

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

August 2016

April in August—Loss and Sobriety

I got sober when I was 27. I am 33 now and still learning how to “survive” a variety of experiences and events as a young woman—who no longer drinks—in a world that does.

In June, I experienced a loss I had been dreading, though definitely was not expecting. One night I came home from work to find my dog, Roxy, acting a little off. After emergency vet

visits, specialists, and a few days of keeping her comfortable, within the week I had to make that dreaded decision to put her down. There were no signs prior and the shock and sadness has rocked me to my core.

Roxy had been with me prior to me getting sober. She saw me at my worst, and helped me

through the early days of sobriety—those days when I didn’t have a lot of human friends. Roxy was more than a pet to me, she was a confidant, a furry shoulder to cry on, and a sweet face to come home to every day. Losing her was the hardest thing I’ve ever experienced. Fellow pet owners—I know you understand.

Despite my pain and sadness at this time, my sobriety has still been my top priority. The reason I never even thought to turn to a drink is a huge thanks to this program. And because of AA, I know that the best thing I can do right now is to sit in my pain and feel it. The old me hated feeling feelings. I would drown them and escape, but in turn, never actually deal with my feelings. The sober me still kinda hates feeling these feelings. But I know that crying, talking about my pain, and

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Don’t Drink. Go To Diners!

So when it was suggested that I avoid people, place and things associated with my drinking I panic a bit because that didn’t leave me much of a life. Was I to crawl into a hole and only come out for AA meetings?

Many of my new-found friends in AA were single people who ate lots of meals out. And they invited me along. In fact, they insisted I come with them so they could get to know me better and I could learn how recovering people behaved in public places. A late afternoon AA meeting followed by a diner for dinner. Or maybe an evening AA meeting followed by coffee and a desert (or two) from the diner’s pastry case.

Often the diner’s meeting-after-the-meeting lasted twice as long as the original meeting. Then there was the diner breakfast

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Inside This Issue: New!

Monthly Trivia Question ♦
Spiritual Progress in Step 8 ♦
Announcements and Things
To Do ♦ Freedom Fire Fellowship ♦ District 13 Picnic

Step 8: A Right To Make Spiritual Progress.

Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

I CHOSE this Step to write about because it's the toughest one for me. I've had one hell of a time with the state of willingness. For, in order to be willing to make amends to others, you must first forgive yourself and be ready to make amends to yourself. And I am just beginning to see this in broad daylight. Formerly, I was half-aware that I had not really forgiven myself. It was what I call gauze-curtain, awareness; you see the problem dimly, as if through a veil, but you can't really formulate it. I think that many of us in AA have a hard time with self-acceptance. And the result is misery, whether it takes the form of repeated slips, depressions or psychosomatic illness, or failure in business or human relationships.

The other night, in our local discussion group, we batted this around a little. Somebody said that the first seven Steps lead into the Eighth. The surrender, the arrival at faith, the inventory all help us to forgive ourselves and gain enough self-respect and insight to be able to make amends and really mean it. Someone else said that joining AA and being sober were the biggest amends we could make. I go right along with this, of course. In the years that I have been in AA, life has indeed been more manageable. Often, it has been very good. I've made a lot of wonderful friends. I've had a lot of fun. I've been able to help new people, and the rewards for this effort are unending. But every so often I used to get back into moods of self-debasement. "It's hopeless," I'd say to myself. "I simply cannot work this program; I can't stay put."

The poet Samuel Hoffenstein said, "Wherever I go, I take me along and spoil everything." Really, during those long moods of depression, I felt that I was walking across a mountain range in a snowstorm without a handkerchief. But throughout each time, I'd keep saying to myself, "I've gotten this far, and I'm not going to give up. I'm not going to get drunk. I'm going to find out what causes it, if it's the last thing I do."

So I kept trying. From the very beginning, I made all the amends I could, all the way from sending someone a green branch sewn all over with ripe black olives to calling an amendeed on the telephone in Paris, when I was over there a couple of years ago.

This apology was for something that had happened thirty-one years before. It was accepted. Everything was beautiful. . . . Only it wasn't.

I now know that I was hung up on the Puritan mystique: Sin is unforgivable; you're going to be punished forever. Other people's forgiveness, their loving forgiveness, the friendship of people in AA and not in AA who loved me and whom I loved--all this was unavailing. I was making myself into a special case; down deep, I believed I was beyond redemption. It went back beyond all the sordid, unsavory, tawdry, illicit, and ridiculous behavior of my drinking days. It went 'way back into childhood. I now see that nobody was to blame. I am learning to release this childhood conditioning and the insecurity that contributed to my alcoholism. The people who brought me up had hang-ups, too. The God of my understanding, whom I found in AA, is not a punishing, revengeful God at all. I have begun to make friends with Him and thus with myself.

