



Add - A - Line

March 2016, Volume 54 Issue 3



*Northeast Florida Intergroup Newsletter
Published in Northeast Florida Since Nov. 1962*

*Northeast Florida
Intergroup Services
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Jacksonville, FL*

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*Serving the Greater
Jacksonville Area
Fernandina Beach,
St. Augustine,*

*Orange Park,
Macclenny,
Middleburg,*

Palatka,

Keystone,

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Starke &

Putnam County, FL.

Also including:

Folkston & Kingsland, GA.

For Flagler County go to

www.AAFLAGLER.org

or call (386) 445-4357

2016 INTERGROUP SPRING BANQUET

Saturday, April 2, 2016
Ramallah American Club
3130 Parental Home Road

> > **CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS** < <

SAVE THE DATE

**COMING
UP**

Time to get ready for our annual Spring Banquet and a great time again for the Fellowship we share with each other. Many Volunteers are needed to make this Banquet a success for Intergroup. Please attend our Banquet Committee Planning Meetings at 6:00 p.m., Mondays, March 14th and 28th, at the Intergroup Office — 3128 Beach Blvd. Service work also available at The Ramallah Club the morning of the Banquet at 8:30a.m., all the way 'til the Banquet is over!

We need help with: Set-Up, Cooking, Decorations, Coffee & Iced Tea, Cake Auction, Cake Ladies, Ticket Sales!!!, Raffle, Food Line and Clean-Up! To Volunteer, call Holly C. 662-0646, Linda G. 608-1634, Banquet Co-Chairs, or the Intergroup Office 399-8535. (Thank you!)



**REQUESTING DESSERTS
FOR THE
DESSERT TABLES!**

If you are not baking a cake for the Cake Auction, PLEASE help us out by donating a dessert for the dessert tables. These items can store bought for your convenience.

**Banquet Cake
Auction
Calling All
Cake Bakers**

Please contact
the IG office at
904-399-8535
to notify them

of your very
creative cake for auction.

*(Cake Plates will not be returned so
please plan accordingly)*



**SUPPLEMENTAL
ARCHIVES
EDITION**

*Regular Add-A-Line
Pages 1-8*

*Archives
Pages 9-12*

V O L U N T E E R
all that's missing is U!

The morning of the Banquet, we need help for two different work shifts. The 1st shift is from 8:30 am to Noon, and the 2nd shift is from Noon to 4 pm. Call any of the contacts on the list above to offer your time for service work or JUST SHOW UP and offer assistance where you can!!

THOUGHTS ON DOING THE THRID STEP PRAYER

When my sponsor and I got down on our knees and said the 3rd step prayer I finally opened the door to Willingness. It was time to turn all of it over to my Higher Power. I let go and understood what the Step 3 in the 12 and 12 meant; that my trouble had been the misuse of willpower. It was time to bring it into agreement with God's intention for me, time to have Faith and to Trust Him. Trust is Totally Relying Upon Spiritual Truths. Faith is Forging Ahead in Trusting Him. How freeing it is to let go of my independence and depend only on my Higher Power in all things.

Life is hard, no doubt. Just because I am sober, through God's Grace, does not mean my life is perfect. Difficulties come- relationships, health problems, finances. I thank my Higher Power for exactly where I am now, then put the troubles in my God Box. I speak out loud to God and give Him these issues. I don't have to worry because I pray. I know that when He closes a door He opens a window. Stress and fear may attempt to rob me of my serenity but then I recognize these as reminders that I am learning a lesson. I know that God's timing is perfect. Yes, I must do the foot work and leave the results to God.

