

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

NOVEMBER 2014

The 7 Gifts of AA

The Wonderful Gift of Sobriety

By Patricia P.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving in November, I give thanks for the incredible, wonderful gift of sobriety. What brings this to my mind is the story "A.A. Taught Him to Handle Sobriety" on pages 554-561 of the third edition of the Big Book.



The story starts out with a quote: "God willing, we...may never again have to deal with drinking, but we have to deal with sobriety every day."

Then follows the opening paragraph: "When I had been in A.A. only a short while, an old-timer told me something that has affected my life ever since. 'A.A. does not teach us how to handle our drinking,' he said. 'It teaches us how to handle sobriety.'"

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Step 11 Structure

Step 11: 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

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25-Pound Turkey, 500-Pound Phone

How a newcomer gets through his first stressful sober Thanksgiving

Holidays, for me, were always fueled by alcohol. I used to like to say that if you shook my family tree, bottles would fall everywhere. However, it turns out that I was the alcoholic.

I started drinking when I was 15 and quickly fell into the abyss of alcoholism.

When I was 18, I came up with three “rules” so I wouldn’t be labeled as someone with a drinking problem: 1) never drink alone; 2) never drive drunk; and 3) never go to a bar by myself. Looking back, it seems strange that an 18-year-old would have created “rules” to drink by, especially since that someone (me) had no other life plans.

Holidays were joyous occasions in my family, and relatives would come over to my parents’ house. As I began to drink more, I became what I now call an “eve drinker.” On the eve of every holiday—Christmas, Thanksgiving, you name it—I would always be in a bar or drinking with my family or with friends at home. It didn’t matter where I was, as long as there was alcohol. On Christmas Eve my family always went to a friend’s house for libations and food. I’d hang out in the kitchen all night with the caterers and drink vast quantities of beer, telling

them what a fine job they were doing. Then I’d go home and pass out. Christmas was especially great because I would usually get a case or two of beer as a gift. My

There stood several members of my home group, with my sponsor and his wife, who is also in the program. We all looked at each other and smiled. They greeted me with genuine hospitality and warmth. Everyone in that house was sober. And I was sober. It turned out to be a really special day.

family and friends knew what I appreciated. In retrospect, I used alcohol as a way to numb myself through the holidays.

By the time I was in my early 20s, I’d already been fired from two good jobs, and both times alcohol was involved. I wouldn’t actually show up on the job drunk, but I had the “ism” of not feeling appreciated, and I would talk badly about other people. I was always thinking that I “deserved better than this.” I never did anything to earn praise or promotions. So when I went to my parents’ house for the holidays I would be filled with shame and guilt about how my life was turning out. Of course, my response was to turn to alcohol. I always ramped up my drinking during the holidays.

Then one day, after the July 4th holidays of 1993 were over, I finally decided I had had enough. On July 13, I put down the booze and walked into the Green

House Group of AA in Winter Park, Fla. After about three months, I finally got a home group and a sponsor. But I still didn’t know what to do with myself. Getting sober was tough enough, what with the withdrawals, the mood swings and the

night terrors and all, but now I was about to face the horror of sober holidays. I had no concept of “one day at a time” yet. Imagine, I thought to myself, going through Thanksgiving and Christmas—much less New Year’s Eve—without alcohol!

I wasn’t calling my sponsor much because my phone (which I so freely used drunk) felt like it weighed 500 pounds when I would go to check in. But I made sure to go to a meeting on Thanksgiving eve, figuring that since this was a huge drinking night for me, I should be with fellow alcoholics. So far, so good. I was really nervous, but I never told anyone about my fear of the holidays.

The next day, Thanksgiving morning, I went to take a

(Continued on page 6)

Bicycling With Adam:

Getting Sober Saved My Life AND My Soul

I got sober not just to save my life but to save my soul. Even in my worst days of drinking, I still believed in damnation. Once done with this life, I believed (and still do) that there comes a reckoning; payment for debts still outstanding.

