

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

**SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP**

**May 2017**

## Mary Ellen's Story: Finding Gratitude in Sobriety

My name is Mary Ellen and I am sober today through the fellowship of A.A., the grace of my higher power and my commitment to working the 12 steps to the best of my ability.

I have shared my story so many times and I wonder what else I have to say. I have shared that I drove drunk many times, that I was passed out on the floor when

my children came home from school, that I left them alone in a snowstorm to go to the liquor store, that I was drunk on Christmas Eve and my 12-year-old reminded me before he went to bed that Santa had to come and he was worrying more about his younger brothers and sisters than about himself. So I don't want to go over those stories again.

I wonder how many in this room tonight have less than a year of sobriety and I want you to know that you are very important to AA and this meeting. I am so grateful for these 36 years, but the 90 days, the one year, the five years, and everything in between is every bit

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### I Was Becoming My Own Higher Power

*A member got so involved in service, she forgot her primary purpose.*

Around my fifth or sixth year of sobriety, life was good, beyond my wildest dreams, and it still is thanks to AA and my higher power. When I had five years of sobriety, I was told, "You got your marbles back, now you have to learn how to use them." As a matter of fact, my service sponsor actually gave me marbles. I had a sponsor, a service sponsor and a sponsee. I was an active member of my home group. I was the GSR. I was going to district meetings, area assemblies, mini conferences, conventions—you name it. I was carrying out our primary purpose. AA told me, "Our primary purpose is to stay sober, and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety."

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**Inside This Issue:** ♦ SJI Trivia ♦ Opportunities for Service ♦ Announcements and Things to Do

### Into Action

*Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

"Having made our personal inventory, well what should we do about it?" My 4th step disclosed to me the old attitudes of selfishness, fear, and harms done to others – those exact things that kept me blocked off from the love and grace of my Higher Power. I now had them on paper. However, the idea of sharing my defects with another person paralyzed me with fear.

Upon further reading in the Big Book, it was made clear to me what the first 100 A.A. Pioneers experience meant – that if I skipped this step, I might not overcome my drinking problem. This clear and concise statement made it evident to me just exactly what I needed to do. It's clear, that a solitary self-appraisal is insufficient.

After some internal mental debate, I called my sponsor and told him I was ready. We set the date, and it was done. No going back now. When the time came, he picked me up and drove me

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## **Purpose**

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I believed that I certainly had that covered. I was sober and doing all this service work and sponsoring. I was helping the newcomer and giving back to AA. It certainly seem to me that I had a "lock" on this, until an old-timer, who also happens to be my grandsponsor, pointed out that I was not being open, that I was closing myself off from AA.

Well, what was she talking about, I thought. I'm sober and I am doing all this service work. How could she say that to me? What a resentment I had. It lasted about a year too. The good news is that with my sponsor's help and what she

and AA had taught me about resentments and my grandsponsor, who continued to love me unconditionally, I finally got over it, especially because my grandsponsor was correct. I had forgotten a very important part of our primary purpose and that is...I am also the "other alcoholic" who still needs help achieving sobriety, a sobriety that was and still is achieved only one day at a time with the help of AA (those other alcoholics). I was so busy doing service work and sticking my hand out to the new person that I was not grabbing hold of the hand of sobriety that came before me, the hand that was so freely passing it on to me. I was not remaining teachable. Not only was I short-changing myself and the person I was sticking my

hand out to, but I was becoming my own Higher Power. What an eye-opener that was. Thank God for the wisdom of those other alcoholics. They save my life.

Recently when I heard a fellow alcoholic say that something AA wanted to do, something that would help my sobriety, was against AA's primary purpose I realized yet another lesson. Not only is it very important I never forget I'm also the "other alcoholic" that needs help achieving sobriety, but my life depends on you remembering that I am too.

Loretta C.

Mahwah, New Jersey

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## **Mary Ellen**

From page 1

afternoon. Gail was celebrating 90 days of sobriety and sharing her story at the meeting. I could not imagine not having a drink for 90 days. I could not not drink for even one day. I promised myself every night that tomorrow would be different, but it never was. Looking around at everyone there, I could not believe that any of them every felt like I did at that moment.

