows.

Email messages to Newsletter@aaaj.org. Just be sure to accompany your submissions with an explicit request that it be published.

In the case of our letter writer, no such request was made, so I issue an open invitation for the letter writer to re-submit his comments with a request for publication. Said invitation is made to all our members regardless of their opinions.

We cannot publish this Newsletter without the members being involved. So write, write, write! Send, send, send! There is room here for everyone.

Steps 3 and 4

(From page 1)

"To see how erratic emotions victimized us often took a long time." So states Step Four. "Where other people were concerned, we had to drop the word 'blame' from our speech and thought. This required great willingness even to begin." This, I believe, is the same 'willingness' that is spoken of in Step Three. A willingness to turn things over to the care of a higher power; a willingness to accept the fact that in all but a few rare instances, I am responsible for my defects of character and it is up to me to take action and clean my own house.

I like to think of Step Four as a piece of intense work over a concentrated period of time; with Step Three being always there, flowing below us like an underground spring or current. We need to continually drink of this spring throughout the days, weeks and years of our sobriety, no matter what Step we are working at the moment. Step Three tells me my higher power will always be there for me and therefore, I need not fear Step Four, or any of the other Steps for that matter. And because I need not fear, I can continue on my journey of sobriety. I do not need to get drunk to deal with myself any longer, despite the challenges that come my way each day.

--Masonville Marty

Around the Rooms

(From page 5)

These people were humbled. They admitted their faults on a daily basis and without beating themselves up. Nor were they moaning or trying to control their faults. They were simply stating them, accepting them, and understanding that they could not be rid of them on their own.

These people were just like me! The difference was, they **talked** about the crazy-committee that was in their head and were willing to have a power greater than themselves remove those defects. They were not ashamed to tell someone the honest truth about every crack in their spirit. They told me this process would never be completely over. "He will never render us white as snow", Bill W. Wrote in the Twelve and Twelve

The courage shown by the people in the rooms gave me courage to be honest too; to begin to let people know who I was, so I too could begin the process of healing through the Steps. Only when I exposed the deepest twists in my character and asked them to be removed, could I find any peace within myself and allow myself to wholeheartedly open up to another human being without shame.

My closest friends are in AA. I have never had such a bond with others as I have with people who share this disease with me. My heart is full when I hear my friends say, "Oh, I felt that way too", or "Oh yeah, I did that". No longer do I feel alone or feel that life is too much to handle on my own. I now have a fellowship to hold my hand while we walk through this (sometimes scary) journey of sobriety. I have never been more grateful for the fellowship and the laughter that tickles my heart on a daily basis in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

PASS IT ON!

This is the year to get involved! Before you even knew what AA was about, someone you don't know was Helping to Carry the Message to you. Maybe it's time to Pass It On! Here are some of the ways that **YOU can CARRY THE MESSAGE** through your Intergroup Service Committees! Check off the box of the committee you would like to join. Fill out your contact information, then give the whole page to your Group Intergroup Representative and you will be contacted by the committee.

- ANSWERING PHONES:** Answer the AA phone line, either at the Intergroup office or use the call forwarding system to your phone.
 - ___ Regular 2 hrs a week OR ___ Substitute (as needed) **email:** answeringservice@aasj.org
- ARCHIVES:** Collect, organize and present information on the SJ Intergroups history: Including Group histories and interviews with Long Term AA's. **Email:** archives@aasj.org
- H & I:** Share at various hospitals and other institutions. Participate in AA Bridging the Gap program for released patients. **Email:** HandI@aasj.org
- LITERATURE:** Sell AA Literature at the Interhroup office.
 - ___ Regular 2 Hrs weekly ___ Substitute(as needed)
- MEETING LIST:** Collect information on meeting changes submitted by groups. Verify information and arrange for printing of new lists. **Email:** Meetinglist@aasj.org
- NEWSLETTER:** Gather information on local AA events. Collect and write articles for monthly Intergroup newsletter. Compose and print newsletter for distribution at monthly meeting. **Email:** Newsleter@aasj.org
- PUBLIC INFORMATION:** Provide AA information to the Non Alcoholic Public by presentations, letters and contact with media. **Email:** Publicinfo@aasj.org
- SOCIAL EVENTS:** Develop, organize and promote a variety of Social Events for the SJ Groups. **Email:** Socialevents@aasj.org
- UNITY:** Promotes Intergroup involvement by Groups by visiting and making the Unity Presentation on Traditions and Service. Provides orientation for new IGRs. **Email:** Unity@aasj.org
- WEBSITE:** Helps with the ongoing management of the AASJ website. **Email:** Webmaster@aasj.org

Contact Information

NAME (First name only): _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Home Group/Town: _____ Sobriety Date (MM/DD/YY): _____

Fellowship Announcements and Things To Do

April 2014

Meeting Needs Support

Fridays – Friend's Meeting House, 118 Main Street, Moorestown NJ: Prayer & Meditation: The "Innervision for You", welcomes all for 11th Step meditation followed by open sharing. Meets on Friday's at 7:30 pm.