So my job went away- He must have something better in store for me. I put in the applications, send the resume, do the interview, send the thank you note for taking the time to talk to me. Then, again, I use the tools put the job in the God box, claim the job out loud- "Thank you, God, for this wonderful job you have given me." Of course, I put the word out to my sponsor, and network after meetings, continuing to believe and trust. When I need to discuss my fears I talk to my sponsor or another alcoholic. Running to the bottle when I am afraid is no longer an option and rarely comes to mind since the spiritual experience took the obsession away. I say the 3rd step prayer and the Serenity Prayer often and claim the courage to do the next right thing. I continue to do this and wait to see how God resolves this issue, knowing it is in His Hands.

Sometimes the results are better than what I would have asked for. I have seen the promises come true. I have to turn my will and life over to God every day and practice getting out of the way. It does get easier. Things don't always turn out the way I want, but my Higher Power is always there giving me His peace no matter what. I am grateful to be sober today. —Shirley J. (Westside group)

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



**NEFL INTERGROUP
FREE SPRING FLING
PICNIC**

May 7, 2016 10 AM to 5 PM

**Lake Fretwell (Cecil Field I- 295 & 103rd Street)
13531 Lake Newman Drive, Jax, FL**

**Eating at Noon, AA O-D Meeting at 1 PM, Hot Dogs
and Hamburgers & Drinks Provided Please bring,
Cole Slaw, potato or macaroni salad, or baked
beans etc., Chips and Desserts Needed,
(Covered Eating Areas) —Games with Prizes**

Call Holly at 662-0646 or Linda at 608-1634

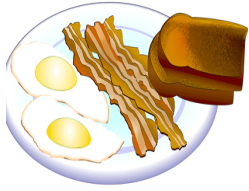
**COME rain
OR COME shine**

come join in the fun, enjoy the fellowship

*Things We
Cannot
Change . . .*

**But for
the
Grace
of God.**

*The Following
Member Will
Be Fondly Remembered and
Sadly Missed
Bob H*



Speaker Meeting
April 02, 2016
Gateway's Dining
Room
555 Stockton St.

8:00 am All You Can Eat
Breakfast — \$4.00
8:30 am Speaker Meeting



BUSINESS
MEETING 9:45 AM
Saturday
April 02, 2016

GATEWAY FRONT
CONFERENCE ROOM



<i>Committee</i>	<i>Time / Date</i>	<i>Location / Notes</i>
<i>Archives</i>	Noon, Mon., Mar. 07 2016	Intergroup office. 1st Monday of the Month
<i>Finance</i>	5:30 pm , Tues., Apr. 19th, 2016	Intergroup office. Please call the IG office at 399-8535 for more information.
<i>Intergroup Steering Committee</i>	5:30 PM, Tues., Mar 22nd, 2016	Intergroup Office. All members are welcome to attend.
<i>New Intergroup Rep Orientation</i>	8:30 AM Mar. 5th, 2016	Front Conference Room Gateway, 555 Stockton St.) To familiarize the new IG Reps with the flow of the Business Meeting, Parliamentary Procedures, Robert's Rules of Order, etc..

2015-2017 District Committee Contact and Meeting Info			
	Position & Name	Phone	Meeting Time, Day & Location
District 1:	DCM - Steve H.	904-307-5518	3rd Tuesday @ 5:30pm each month at the NEFL Office
District 4:	DCM - Deb B	904-314-7155	7pm Every 3rd Thursday @The Amelia Room 906 S 7th St, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
District 3:	DCM- Anthony S.	904-302-1907	2nd Monday 6:30pm @ Anthony's house
District 6:	DCM- Chris B	904-501-0043 412-951-6910	1st Monday of each month @ 6:00pm @Flagler Hospital in Osceola Room
District 24:	DCM-Amy W.	386-538-2028	Meets the second Wed of every month @ 6:30pm Lion's Club-318 Oseola Ave, Palatka, FL 32177
District 25:	DCM-Chris P		Neptune Beach Library 2nd Wed @ 7:00pm (3rd Street)
District 30:	DCM - Jack B.	302-668-7553 714-661-3918	3rd Friday of each month @ 6:30pm First Christian 11924 San Jose Blvd



Kiss Me, I'm Sober!