Thank God, I have a mind that is capable of learning and is willing to learn. Thank God for what must be over a thousand AA meetings by now and for every word uttered by every speaker. I have always learned something. I'm lucky in my AA friends. Hundreds of evenings of talk, several reservoirs full of hot coffee, truckloads of cream, carloads of sugar, ideas enough to fill all the shelves in the Library of Congress. Love and understanding of a kind that would quickly bring peace on earth if it were generally shared. When I look back, I can see that while I was walking across Snow Mountain, sniffing and hating myself, I never once walked alone. Thank God for professional help, too. I needed it, so I went and got it. Psychiatry is not a dirty word to me. After all, if I gashed my finger, I'd be in a doctor's office in ten minutes!

It has finally penetrated my head and my heart that I have a right to make spiritual progress. I have a right to be emotionally mature. I have a right to take pleasure in my own company, and that makes me more pleasant to be with. I have a right to

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Diners

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before the Sunday Spiritual meeting or after the early morning holiday Alcahons. Where to after a sober dance or night of sober bowling? The diner for food and fellowship, of course.

Sometimes the diner is where the meeting topics continue to be discussed. Or other, more personal recovery messages are shared. Sober theater trips are planned in diners as well as sober picnic, beach or ski outings or bike rides. Newcomers are welcomed into the companionship of AA in a diner's booth by long-timers who themselves lost

that feeling of loneliness that is the special curse of heavy drinkers many years before in diners.

What a blessing to get sober in New Jersey where we have more diners (about 525) than any other state. Where the regular waitress knows your name and where the table of Al-anon folks always have friendly bantering to share. Where the menu is always like its own plastic-laminated big book. And where many a struggling alcohol first found new friends, a sense of belonging and a glimmer of hope...along with a burger, a cup of coffee and a slice of pie.

My first sober trip abroad was planned in a diner with other

AAs. On our first day in Ireland we hit a meeting. After the meeting we were asked to join the meeting-after-the-meeting. Where, we asked? And the response was, "We ain't got no Jersey diners. We make do with the back room at the pub."

Today, many years after I was introduced to the recovery that can be found in Jersey diners, I still go to diners with folks in recovery twice or three times a week. If everybody who get sober stops going to diners who would be there for the newcomer? Hope to see you there soon.

Gino B.

*Hainesport Tuesday Steps
to Recovery*

April

From page 1

grieving as I need to, is the healthy (i.e. normal!) reaction to loss.

Through this time, I have also been handed a huge dose of gratitude for my current life. Roxy was always my best girl, but through sobriety, I was able to get back real relationships again. My boyfriend was a huge help in this process, walking through all the pain right by my side. And friends from near and far sent cards, flowers, gifts, prayers, and love. My support system today is a huge part of my life, thanks one hundred percent to me getting sober and learning how to be a good friend again. Over the past few weeks I've had a lot of time to reflect. I've sat in my grief, but also stepped outside of it to acknowledge that everyone is going through something. Everyone has something they are fighting through, dealing with, or making peace with. In different seasons of our lives, these can be minor

fights, or major battles. But I am not unique in feeling big, heavy feelings. And today, I know that having big feelings is not an excuse to act out. I haven't earned the right to drink or misbehave because of the hand I am dealt at any given moment. AA has taught me that I don't drink under any circumstances. And today, I am so thankful to have these tools and know that.

Nothing will bring my Roxy girl back, and drinking definitely would only compound my feelings. Instead of making peace and finding ways to move on in gratitude, I would be an emotional burden to my friends and family.

No matter what you are going through, friends, drinking will not make it better. AA has taught me that lesson, given me a wonderful support system, and a place to turn to learn how to deal with life on life's terms.

April E.

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.

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Website: www.asj.org
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444

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

A.A. Trivia

A new feature in Anonymous South Jersey—a monthly trivia question. We will present a question about being in A.A. every month, and the answer will appear the following month.

It's not a contest, unless you choose amongst yourselves to make it one. Whether we get the answers right or not, we will learn something about what it means to be in this fellowship. The way we see it, that means everybody wins.

August Trivia Question: What do you do when you can't make your H&I commitment?

- A. Find someone to cover the commitment for you.
- B. E-mail handi@asj.org to let them know so they can get the commitment covered.
- C. Skip it – carrying the message isn't that important anyway.
- D. Both A and B.

Step 8

From page 2

become willing--deeply willing, entirely willing--to make amends to all those whom I have harmed. Because I can now accept myself the way I am, I can accept other people the way they are--not entirely but to a much greater degree than in the past. My early amends were efforts to reinstate myself, to win back approval. My intolerance and anger were always followed by crawling apology. I had an insatiable need for other people's approval. Now, when apology is in order, my first concern is to make the other person happy. I come second.

I deserve *not* to be as self-centered as somebody with a terrible toothache. I deserve to have the grace to laugh at myself. To me, all this is part of the amends business, I wish I could reach out to every single one of you who are having a bad time with yourselves. I wish I could put the answer right into your hands like a present in a package. I can't quite do that. But perhaps this piece has given you a clue, a signpost, a hope, and a start along the road that you want to follow.