When I came into A.A. (for the second time) my spiritual account was deeply in the red. I was scared, angry (I call it "scangry"), selfish, self-centered, lazy, etc. I needed salvation and redemption ("salvemtion") and those things were going to cost.

So I played the "spiritual stock market", as it were. In that "stock market", the more you give away, the more you get back. Investments in kindness, compassion and tolerance can make one spiritually wealthy. Service to others, without thought of material reward or recognition, put my spiritual ledger in the black. Who would've "thunk" it! It sure didn't seem too



much like work to me; but it paid off and continues to pay off.

I grow sometimes slowly, both as a man and a human being. Despite occasional or even frequent screw-ups (resentments and anger), I remember what it was like, what I've learned and what it's like now and still show "spiritual profit" at the end of the day.

A Different Perspective:

I Needed to Change Myself, Not My Job

by Big Mike

I have been working for a large liquor distributor for almost 30 years now. Today I am a recovering alcoholic.

For many years I tried to go one day without drinking, but was unsuccessful. I tried A.A. four times before this but could never admit that I was powerless or that I could not manage my own life or my family's life. Much less could I admit that I was an alcoholic.

In March 2008, after realizing that I was losing control, and being sick of the way things were going, I got

on my knees and sincerely asked God to help me get sober for good. Kicking and stomping, I made my way down the steps to a meeting.

The first year was very hard for me and I cried and complained about the way life was treating me. One night someone came up to me and said that I needed to quit my job and look for another one. I prayed about it and decided that it wasn't my job that I needed to change, but myself. I was the one that needed to change; to admit defeat

and change my whole way of thinking.

Sometimes, situations don't change: but we must, or else we die. I've been sober for 6 ½ years now and I wouldn't go back and change anything I've done.

A dear friend of mine says that our "humanness" will always get in our way. I have a strong faith in my higher power today. I wake up every day and put on my spiritual armor, say the Serenity Prayer, go to work, and drive that liquor truck: one more day!

As Bill Sees It



“I try to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one’s heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion we can ever know.”

As Bill Sees It, page 37.

Notice to all Groups Submitting Money to Intergroup

The Intergroup Treasurer has asked for help in properly recording your group’s Seventh Tradition donations to Intergroup. Many times, group donations come into the Intergroup office without the information necessary for Intergroup to properly identify the group that’s making the donation. This causes unnecessary delays in record-keeping and additional work for the Intergroup Treasurer in trying to identify the group that’s making the donation. Intergroup sometimes receives personal checks or money orders with no identifying information.

It’s vitally important that, when making a donation, there be some indication of which A.A. group is making the donation. According to Joe M., Intergroup Treasurer, the person making the group’s donation should include a notation on the check itself, or by inserting a slip of paper with the check, indicating which group is sending the money. This allows Intergroup to properly credit each group for their donation and also allows Intergroup to focus on areas that may require better communication channels between groups and Intergroup.

According to Joe M., each group should have a GSO Registration Number. If a donation includes just that number, that is all that is required to identify the group making the donation. If your group doesn’t have a GSO Registration Number, it can get one by simply logging on to GSO website in New York (www.aa.org) and following the prompts for a group Registration Number.

Please remember though, that a GSO Registration Number is not necessary or required to contribute to Intergroup. According to Joe M., any identifying information is helpful. Either the name of the group, or the town or municipality where it meets, would be extremely helpful. Also helpful, would be the day and time of the group’s meeting.

For those concerned with anonymity, no one from the group has to identify themselves when making or sending a donation. In this respect, it is helpful to remember that it is the individual that may require anonymity; not the group itself. If however, a group wishes to remain anonymous when making a donation, please tell Intergroup that when sending the donation. Intergroup will not publish the fact that a particular group has made a donation and the identity of that group will remain confidential with Intergroup only and will not be released.