Save the Date!

Get ready to get painted!
 March 19th 2016, 3pm
 1 Mile @ Jax Beach 16th Ave S & 1st Ave
 In Celebration of a Sober St. Paddy's Day
 Wear Green!
 Prizes for Fastest Male & Fastest Female & Best Costume
 \$10 Entry Fee

Contact Sasha or Jess with Questions: 904-304-4453 / 904-894-5517
Sign up at: <http://www.signupgenious.com/go/20f0b49a9ad29a3ff>

#jaxbid



INTERGROUP OFFICERS

Chairman:

Carl G. Phone: 904-497-9769
Email: cgian9@gmail.com

Vice Chair / Treasurer:

Dan. B. Phone
904-737-7532.

ADD-ALINE

Mike M. 904-807-8750
nefladdaline@gmail.com

All articles due to Intergroup by
the 18th of the month

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

Chaz H. 904-568-4836
4chacon@att.net

BANQUET CHAIRS

Holly C. 904-662-0646
Linda G. 904-608-1634
Banquet Volunteers Please
Call The Intergroup Office

CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE

Mike M. (men in jail)
904-294-5064
Monique S. (women in jail)
904-210-8111

CPC/ PI

Cooperation with the
Professional Community &
Public Information.
Maggie R. 904-707-6125

GRAPEVINE COMMITTEE

Cheryl Ann L. 904-401-6412
chilly5555@gmail.com

PHONE ARMY

Holly C. 9046620646
hollyjowhatchaknow@yahoo.com

**TREATMENT FACILITY
COMMITTEE**

Craig W. 904-238-3333

Third Step

T

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

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Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

H

Third Tradition

" The only requirement for AA membership is a
desire to stop drinking. "

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I

Third Concept

R

" As a traditional means of creating and main-
taining a clearly defined working relation between
the groups, the Conference, the A.A. General Service
Board and its several service corporations, staffs,
committees and executives, and of thus insuring
their effective leadership, it is here suggested that
we endow each of these elements of world service
with a traditional "Right of Decision." "

Reprinted with permission from *The AA Big Book* Copyright © Alcoholics
Anonymous World Services, Inc.

D

In and out of black outs, couldn't find the path out. Every day I woke up
with conviction, only to be led down the path of addiction. I often won-
dered if I had a split personality, an evil twin, the beast within. It fed on
immorality and tricked me to believe in immortality.

Feeling lifeless, disgusted by my vices, all the lies, I just couldn't look
myself in the eyes. Finally, one night shivering in jail it came to me, I had
to stop blaming me. Something from within reminded me, there is a solu-
tion, and I can end this manic brain pollution.

With one mighty prayer I was spared.

A feeling of hope washed over me.

Despite the uncomfortable cold, the

looming devastation of the upcoming

consequences, the fear that I could

never get sober, the anger of not being able to smoke another cigarette

for several hours, it all dissipated with one single memory.

A few months

earlier, at the end of a meeting where I picked up yet another white chip

and tried to share but couldn't talk through my tears, an old timer kindly

smiled at me and said, "Just keep coming back, with God all things are

possible." Something inside felt strong, I knew there was a place I be-
longed.

Instead of fighting, I got to writing, and highlighting. The admission of

powerless surprisingly empowered me. New comrades, new habits, new

opportunities, and a new best friend, Heavy G. (up in the limousine).

