

# ANONYMOUS SOUTH JERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

May 2018

## A Long-timer Recalls Smoke-filled Church Basements and Staying Sober for the Long Haul

The Archives Committee has recently *begun to interview "old timers" who have generously given us permission to relate their stories in our newsletter. This one is from Kevin L, who has 35 years of sobriety, and his home group is Saturday Early Morning Risers. He came in when he was 18, so I think we should call him a "long timer" as he is definitely not old!! Following are excerpts from his interview. The entire interview is available from the Archives Committee.*

*Thank you Kevin.*

### **Personal Experience**

I had heard about AA through public service announcements, in school, (etc. but) I learned the

most about it when my friend got out of rehab and took me to my first meeting.



(That) was a Sunday night at Moorestown, NJ, (Barber Group) Beginners meeting, probably 1982. I remember they had poster board with various slogans and sayings of them. The chairperson would hold the poster board and talk about the topic.

My friend's father had recently bought him a car after getting out of rehab and I shared that I was an alcoholic, and that if my father would buy me a car I would stay sober. He didn't. That was the first time I said I was an alcoholic, and I didn't stay sober. There was a lot of laughter after my comment.

The next meeting I went to was a Monday night in Collingswood. No more meetings until I hit bottom several months later. I went to see my friend who I had previously gone to the meeting with and he directed me to his mother, who was a psychologist.

*(Continued on page 4)*

### **Meeting vs. Groups: There Is a Difference**

I was at a meeting and a new-comer asked if there was a difference between an AA meeting and an AA group. My response caused quite a conversation since I immediately said, "YES there is a big difference."

I went on to explain that an AA group is registered with our World Service. They receive a group number and are part of our national and international registry. They also receive a group packet outlining all of the benefits available as well as pamphlets and guidelines on how the group should operate.

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**Inside This Issue:** ♦ SJI Trivia ♦ As Bill Sees It ♦  
Opportunities for Service ♦ Step 5 Poem ♦

### **From the Editor**

Welcome to May and Spring!

Wishing all our moms out there a very Happy Mother's Day. I know for me, sobriety has enhanced my motherhood skills. What a gift!

We are always looking for your contributions so please don't be shy! Much gratitude for this month's contributors.

Take a look at the "Long Timer's" interview, and get ready for some new additions next month!

*Judy*

## Meetings

From page 1

There are guidelines provided for all of the positions such as Treasurer, IG Rep. GSR, DCM, and other great positions that our members can fill to become part of this world-wide fellowship. They are also given our wonderful Traditions which the group is encouraged to follow. One of the pamphlets describes how the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition should be disbursed, called, "Circles of Love."

One of the persons at the meeting stated that "anyone can start a meeting and that there is no reason to go through all of that". "There are lots of meetings that are not groups". I was surprised at this, since the person had many years of sobriety and was almost discouraging this new person from joining a group and just attending meetings as they choose.

I went on to tell the new comer that meetings collect money from AA members, however, they do not contribute to AA in order to help the next sick and suffering alcoholic. The money collected goes

for other things. They give all the money to the host, whether it be an individual or club or any other entity they choose. They can buy pizza, donuts or have a good ole fashioned keg party if they choose. They are not bound by any group conscious or traditions or guidelines. As a matter of fact, they cannot donate to IG or World Service or District, even if they wanted to, since, we cannot accept money from any outside enterprise. An example: If I wanted to collect money for my personal electric bill, I could hold a meeting at my house, asked that SJIG post my meeting in the meeting list, pass the basket and pay my electric with all the money collected.

SJIG has about 400 meetings posted in our meeting list. Less than half of them are actual groups. Meetings have no Primary Purpose (Tradition 5). Also, some of the club house meetings are in direct conflict with Tradition 6. They are supporting an outside enterprise. Club houses are "NOT AA."