-- F. M.

New Canaan, Connecticut

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District 13

*invites you and family
for food, fun and fellowship
to a picnic at*

Fort Mott State Park

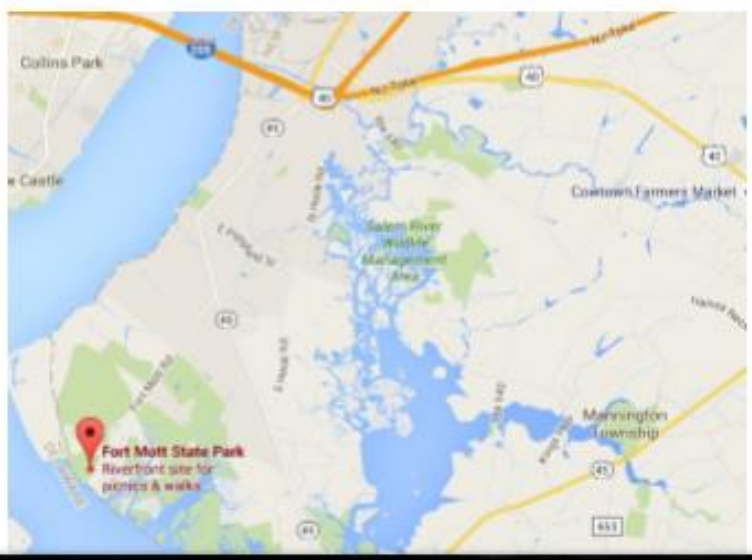
**Saturday, August 27
12:00 PM to 5:00 PM**

Bring your
Horseshoes,
Badminton,
Football, ...

Hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided.
Side dishes and desserts welcome.

**Fort Mott State Park
454 Fort Mott Road
Pennsville, NJ**

**Contact:
Jim H at (856) 299-0383**



Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

August 2016

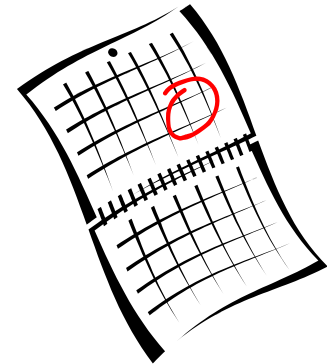
Group Disbanded

The **Rosenhayn Keep It Simple Group** has disbanded and **will no longer be meeting** at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church at 8:00pm on Tuesdays.

Mark Your Calendar!

Thursday July 28 – Swedesboro 11th anniversary at the Bethesda Methodist Church in Swedesboro. There will be ice cream sundae making at 7:00 and reading and a speaker

Saturday, July 30 – Fri. Carneys Pt. KISS Group Sponsors Splash Party-Splash Sports Club, 118 Pittsfield St, Pennsville, NJ, 08070. 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm burgers/dogs provided. Desserts, sides, contributions welcome! Please call Larry R. at 856-281-4697 or Kathy W. at 856-448-3341 for number attending and/or contribution items NEEDED.



Saturday, July 30 – 2:00 pm. 9th Annual Dr. Silkworth Birthday Celebration! Grave Site - Glenwood Cemetery, Rt. 71, West Long Branch. BYO Beach Chair/Seat. Speaker: Sally Corbett, Exec. Drctr. Of Stepping Stones, Historic Home of Bill & Lois Wilson, BedFord Hills, NY. GSP Exit105 (Rt.36) 3mi. thru 5 traffic lights. Rt 71 So./W. Long Branch & Asbury Park (just before 6th light. Turn Off to Right, past Carnegie Sq.. Bear Right onto Rt.71 (Monmouth Rd.). Glenwood Cem. appears very quickly on left. (2 stone pillars & name). Once inside cemetery. Bear Left uphill. Make 1st Hard Right Grave Site-near 1st tree on right. Unsure Call Barefoot Bill: 201-232-8749 cell.

Saturday, August 27 – District 13 is hosting their annual picnic. Burgers and hot dogs will be provided. Side dishes and desserts welcome. Food, fun and fellowship from 12:00 pm to 5 pm. Fort Mott State Park, 454 Fort Mott Rd, Pennsville, NJ

Monday, September 19 – Monday Night Ladies Step and Tradition meeting will be celebrating our anniversary. We will be starting at 7:00 pm with desserts followed by 2 speakers at 7:30. We will be meeting at Blackwood United Methodist Church at 35 East Church Street, Blackwood, NJ 08012. All are welcome!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Friday, October 22 – 6th Annual Freedom Fire. Food and fellowship 4:30-6:30 pm, a bonfire and two speakers 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Old Cedar Campground, 274 Richwood Road, Monroeville, NJ 08343. \$10 donation requested. Contact Rich, 856-904-3534; Amy, 856-404-0237; or Jesse 609-217-1295.

Friday-Sunday, November 18-20 – 10th Annual Waves of Sobriety Grand Hotel, Cape May. CapeAtlantic CAIG