There were too many miracles, I knew they were spiritual. It's been a

journey; I can't believe I'm almost an attorney. Gratitude is the attitude.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! — Sahsa H. Mandarin YPG



INTERGROUP OFFICE LOG

<u>INTERGROUP OFFICE LOG</u>	Jan. 2016	Jan. 2015
A. A. Information	179	202
Administrative & Other Information	71	23
12 Step Calls	0	2
Visitors to the Office	147	212



**Congratulations
ON STAYING SOBER
ONE DAY AT A TIME!**



January Birthdays
Group

Sojourn

Ben B.	38 yrs.
Sue S.	24 yrs.
Tom J.	17 yrs.
Austin B.	14 yrs.
Ryan W.	13 yrs.
Paige K.	13 yrs.
Lisa D.	8 yrs.
Alicia S.	4 yrs.
Becky C.	4 yrs.
Tammy F.	3 yrs.
Lisa T.	3 yrs.
John R.	3 yrs.
David K.	2 yrs.
Vanessa P.	2 yrs.
Sarah E.	2 yrs.
Hunter S.	1 yr.

February Birthdays
Group

District 6

St. Augustine

Bob S.	41 yrs.
Joan S.	41 yrs.
Bill	31 yrs.
Randy W.	30 yrs.
Sam C.	19 yrs.
Pat B.	10 yrs.
Frank B.	9 yrs.
Chris	9 yrs.
Linda K.	8 yrs.
Julie P.	7 yrs.
Carolyn S.	1 yr.
Sean G.	1 yr.

Fernandina Beach

Ed. V.	8 yrs.
Walter H.	6 yrs.
Joseph D.	5 yrs.
Jeremy	4 yrs.
Toni S.	2 yrs.
Tom Q.	2 yrs.
Tom C.	1 yrs.
Megan E.	1 yr.

February Birthdays
Group

Fiesta

Tex (Terry)	25 yrs.
Sandy	13 yrs.
Shelly	11 yrs.
Ericka	9 yrs.
Vicki S.	7 yrs.
Kristin M.	6 yrs.
David K.	2 yrs.
Renee B.	2 yrs.
Megan	1 yr.
Rachel	1 yr.

Free to Be

Mary M.-C.	28 yrs.
Nina L.	2 yrs.

I Am Responsible

Suzanne H.	38 yrs.
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Mandarin Women's

Karen R.	24 yrs.
Susan H.	18 yrs.
Megan	6 yrs.
Cat	3 yrs.

Orange Park

Robbie	30 yrs.
Mavis G.	29 yrs.
Jeff M.	24 yrs.
Diana S.	24 yrs.
Pamela J.	23 yrs.
Tony R.	8 yrs.
Ute	7 yrs.
Ray B.	6 yrs.
Roger	5 yrs.
John K.	2 yrs.
Jamie D.	1 yr.
Bob F.	1 yr.

February Birthdays
Group

Sojoun

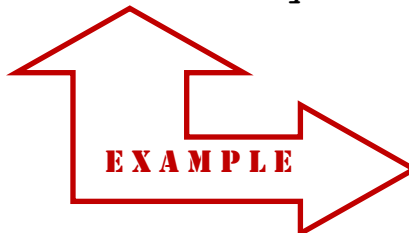
Lester R.	41 yrs.
Linda B.	11 yrs.
Mark D.	10 yrs.
Joanne M.	5 yrs.
Cindi S.	2 yrs.
Bob Q.	2 yrs.
Shannon T,	1 yr.

Trout River

Dan P.	44 yrs.
Ericka C.	20 yrs.
Bob C.	14 yrs.
Michael P.	8 yrs.
Cayla K.	5 yrs.

Westside

Scottie B.	39 yrs.
Paul B.	39 yrs.
Donna B.	19 yrs.
Gene P.	19 yrs.
Arnold W.	15 yrs.
Sarina E.	12 yrs.
Eleonore T.	11 yrs.
Cynthia H.	10 yrs.
Joann M.	6 yrs.
Kudy O.	5 yrs.
Kelly M.	5 yrs.



When sending in
Sobriety
Birthdays.



Please list first name, last name initial only with a period after it. List only the number of years or year only in descending order. (see how they are listed on this birthday page. We do not need sobriety dates, dashes or any other letters / symbols.

THANK YOU



JOIN THE BIRTHDAY CLUB

Contribute \$1.00
To Intergroup
For each Year of YOUR Sobriety
Call 399-8535 for more information.