Now, I need to make it very clear, I support club houses. I am a dues paying member of 2 clubs and

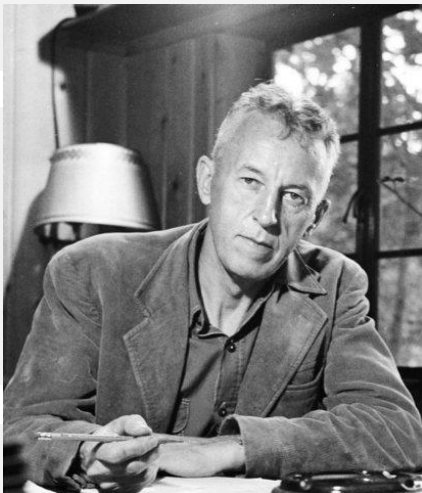
have been supporting club houses for over 35 years. We want our club houses to survive. They provide an important service for our fellowship. You can join a club for \$10.00 or \$15.00 a month. They should be supported by members of the club, not by passing the basket during an AA meeting.

I guess when it is all said and done, some individuals are supporting a meeting and assuming they are supporting AA?

As a longtime member of AA along with my profound love for the traditions, it concerns me that we allow these meetings and club houses to advertise in our meeting list. To collect money from folks who truly believe that they are supporting AA as a whole and in fact, they are supporting private, nonprofit enterprises.

So, learn the traditions, join a group where you can get an AA job, and be sure, when you put your money in the basket, you know where it is going.

*Anonymous*



### As Bill Sees It

"Moments of perception can turn into a lifetime of spiritual serenity, as I have excellent reason to know. Roots of reality, supplanting the neurotic underbrush, will hold fast despite the high winds of forces that would destroy us, or which we would use to destroy ourselves."

*As Bill Sees It, page 173*

## 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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Cherry Hill, NJ 08035  
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Website: [www.asj.org](http://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

## Trivia Question



May 2018: How can Intergroup help your group promote an AA event?

Answer to April 2018 trivia question, Where do you send your group's contributions?

South Jersey Intergroup  
PO Box 2514  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

Southern NJ GSA Area 45  
PO Box 3724  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

The General Service Office  
Grand Central Station  
PO Box 459  
New York, NY 10164-0423

LIPS: Area 45 CTF Committee  
PO Box 3724  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

District: Please contact Area 45 or South Jersey Intergroup for your District contact information

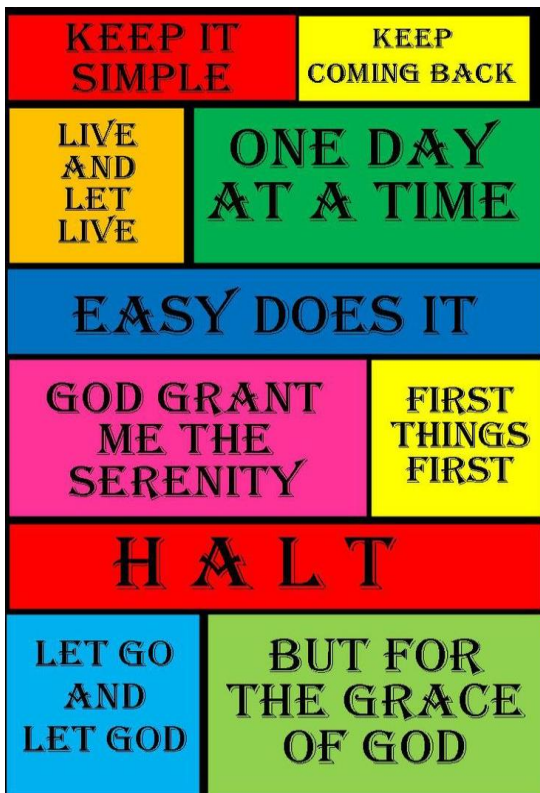


She eventually took me to a detox in Burlington County, Starting Point. I was there 4 days, then went to rehab, Clear Brook Manor, for 42 days. I came out on a Saturday and went right back to the detox to get my aftercare advice and go to meetings.

My mother took me to a meeting in Berlin that Sunday morning. She sat in the car and did homework (she was going to college), and I went into the meeting. I don't remember anything about the meeting, though I remember talking to two guys, Donny D. and Ted, after the meeting as they cleaned up. Donny is still sober and still a friend. He called me the following day to see if I wanted to go to a meeting. I did, and he picked me up.