If there are any questions about this, please contact Joe M., Intergroup Treasurer at treasurer@aasj.org. You can also call Joe M. after 5:00 PM on weekdays or anytime on weekends at 856-425-6762.

Intergroup wishes to thank everyone for helping to cooperate with it in properly processing group donations. By helping out here, your group is making a real difference in helping Intergroup to carry the message. Thanks.

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.

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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

Love & Gratitude

Just as the leaves start to deepen into rich reds and oranges, our spirits seem to deepen into self-reflection during the fall season.



The cold weather leaves us bundled on our couch with time to go inside and be with our heart.

Sometimes that's uncomfortable, other times it can feel like a great escape from any worldly clamor. Either way there is an abundance of gratitude and love to be found in either scenario. Whether the cold season darkens our eyes to the world leaving us with a winter melancholy, or we rejoice in the bliss of the snow- there is always gratitude to be felt and love to be shared.

I never understood what gratitude and love was until I entered the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous and began my recovery journey. This being a "we" program never registered with me until I got more involved in the fellowship and realized I can't do this on my own. Even after countless attempts to get sober on my own, I still didn't want to let people help me and see me at my weakest. But, I slowly learned what a relationship really was. I saw the way people selflessly were there for each other as fellow AA members and friends. Coming into the rooms of AA I did not know how to live life. I was afraid of living and I was afraid of dying. I didn't want to be alone, but I didn't want anyone around me, either. I was afraid to leave my house, and more afraid for you to see me leave my house and judge me. I did not know how to show love, give love, and most of all I was incapable of loving myself. This lack of love in my life left me with a feeling of deep isolation that was only remedied by the twelve steps of alcoholics anonymous, the fellowship, attending regular meetings, and doing service. Through doing the work that was suggested to me (mostly things I did not want to do) I learned how to live like a person in soci-

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Structure of Step 11

From page 1

I am to pray only for knowledge of my higher power's will, not my own. 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. 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

Sober Thanksgiving

From page 2

shower. My partner and I were getting ready to go over to relatives for the big meal. Suddenly I was overwhelmed with the urge to drink. I decided I would indeed drink. I was strangely calm about my decision and was grateful that I would finally put this monster to rest. But as I stepped out of the shower, it suddenly hit me that I should call my sponsor and tell him about my great idea. To this day I have no idea why I had that thought. Was it divine intervention? I still do not know.

So with a towel wrapped around my waist and dripping water everywhere, I finally picked up that 500-pound phone and dialed my sponsor's number. I told him I was going to drink. He said that he could not stop me from drinking, but before I did why didn't my partner and I come to his house and have some Thanksgiving dinner? I agreed, thinking I would go, stay a little while, and then go get drunk. So I called my family, canceled my participation in their meal, and trundled off to my sponsor's home. I wish I could say I was happy, but I was not. The urge to drink

was very strong, and to admit defeat was not in my language that day. But I kept driving until I got to his house.

When we walked in, there stood several members of my home group, with my sponsor and his wife, who is also in the program. We all looked at each other and smiled. They greeted me with genuine hospitality and warmth. Everyone in that house was sober. And I was sober. It turned out to be a really special day.

What I learned that day is that in order to stay sober I have to take action. Driving, phone calls, whatever it takes to not take a drink. I also learned that I have to continue to ask for help; it's not a one-time deal. I don't necessarily know how to run my life, and I need to keep asking for help.

On that Thanksgiving Day in 1993 I saw that together with other members of Alcoholics Anonymous, we can stay sober rather than fight a losing battle by ourselves. That has been the greatest gift I've received in AA, and one that I'm thankful for 365 days a year, not just on Thanksgiving Day.

--John W., Wayne, Pa

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Gift of Sobriety

From page 1

Later the author says, "I have come to realize that the name of the game is not so much to stop drinking as to STAY sober...."

"How do we do it? By learning--through practicing the Twelve Steps and through sharing at meetings--how to cope with the problems that we looked to booze to solve, back in our drinking days...."