	Jan 16	Jan 16
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
4000 · Contribution Income		
4002 · Groups	\$7,442.35	\$7,442.35
4003 · Pink Can Contribution	\$169.69	\$169.69
4005 · Faithful Five	\$155.00	\$155.00
4006 · Birthdays	\$26.00	\$26.00
4008 · Anonymous	\$304.00	\$304.00
4010 · IG Breakfast	\$81.00	\$81.00
Total 4000 · Contribution Income	\$8,178.04	\$8,178.04
4020 · Retail Income	\$4,531.78	\$4,531.78
Total Income	\$12,709.82	\$12,709.82
Cost of Goods Sold		
4510 · Cost of Retail Sales	\$3,096.62	\$3,096.62
4540 · Cost of Event - Banquet Expense	\$55.00	\$55.00
Total COGS	\$3,151.62	\$3,151.62
Gross Profit	\$9,558.20	\$9,558.20
Expense		
Total 5100 · Office Expense	\$225.64	\$225.64
5110 · Telephone	\$193.43	\$193.43
5120 · Telephone Answering Service	\$80.00	\$80.00
5130 · Postage - Freight	\$17.20	\$17.20
5140 · Utilities	\$132.92	\$132.92
5145 · Advertising	\$51.00	\$51.00
5195 · CC Fees	\$91.50	\$91.50
5210 · Building Rent	\$900.00	\$900.00
5220 · Dues/Fees/Licenses	\$61.25	\$61.25
5265 · Security	\$27.40	\$27.40
5290 · IG Breakfast Expense	\$42.58	\$42.58
5300 · When & Where Cost	\$191.90	\$191.90
5500 · Committees Expense		
5540 · Corrections	\$479.09	\$479.09
5560 · Newsletter	\$343.49	\$343.49
Total 5500 · Committees Expense	\$822.58	\$822.58
Total 6555 · Wages Total	\$2,759.75	\$2,759.75
Total Expense	\$5,597.15	\$5,597.15
Net Ordinary Income or (Loss)	\$3,961.05	\$3,961.05
6305 · Interest Income	\$26.34	\$26.34
Net Income or (Loss)	\$3,987.39	\$3,987.39

Account Balances as of January 31, 2016

Petty Cash	\$100.00
Checking Account	\$13,823.17
Saving Account	\$10.00
Total	\$13,933.17
CD 12 Month 51	\$20,262.21
CD 18 Month 52	\$11,728.70
CD 18 Month 42	\$10,124.21
Total Prudent Reserve	\$42,115.12
Inventory Asset Value	\$15,646.37

When and where...

In Late May 2016 it will be time to update the When and Where Meeting Schedules for printing.

Please send in any additions, changes or deletions of your meeting days, times location change by Friday April 30th, 2016.

Any questions or concerns please call the IG office at 904-399-8535

E Mail:

neflintegroup@gmail.com

Fax: 904-399-8537

Thank You

JANUARY 2016 Group Contributions

GROUP	MONTH	YTD	Att.	GROUP	MONTH	YTD	Att.	GROUP	MONTH	YTD	Att.
A Design for Living	\$20.00	\$20.00		Language of the Heart			X	Sober Sisters	\$126.00	\$126.00	
Alexis Group	\$15.00	\$15.00	X	Living In The Light	\$200.00	\$200.00	X	Sojourn Group			X
Amethyst Group			X	Mandarin Hi-Noon	\$956.26	\$956.26	X	Solutions Group	\$120.00	\$120.00	
Beaches Unity Group	\$360.00	\$360.00	X	Mandarin MoNDAY Night BBS			X	Sons of the Spirit			X
Central Group	\$1,350.34	\$1,350.34	X	Mandarin Women in Recovery	\$100.00	\$100.00		St Nicholas			X
Clean & Free			X	Men's Red Eye	\$239.00	\$239.00		Step A Month Group	\$50.00	\$50.00	
Conscious Contact Group			X	Middleburg Group			X	Stepping Up	\$130.00	\$130.00	
Coyote Mens Group	\$450.00	\$450.00		Morning After Group	\$25.00	\$25.00		Student Group	\$108.89	\$108.89	
Eastside Group	\$30.00	\$30.00	X	New Beginnings Group			X	Surrender To Win	\$100.00	\$100.00	X
Fernandina Beach Group			X	Nocatee Sobriety	\$190.40	\$190.40		Switzerland Group			X
Fiesta Group			X	On the Way Home Group	\$147.32	\$147.32		The James Gang	\$500.00	\$500.00	
Free to Be			X	Orange Park Group			X	Thirsty Thursday			X
Green Cove Springs	\$200.00	\$200.00		Orange Park Step Sisters			X	Trout River			X
Greenland Road Group			X	Ortega Group	\$85.00	\$85.00		Villagers Group	\$47.70	\$47.70	
Half Way Through	\$28.14	\$28.14		Phoenix Men's Group	\$233.80	\$233.80		We Agnostics Free Thinkers	\$85.00	\$85.00	
Happy Destiny Group			X	Primary Purpose Group			X	West Jax Men's Group			X
Happy Hour Group	\$25.00	\$25.00		Q Branch Group	\$350.00	\$350.00		Winners Group			X
I Am Responsible	\$150.00	\$150.00	X	Riverside/Ortega Group	\$23.00	\$23.00		Winning Game Group	\$230.00	\$230.00	
It's Come to This	\$86.25	\$86.25		Riverside YPG	\$105.00	\$105.00	X	Women Enjoying Sobriety	\$267.50	\$267.50	
Keep It Simple (Fern. Bch.)			X	Serenity at Noon	\$292.75	\$292.75	X	Women Speak	\$15.00	\$15.00	
Represented at the February 2016 IG Business Meeting: IG Reps=35, Total Signed In=45								Total Contributions	\$7,442.35	\$7,442.35	



At a recent meeting, the topic of "Surrender" was discussed and many thoughts were shared. "Surrender to Win; Let Go and Let God; Surrender to the Winning Side" were just a few of the encouraging slogans that sounded great at the meeting and appeared simple to carry outside into my daily life. But so often my old alcoholic thoughts take over when I have to deal with the real world outside of meetings. For example, my feelings about "surrender" involve failure and that I'm a miserable loser if I give up or give in. As you can tell, hangovers of alcoholic thinking are never helpful!

But here's the beauty of the program and if I listen carefully, I will hear what I need. Another phrase voiced was "A problem shared is halved and shared joys are multiplied". This made sense to me and although it's a form of surrender, i.e. sharing a problem or concern with another or our Higher Power, I don't feel as though I have failed, but instead become empowered. This simple slogan felt like a positive and hopeful step in dealing with my concerns.

Turning around our alcoholic thoughts and relearning new thinking processes is unique to each of us. I need to keep looking for the keys that unlock and free me from my old alcoholic thoughts. Not only does "problems shared" appeal to me, but even more so, "joys shared are multiplied" sounds wonderful. Wishing you days showered with joy in March.

"FORMING TRUE PARTNERSHIPS", How AA members use the program to improve relationships ", a NEW Book published by the Grapevine and available online at AAGRAPEVINE.ORG/BOOKS. Please consider a personal subscription to the Grapevine for yourself or a friend. Possibly your group has more than a "prudent reserve" in funds and you may consider buying a few subscriptions for your group to share amongst members. And don't forget that the Grapevine Website also offers extensive achieves on AA's history and writings as well as other books and items not available on AA's Website. To find information on Grapevine Magazine subscriptions or books please go to aa-grapevine.org or 1-800-631-6025.

**HELLO,
MY NAME IS RON
AND I AM AN ALCOHOLIC!**

Northeast Florida Intergroup
Supplement to the
March 2016 Add-A-Line
Archives Newsletter

Interview with Ron E.