Area 45 Corrections

Meetings will be held 1:00 p.m. on 4/27 and 5/18 at the Centenary United Methodist Church, 151 S. White Horse Pike, Berlin, NJ 08009 at 1:00 pm. Please contact the Chair Kathy Jo at 609-790-3740 or KJSwersky@gmail.com or Co-Chair Judy K. at 856-404-3057 or Judyn413@gmail.com.

Recovery Dance

Last Friday of each month, 9:30 pm – 1:00 am at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 176 Stagecoach Rd., Washington Twp. Admission: \$5.00. Children under 14 are free. Music by Philly D. Benefits Spring Softball League. Non-AA.

Mark Your Calendar!

Wednesday, March 26—"Voorhees Women of Grace" are celebrating their 22nd Anniversary at 'The Meeting Place' in front of Hope Church, 500 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees, NJ at 6:00 pm, Food at 6:00 pm and Speakers at 7:00 pm. Gentlemen are welcome to join us!

Saturday, March 29—24th Annual Mini-Conference. Help us to develop an informed group conscience for our Delegate to take to New York. 8:30am Registration. Conference begins at 9am and goes to approx. 2:30pm. Free lunch and free breakfast. St. Charles Borromeo Church, 176 Stagecoach Rd., Sicklerville. Directions at www.snjaa.org.

Saturday, April 5—AA Workshop sponsored by District 19. 11th Step & Meditation. 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Church Hall, Crest Community Church, Crocus & Pacific Aves., Wildwood Crest, NJ. Light refreshments will be served. Presenters: Ed M., Good Morning Avalon & Guy D. Speaker – Presenter Malvern Retreat Center, Malvern, PA

Saturday, April 12—District 14 Unity Event. (Rescheduled) Dinner-speaker meeting followed by Music and Dancing. Trinity Episcopal Church, 800 E. Wood Street. Corner of 8th & Wood St. Vineland, N.J. 6:00 PM: Dinner, 7:30PM: Meeting. AA & Al-Anon Speakers. DJ Music at 9:00 PM. \$8.00, \$10.00 at the Door.(Children 10 and Under Free) Greg C.(856) 238-8488 ghc01@comcast.net Jessica S. (856) 896-5583 jniz1@msn.com

Friday, April 18—"Bellmawr Group" will celebrate their 49th Anniversary at 8:30 pm with speakers and desserts. Holy Spirit Church, Browning Rd. (East of Black Horse Pike), Bellmawr, NJ

Thursday, April 24—HOW IT WORKS GROUP OAKLYN 27th Anniversary Dinner Meeting. Homemade Dinner begins at 7:00 pm, meeting begins at 8:00 pm. All are welcome to celebrate with us! Contact Willa, mamablaze7@verizon.net, 856-858-0336 (home) or 609-332-3252 (cell).

Sunday April 28—Bellmawr night Surrender on Sunday is celebrating 27 years. Two speakers and food after.

May 2 - 4 - 37th Couples Escape Weekend @ St. Mary of Providence Ctr. 227 Isabella Rd. Elverson, PA. Website : www.stmaryofprov-pa.org (couples in recovery). Cost is \$280 per couple and includes 5 meals per person and a weekend get-away. \$100 deposit due by April 4. Make checks payable to Couples Escape Weekend and send to: Carol Buccio 2502 Nicholby Dr. Wilmington, DE. 19808 more info call Wayne @ 856-534-0104.

June 27 – 29 – 3rd Liberty Bell Roundup (Philadelphia Woodstock of AA) Clarion Philadelphia Airport, 76 Industrial Highway, Essington, PA. 610-521-9600. Mention LBR. \$99/night. Sells out by May 1. Must Pre-Register: \$35 <http://libertybellroundup.com/Info>: Dave W.: 610-342-6876, Dave42day@gmail.com, or Scott F. 215-431-0921 scott@new-foundfreedom.com.