I was told about sponsorship when I was in rehab and knew I had to get one when I got out. I heard, "Get a sponsor who has what you want." I was a young, scrawny, insecure 18-year-old kid, and I asked a guy Ted who was tall with a beard and mustache, who seemed comfortable around women. He said yes, but several weeks later, his sponsor, Jerry O., came to me and said Ted could no longer be my sponsor. I then asked Donny D., who had the wherewithal to say he would be my "temporary sponsor." He informed me I should find someone with 5 years or more and that he would help me find him.

Several months later I heard Rick C., who would be my sponsor for about 25 years. I first heard Rick C. several months previously when I sat next to him, and



someone was sharing about the colors of the fall, "the reds and blues," and he chuckled to himself, "Yeah, reds and blues", and I instantly liked him.

I then heard him several months later share as a speaker at a meeting, and he spoke that he was a representative of AA/NA when he was in the community, and (wondered if) his behavior reflected positively on AA/NA. It was the same speech my mother gave my siblings and I when we went out as a family: "Remember you are a (member of this family), and people know your father in this town." His wife, Joann C., was also a tremendous help. Rick covered the bases of AA and NA, spiritual advisor, counselor, mentor,

surrogate father, big brother, and friend. Joann was like a sister to me.

## On the Growth of AA

There were numerous meetings every week, 1 ½-hours long, smoking allowed. (There) was so much smoke it rose from the basement, where several meetings were held.

At one time, the pipes in organ in the church were ruined. I believe the meeting donated money to have them cleaned and repaired, and then the meetings became non-smoking. I also remember the group paid to have a floor retiled where they held the Beginners meeting, due to spilled coffee and cigarette butts on the floor.

Aside from the first meeting I went to, the Beginners meeting in Moorestown (Barber Group), the format has not changed much, though they are now one-hour long and non-smoking. Someone opens the meeting and then chairs the meeting. The AA Preamble and How It Works were read, with several announcements.

Club houses were important and there appeared to be two factions, the Camelon Club (98 Stewart Street, Camden) and the 400 Club (White Horse Pike, Oaklyn). I went to both. Their softball games were legendary, i.e. strong rivalry and fights. Typical early recovery with too much testosterone. I don't recall any early morning meetings; most started at 8:30 p.m. and went to 10 p.m.

*(Continued on next page)*

## Personal Contributions

I did not do a lot of service, I just tried to stay sober. I got the sense that since I was young, 18, I was not welcome to participate too much, making coffee, cleaning ash-trays, and putting away chairs seemed to be where they wanted me. NA was more open and where more young people went to participate more, though many of us went to both.

## How AA Has Remained the Same, How it Has Changed

New members were given phone numbers after the meeting, men gave men their numbers, women gave women their numbers. Men were told to stick with the men and women were told to stay away from the men, at least for a year. New members were encouraged to call AA members, not the other way around, though Donny called me. Twelfth Step work was done when receiving a call from Intergroup that someone reached out. It was advised that at least two people go on a Twelfth Step call. Speakers went to detox's, rehabs, jails, and hospitals.

Drunk driving started to get more attention with the courts, therefore more people were court ordered to attend AA. They had to pick up a slip at the end of the meeting that indicated they attended, which they would then have to show to their probation officer, now they just get a piece of paper signed. The courts are more informed about AA, alcoholism, and addiction, therefore are more likely to offer treatment as an option.

We had literature, albeit some of it was dated, they had a comic strip type book for teenagers. Newcomers had to want to stay sober, they had to do the work, they had to call and ask for help. They were certainly welcomed, but they had to show that they wanted to stay sober. I did not see a lot of running



## Step 5

Admitted to God; to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

*Step 5 is asking us to tell all  
And stand up, no longer choosing to crawl  
In lowly places with so much false pride;  
The time has now come to no longer hide.*

*But, whom shall we trust, to help us forgive?  
All of those awful things that we did?  
We tried trusting ourselves in Step 4, without fear,  
Believing that God, as we knew Him, would hear*

*And now, we must muster all the courage we find  
In telling a person with whom we'll confide  
The true nature of our being; and as all is revealed,  
We will be moved forward, each day, to be healed.*

around after people. If someone had a desire to stay sober, then people would step up and help, spend time with them, stay late after a meeting, talk to them in the middle of the night, pick them up and take them to meetings. You never said no if someone asked for help. I often heard, "Put the plug in the jug and come to meetings. "Take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth."