But Gail shared her story that was just like mine. She was so serene, confident, and peaceful. I thought, why is Gail here at this meeting if she hasn't had a drink for 90 days? She surely does not need to be here. She must be cured.

And when "How It Works" was read, I was not interested in hearing about the 12 steps. I felt that I only wanted to stop drinking. The rest of my life was just fine. If only I could stop drinking. That is why I was

there. I had my own concept of how to live a good life and I didn't need the 12 steps to show me how.

So I went to a few more meetings but didn't embrace the program. I kept drinking in between meetings and was not destined to get sober at that time.

My family-life was a mess. I had four young children, and they never knew what to expect from their mother. My husband was beside himself with all of the broken promises. I withdrew from other family members and from friends. I knew I was at a real bottom when even very important occasions were coming up, and I couldn't count on myself to not drink long enough to get through an evening when I needed to be sober.

Work-related dinners with my husband. Meetings at my children's school when I had committed to help

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Service Opportunities

### Answering Service:

Currently we have shifts open on Saturday 6pm to 8pm , and we have Thursday 10am until noon and Friday 8am until 10am. We also continue to take names for our waiting list, and are still taking AA members to sign up to be available for a 12 Step call, so please have interested people continue to contact us via [answeringservice@aasj.org](mailto:answeringservice@aasj.org).

### Budget and Finance:

We will need a new Budget Chair & Co-Chair for 2018-2019 term. If you are interested in either of these positions or learning more about the Budget & Finance responsibilities please reach out to the Budget & Finance Committee at [budget@aasj.org](mailto:budget@aasj.org) and we can include you on the committee activities now for a smooth transition.

### Intergroup Reps wanted:

If your home group is not represented at Intergroup, please join us on Wednesday, May 17 at 8 pm at St Bartholomew's Episcopal Church (Rt 70 in Cherry Hill). Be sure to stop at the Unity table to learn more about being an Intergroup rep.

### Meeting List Makers:

Intergroup needs individuals to come to the office to fold and staple meeting lists. For dates and times, please contact Anna at 856-981-7021. This is a great opportunity to come see our office and share some fellowship in service.

### Newsletter Articles:

Please submit articles for the June newsletter to [newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org) by May 3rd.

### Public Information:

Eileen T continues to spearhead programs with local High Schools, Doctor's offices, and local police departments. Eileen is still looking for volunteers for other programs. She can be contacted at [publicinfo@aasj.org](mailto:publicinfo@aasj.org). Please consider volunteering for this important service opportunity.

### Treasurer:

Intergroup will be looking for a new Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer for the 2018-2019 term. If you are interested in learning more about these positions please contact the Treasurer at [treasurer@aasj.org](mailto:treasurer@aasj.org). Strong sobriety and interest in or experience with Quickbooks is needed for these elected positions.

### SPEAKING COMMITMENTS

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities:

Please contact Patti or Frank at [handi@aasj.org](mailto:handi@aasj.org) if you are able to take one of these commitments.

#### April

April 24: Ancora 7-8 pm Hammonton

April 27: Ancora 7-8 pm Hammonton

April 20: Unity II 2-3 pm Hammonton

April 20,27: Daybreak 10:30-12pm Atco

#### May

May 1,15,22: Ancora 7-8 pm Hammonton

May 9, 23: Delaware House 2-3 pm Westampton

May 17,24,31: Unity II 12:40-1:30 pm Cherry Hill

May 25: Ancora 7-8 pm Hammonton

May 11,18,25: Daybreak 10:30-12 noon Atco

May 13: Inspira Hospital 4-5 pm Woodbury

May 6,20: Cooper 10:30-11:30 am Camden

May 13, 20: Virtua Hospital 8:30-9:30 pm Mt Holly

## Mary Ellen

From page 1

out on an activity. Times when my parents were coming to visit. I had always been a responsible and dependable person. Now I let people down and couldn't follow through on my promises. I went to detox twice and rehab twice.