Ron E. – is another of our AA pioneers. He has 52 years sobriety (DOS xx/xx/xxxx). He taped his story earlier this year and the following has been excerpted from that tape with his permission. (Interviewed by Chaz H. edited by Charlie M. and transcribed by Rhonda B.)

Chaz: Ron please tell me a little bit about your life before AA. Where were you born and what kind of childhood did you have? **Ron:** I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I lived in a house full of drunks and I swore that I would never drink. I meant it then. I was maybe 10. My family drank all the time. Holidays were more than special. Thanksgiving is always on a Thursday and sometimes we had it three or four weeks later. They cancelled Christmas. This is not made up. This is a fact. I went to high school and was the first one in my family to graduate from high school. I played sports in high school and so I spent a lot of time in the gym playing soccer and basketball. The school that I went to did not have a football team because it was a school they considered the last stop. The next stop was jail. It was a trade school but I did learn a trade there (carpentry) and while I never used it to earn a living it helped me because I could fix up every house I bought. Somewhere along the line my parents stopped drinking, which surprised me. They would have maybe a six-pack twice a week and they would split it, two or three beers. I guess you'd call that normal drinking.

C: What did you want to be when you grew up? **R:** I wanted to be a truck driver, my father was a truck driver.

C When did you start drinking? **R:** The first time I drank I was about 12 years old and it was VJ Day and they had a party on the street. They had a party there for the next 25 years on VJ day. They'd decorate the street. Anyway a friend and I had a dollar and we bought a six-pack for a buck. It was cheap. I drank that night. I had four beers if you take two and divided it into six, you know it should have been three a piece but he gave me some guff and I cold cocked him and took the last beer. So, the effect there was instant because it changed my whole personality. I was not somebody who looked for fights, although I never backed away from one in my life but I didn't go looking for them. I probably started a lot of them when I was drinking. That was the first time I drank. You know before that night was over I'm throwing that beer up on the street. I never did like beer. I never had a taste for it at all. That was the first time I drank. The next time I drank was about six years or seven years later. I was almost finished with high school. There was a New Year's Eve party and I got really drunk and sick because we were drinking hard stuff then. If you'd have asked me what flavor it was, I don't know, it was just whiskey and that was the second time. The third time I drank I was probably 19 and experienced the same results; I got very sick. There was nothing in between those episodes until I was about 25. I remember going to work. There was always a saloon right across from whatever plant I worked. Well, that night I stopped in with the guys and I got really drunk. The next day I woke up and I was sick again and shaking like a dog. I always had that problem and my mother said to me, "Ronald, me boy, you know you shouldn't drink, but if you're going to drink for God's sake don't suffer like that." She said, "You get the hair of the dog that bit ya." She insisted and so I took a drink and I found the magic elixir. It was like heaven. You could drink and feel good the next morning, just get a couple of drinks. That was the start of the trip. I drank for approximately 2-1/2 maybe 3 years and had really bad things happen, fights and going to jail but no serious time just overnights. Then one day I quit. Just like that because I wanted to quit. I didn't drink again for another 2-1/2, maybe 3 years, and then I started again and went through hell. I have a very short drinking career, somewhere in the neighborhood of 5 or 6 years. For the last 3 years I was constantly being locked up. They let you out in the mornings so you could go to work. They actually were doing me a favor because they kept me from killing somebody on the way home when I was drunk as a skunk. I was a member of the Teamsters Union and always had a job. They always protected me. Over 5-1/2 years I went to jail 68 times.

So, that was the extent of my drinking. Blackouts galore, mostly every night, could never remember what day it was let alone what I did last night, you know, so that's kind of where I was at with my whole drinking career.

**FIRST YOU TAKE A
DRINK, THEN THE
DRINK TAKES A
DRINK, THEN THE
DRINK TAKES YOU**

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

C: We'd like to hear about the bottom. What made you just end your career with alcohol?