I would see hard candy on the chairpersons table for the newcomers. It was always about going to meetings, then doing service, then eventually steps and spirituality.

Slippers were always welcomed back and encouraged to keep coming back. Thirteen steppers

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*From previous page*

were looked down upon and talked about. I think the women knew who they were and told newcomers to stay away from them. If that behavior contributed to a newcomer going out, the thirteenth stepper usually heard about it from someone, and I would hear the rumors. People usually said, "No major decisions in the first year." This included dating. It was first, don't drink, the other stuff will come.

Some of the older people in meetings did not like the younger people talking about drugs, and would say so. I obviously didn't care. I was there to save myself, though alcohol was my primary issue, so it didn't come up much. Though I certainly discussed other issues—family, girlfriend, school—and this would annoy some people.

Early on I was told to get a sponsor. "That way you won't talk so much in meetings". But they continued to listen to me and I was never shunned. Once when my sponsor was chairing a meeting I kept raising my hand, but he wouldn't pick on me. I was the last person he picked on and he said, "Okay Kevin, try do this in 20 words or less." I never took offense, because I knew I was just trying not to drink. I also remember a meeting where someone was drunk and a member was offended. I talked to my sponsor and he replied, "He's drunk, where's he supposed to go? It's an AA meeting"!

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## Media Exposure

There were only public service announcements. Then the TV talk show host Phil Donohue did a



show on kids and drinking and drugs. Carol Burnett spoke about her daughter, Carrie, and they would be on shows talking about her addiction and drinking. That began the conversation. I spoke at a few schools as a representative of AA.

Regarding media exposure today, remember it is an anonymous program. There are recovery groups such as the Wharf Rats, people who like the Grateful Dead and are sober. When I went to Dead concerts, the Wharf Rats would have a meeting during the break behind the back of the stage, they had yellow balloons. The Wharf Rats now have groups you can join on Facebook, which I have done.

People share about their recovery and their struggles. I would suggest not using your real name, to remain anonymous. I have since joined and provide support and encouragement. These

groups still do not replace meetings and the fellowship in the meetings, I see it as an additional support, not the primary way to recover.

## AA in the Community

In doing my 9<sup>th</sup> step, people were happy I was sober, though it was not something my family wanted me to talk about openly. Now that I have remained sober, it's not an issue, and they will usually approach me if a family member or friend has an issue. If I mention I am in AA in the community, people usually know someone with a drinking problem or who had been to AA.

I only went to a local convention a few times, it was like a high school reunion, I got to see people I had not seen in many years. The intergroup office, when it was in Cherry Hill, NJ was always good for having alca-thons during the holidays. That is always appreciated.



## May Service Opportunities

### Answering Service:

We will be moving onto updating the 12 step call list in the near future and ask that anyone who may be interested in being of service in that capacity contact us via [answeringservice@asj.org](mailto:answeringservice@asj.org).

**Archives:** We are continuing to ask for any Old timers with 30 or more years of sobriety willing to complete a questionnaire to reach out to us at [archives@asj.org](mailto:archives@asj.org)

**Bookers:** If you or your group are interested in filling any of these Bookers commitments, please contact Beverly at [bookers@asj.org](mailto:bookers@asj.org): Tuesday, May 15, Fellowship Group, St. Stephens, Beverly 8 pm

**Literature:** We are in need of a volunteer for the Thursday PM (6 to 8 pm) shift in May. Please e-mail

[literature@asj.org](mailto:literature@asj.org)

**Newsletter:** We would love any and all contributions - articles, poetry, things of interest heard in the rooms, anything that has helped you in recovery. Please submit by Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup> for the June newsletter.