About a year after my first AA meeting I did celebrate 90 days and shared my story at the same Moorestown meeting. I was glowing that day, and so grateful, and I felt that I had a new wonderful life. But not long after that, I drank again. About a year-and-a-half later, I had seven months of sobriety. I went to four or five meetings a week. I called my sponsor every day. I was treasurer of my home group. And I drank again. Alcoholism involves two things: the allergy of the body and the obsession of the mind. While the allergy of the body leaves after three or four days, the obsession of the mind is what brought me back to taking the first drink once again, thinking that it would be different this time.

But it never got any better. I immediately slid back into the place where I had left off—or was even worse. Going to rehab a second time was an extremely difficult decision. As I said, I had four young children and didn't know how I could manage that. But people said if you had cancer and needed to go away for a month,

you would find a way. So I and my husband decided that is what I should do, even though



we could not imagine how it would work out. That month surely was a very long one for my husband, who had to take on all the responsibility of a young family as well as go to work every day. Even though I hated to leave my family. I told myself that I was not doing them any good going on like I was. So we made the arrangements for me to go. I think that was when I finally surrendered to my disease, to my Higher Power, and to the AA program.

And I think that my decision to surrender is what allowed me to get sober. I lost my desire to drink as soon as I checked into the rehab. Before I even met with a counselor, I lost my desire to drink.

Gratitude also played a big part in changing my life. For a long while, when gratitude came up at a meeting, I would not find anything to be grateful for. I had this addiction that was ruining my life. It was destroying me and my family and it seemed like I was doomed to continue on in the way I was going.

But after hearing about gratitude so many times, and how it was necessary to begin to heal, I decided to sit down and try to write a gratitude list. It was difficult. All I could do was feel sorry for myself.

So I started my list with, I hadn't killed anyone. I still have two arms and two legs. And on from there.

One day, when I had been sober for a few years, I was relaying this story about my first gratitude list at a meeting. A woman was sitting next to me that I had often seen at meetings. I admired her spirituality and her commitment to living the AA way of life. She had more time than I had. She was about my age and had children also. When she spoke after I did, she said that she also has a gratitude list. But, unlike me, she could not start hers with the fact that she had not killed anyone, because she had in fact killed someone.

Well, if I thought I had gratitude before, that really made me thank God for that blessing in my life and for so many others. That surely could have been my story. I was this close to killing someone, I was this close to being in jail, I was this close to losing my family, I was this close to being homeless.

My gratitude list now is endless. I thank God for everything. I thank God that my computer is staying functional long enough

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## 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  
Website: www.aasj.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

## May 2017 Trivia Question

Why does Intergroup keep Group History Information and how do groups submit it?

**Answer to the April 2017 Trivia Question:** How many meeting lists did we sell in 2016?

17,770: enough to carry the message to 1480 newcomers per month. Thank you to individuals who work so hard to keep them available and to the groups who get them out there.

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### Fifth Step

From page 1

to a nearby park. We found a secluded area, sat at a bench and said a prayer, asking a Higher Power to aid us in this process. I commenced to share the contents of my inventory.

My sponsor sat very patiently as I worked my way through the resentments, the causes, what it affected, and specifically my part in the situation. He masterfully asked questions, and helped shed light upon the things I couldn't see. Through the sharing of his own experience, the courage to disclose the more embarrassing items gradually crept in.

The process had a momentum effect, the further we went, the easier it got. Slowly and surely, I was feeling lighter and lighter. The mask I had assembled through years of destructive drinking, hiding, lying, and scheming was being removed piece by piece. Without even knowing it, humility, serenity, and peace of mind were sweeping in to fill the space that was now becoming free within me. After sharing that final terrifying item that I swore I was taking to the grave, I felt something I hadn't felt in a very long time. A frightening tremble deep inside me, like a crack in the wall of an ego-built reinforced dam. I was left in tears, as embarrassed as I was; I knew I was free from the pain of my past. The park I left was not the park I had entered.