"We learn how to level out the emotional swings that got us in

trouble both when we were up and when we're down. We are taught to differentiate between our wants (which are never satisfied) and our needs (which are always provided for). We cast off the burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future, as we begin to live in the present, one day at a time."

I couldn't say it better. So I let this anonymous author in the Big Book say it for me.

Happy Thanksgiving reader. And thank you, God, for the incredible, wonderful gift of sobriety.

About the Seven Gifts of AA: *Recently, I was asked to speak at a meeting. I came up with the idea of talking about what it's like now in terms of the gifts I've received from AA. Seven gifts came to mind. --Patricia P.*

In the Rooms

From page 5

ety. Now, "normal" people may not hold that much gratitude for living a "normal" life, but to be able to look people in the eye and hold a job are way beyond my wildest dreams. When you thought you were beyond help and doomed to a life of misery, only to follow a few simple steps and guidelines and be brought to a life you could have never imagined, you develop a gratitude that no amount of service could repay.

Every day sober for me is the best day of my life because I never thought it was possible. I never would have imagined I could experience love for a friend, love for myself, and love for Alcoholics Anonymous. I am grateful for the abundance of love in my life and I am grateful for the pain that brought me here. I am grateful that I now have a higher power who guides my life and people who call me out when I start falling off the beam. I am so lucky to have friends who understand me and share a common problem and a common solution. I am grateful that I am capable of love today, and I am grateful that I am alive.

What are you grateful for?



The Trustees and Committee members of the South Jersey Intergroup want to extend to all our readers, their heartfelt thanks for supporting Intergroup throughout the year and their warmest wishes for a Thanksgiving filled with gratitude.

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

November 2014

New Step Meeting

A new meeting is starting at New Beginnings Club on Thursdays at 7:00 PM. 101c Rose Avenue, Runnemede NJ (GPS address: 1001 Rose Avenue). It's a Step meeting out of the Big Book. We read paragraph by paragraph and share our experience with that step as we go. The group is encouraged to share as we go, so we can learn from each other. For info, contact Adrienne - smolda-adrienne@comcast.net

Notice

Due to lack of support, the Thursday bowling at Westbrook Lanes has been canceled.

Mark Your Calendar!

Saturday, October 18 - St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church "Day of Sharing." Will be joined by three Intergroups and Area 45 to discuss problems, issues and solutions. Will begin at 8:30 AM till noon. Continental breakfast will be provided. Location: 1989 Marlton Pike E. (Rt. 70) Cherry Hill, NJ

Saturday, October 18 - Living Sober Group Anniversary 11:00 AM. Church of the Holy Name, 260 Conrow Rd., Delran, NJ.

Wednesday, October 22 – The Sisters in Sobriety is having their 28th Anniversary with food at 6:30 PM with a speaker to follow. First Presbyterian Church, 494 Beverly – Rancocas Rd. Calvin Hall. NEW

Saturday, October 25 - District 14 Workshop on Sponsorship from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. Trinity Episcopal Church at 8th & Wood in Vineland. We're working on a flyer for distribution soon.

Monday, October 27 - Audubon Last Mile Step and Tradition Group will be celebrating its 22nd Anniversary. Deserts will be served at 7:00 PM before the two speakers. United Methodist Church on the corner of Wyoming and Graisbury Aves., Audubon, NJ. NEW

Saturday, November 1 – International Convention Hospitality Committee Workshop/Potluck Dinner/ Halloween Dance. 6:00 – 10:30 PM. Carslake Community Center, 209 Crosswick Rd., Bordentown, NJ. Speakers from Area 44 & 45. International Convention Information and Archives Display. Sponsored by the Districts in Section 1. NEW

Saturday, November 15 – Gratitude Dinner Dance. Nicolosi Catering, 1 Hessian Ave., Woodbury. \$25.00 p\p DJ Philly D. Great Night out, Fellowship & Unity. Tickets Available at IG Office & IG Meeting.