**Unity:** The Unity committee is accepting any and all help as we move forward and invite "rep-less" groups to Intergroup! If you go to any meetings that do not currently have an Intergroup rep, please invite them to our next meeting on April 18!

**Public Info** is looking for young people to speak at local high schools during the day. Please contact [publicinfo@asj.org](mailto:publicinfo@asj.org) if you are interested.

## Speaking Commitments

**Hospitals and Institutions (H&I)** is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities: Please contact Frank or Debbie at [handi@asj.org](mailto:handi@asj.org) if you are able to take one of these commitments.

### Monday

Ancora - Hammonton April 23, 30 7-8pm: 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton, NJ

### Wednesday

Unity Place I - Cherry Hill NJ April 25, May 23, 30 12:40-1:30pm: 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill, NJ

Solstice Counseling - Lumberton NJ May 23 12-1pm: 1561 Rt. 38 W, Lumberton, NJ

Northbrook Behavioral Health - Blackwood NJ April 25 8-9pm: 425 Woodbury-Turnersville Rd, Blackwood, NJ

### Thursday

Ancora - Hammonton NJ April 26, May 24 7-8pm: 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton, NJ

Unity Place II - Hammonton NJ April 19, May 17, 31 2-3 pm: 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton, NJ

Daybreak - Atco NJ - April 26, May 10, 17, 24, 31 10:30-12:00 noon: 368 White Horse Pike, Atco, NJ

# Spirituality on the Go!

*Clip out these A.A. prayers to keep in your purse or wallet, or copy and paste them into your smart phone. Chances are, they will come in handy.*

*In our busy lives, we are always on the move: Eating while we drive; answering email on the bus; sending text messages while waiting at the doctor's office. Well, here's a little spirituality to take with you for when you need a little help from your higher power. And who among us doesn't need that?*

## SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

MY CREATOR, I AM NOW WILLING THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE ALL OF ME, GOOD & BAD. I PRAY THAT YOU NOW REMOVE FROM ME EVERY SINGLE DEFECT OF CHARACTER WHICH STANDS IN THE WAY OF MY USEFULNESS TO YOU & MY FELLOWS. GRANT ME STRENGTH, AS I GO OUT FROM HERE TO DO YOUR BIDDING.

## THIRD STEP PRAYER

GOD, I OFFER MYSELF TO THEE — TO BUILD WITH ME AND TO DO WITH ME AS THOU WILT. RELIEVE ME OF THE BONDAGE OF SELF, THAT I MAY BETTER DO THY WILL. TAKE AWAY MY DIFFICULTIES, THAT VICTORY OVER THEM MAY BEAR WITNESS TO THOSE I WOULD HELP OF THY POWER, THY LOVE, AND THY WAY OF LIFE. MAY I DO THY WILL ALWAYS!

## ELEVENTH STEP PRAYER

LORD, MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF THY PEACE--THAT WHERE THERE IS HATRED, I MAY BRING LOVE--THAT WHERE THERE IS WRONG, I MAY BRING THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS--THAT WHERE THERE IS DISCORD, I MAY BRING HARMONY--THAT WHERE THERE IS ERROR, I MAY BRING TRUTH--THAT WHERE THERE IS DOUBT, I MAY BRING FAITH--THAT WHERE THERE IS DESPAIR, I MAY BRING HOPE--THAT WHERE THERE ARE SHADOWS, I MAY BRING LIGHT--THAT WHERE THERE IS SADNESS, I MAY BRING JOY. LORD, GRANT THAT I MAY SEEK RATHER TO COMFORT THAN TO BE COMFORTED--TO UNDERSTAND, THAN TO BE UNDERSTOOD--TO LOVE, THAN TO BE LOVED. FOR IT IS BY SELF-FORGETTING THAT ONE FINDS. IT IS BY FORGIVING THAT ONE IS FORGIVEN. IT IS BY DYING THAT ONE AWAKENS TO ETERNAL LIFE.