My perception had in fact changed; this was my first of many spiritual experiences. The Big Book has truly confirmed my own 5th Step experience- "We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator; we may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but we now begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared often comes strongly. We feel that we are on the Broad Highway walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

God Bless, Young & Sober Michael E.

## Mary Ellen

From page 4

to write this message because it has been acting up lately, and I thought I would have to go to the library to write this. I got through typing it out, and right after, the screen started freezing up again. I thank God when I just make the train going into Philadelphia. I thank God for letting me get all of the green lights when I am in a hurry. I thank God when I am looking for something that I haven't seen for a while and find it in the first place I look. And the big things: I thank God that I am able to help out with my grandchildren and that my children are comfortable allowing me to take their precious children to the movies or a show. That they know they can leave their babies with me, and I will not be drinking while I am with them.

So, a connection to my Higher Power, surrender, and gratitude are three of the most important things in my recovery.

One more story of God's and AA's presence in my life. Most

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*I thank God for letting me get all of the green lights when I am in a hurry. I thank God when I am looking for something that I haven't seen for a while and find it in the first place I look.*

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of you here have never heard of Marine Corps Bill. If you want to the group Anniversary of the Red Lion Group a couple of weeks ago, you probably heard his name. He was the founder of that group, and the first meetings were held in his home. The group was founded in the 1980s. Bill died of cancer a few years later. In the 1990s, I bought a newer edition of the Big Book because the stories were different than the ones in my original BB. So I bought this Big Book about 10 years after Bill started the Red Lion Group. In 2013, I was reading this Big Book (which I had read many times over the year. I was going through a rough patch at the time. I turning a page, and I

found this card, which I don't even remember having. I will close with the promises of

the AA program. If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellow. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

I will leave you with that.

Mary Ellen



## Get Out and Get Involved

**Thur. April 20** - YMOM 6th Anniversary. Food at 7 pm speaker at 8 pm. First Baptist Church of Moorestown, 19 West Main Street .Enter through side door on left. No parking in church lot.

**Fri. April 21** - Friday Night Bellmawr's 52nd Anniversary 7:45 pm desserts - 8:30 pm speakers. Holy Spirit Church, Black Horse Pike & Browning Rd. Bellmawr.

**Thur. April 27** - Oaklyn "How it Works" gap will celebrate their 30th anniversary. Dinner will be served at 7 pm followed by a speaker at 8 pm. Local Oaklyn Baptist Church (basement), 29 E Bettleground Ave., Oaklyn (next to post office). For more info, call Byran : 856-873-4148.

**Sat., April 29** - District 14 Unity Event Dinner-Speaker Meeting followed by Music and Dancing Church of the Resurrection Trinity Episcopal Church 800 E. Wood Street Corner of 8th & Wood Vineland, NJ, 08360 Dinner at 5:00 pm Main Dishes Provided Please Bring Sides & Desserts Meeting at 6:30 pm, AA Speaker and Al-Anon Speaker DJ Music at 8:00 pm *Bring Your Dancing Shoes!* 50/50 Drawing - Door Prizes Sobriety Countdown - Doors Open at 4:00 pm - Suggested Donation: \$10.00 Children 14 and Under Free if Accompanied by an Adult For More Information Contact: Greg at (856) 238-8488

**Sun. April 30** - Tansboro Sunday Spiritual Mtg anniversary - speakers start at 10am followed by FFF. at Bud Duple Senior Citizen Ctr. 33 Cooper Folly Rd. Atco.

**Sat. June 3** - Vineland group will celebrate their 58th anniversary. Doors open at 6 pm, refreshments at 6:30 pm, speaker at 7 pm. Church of Resurrection Vineland. For more info, call Fred : 856-982-6791 - food welcomed.

**June 23 – 25** – 6th Annual Liberty Bell Round-up. “The Woodstock of Philadelphia”.10 Featured Speakers. Registration: \$40. Clarion Philadelphia Airport, 76 Industrial Hwy. [libertybellroundup.com](http://libertybellroundup.com) Dave W. (610) 342-6876| [info@libertybellroundup.com](mailto:info@libertybellroundup.com)