R: Actually, my wife said to me when I was sober once, "Why don't you try AA?" I looked at her and I said, "What is the automobile club going to do for me?" Even with all the drunks in my family I'd never heard of AA. My father died when he was 46. My mother's brother, he was 32. My mother lived a long time and I've lived a long time. I'm 83 now. That's a long time. That is also a long time between drinks.

That was how I got introduced to AA. She said that and apparently she knew somebody, another truck driver who drove for Pepsi Cola and he apparently got sober. Bob never stayed sober. He's dead now. He was younger than I was.

C: When and where did you attend your first AA meeting? **Ron:** That was in Oakmont, Pennsylvania, which is about 12 miles northeast of Pittsburgh where I was living at the time. When I walked into that meeting, I remember saying to my wife, "Go in and look and see who is in there." Just because she wanted me to get sober, she went in and looked. She said, "They're just regular people in there." What did I expect her to find, a zoo? I sent this little girl in to see who was in there. If it was a saloon, I wouldn't have sent her in to see who was in there. She was willing to do anything I think to get me sober. That was my first meeting and I was drunk.

C: What was the name of the group? **Ron:** Oakmont Presbyterian Church Group. I didn't get sober right away. I went to that meeting and I stayed sober until the next Saturday night, which was their meeting night, and I was drunk again.

C: What did you think about the people in there? **Ron:** Oh, I had an opinion. They were all idiots. The women in those days that were at the meetings were basically taking their husbands to the meetings and the women sat on one side of the room and the men sat on the other side. Now, I never knew what the purpose of that was nor did I ask but they were segregated in the strictest sense of the word. It wasn't a fun place. There was a guy right inside the door and he put out his hand to shake hands with me and he said, "My name is Joe. We're glad you're here." I said, "You're glad I'm here, you don't even know me. What is your problem?" That was my first person that I spoke to in the meeting. It was really like farting in church.

I met a man Bill D. and started going to the meetings all the time. For the next 87 days I would sneak a drink here or there. Because I knew you people were full of it. You don't take the first drink. One drink will screw up your life. That's BS. One drink is not going to hurt anybody. It's ridiculous to even say that. What I didn't realize was that that 1 drink would lead to another drink and another drink. So, I probably had 4 or 5 drinks for the next 87 days. Obviously, I didn't tell anybody in AA that. Why would I let the cat out of the bag because it's gonna mess up their whole program.

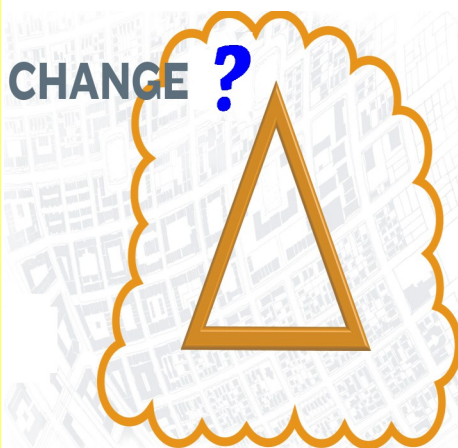
I've been sober 52 years; I know how to stay sober. I haven't changed anything. That's where the arrogance comes in with me because here in Jacksonville they don't do things the way we do in Pittsburgh. It's entirely different. What I do is what I did in Pittsburgh. If somebody needs help, I'm not gonna back away from that. I'll try to help them. If you don't like the way I do it, that's okay. If you stay sober, find somebody that you can talk to. Find somebody that will sponsor you like my sponsor did to me. I'm still sober and Bill D. was my sponsor and still is today. Unfortunately, I can't talk to him because he is suffering from dementia and that hurts. I talk to his wife every once in a while and just say hello and she knows who I am and everything. It's kind of hard to watch somebody that you genuinely love go down the drain. If you haven't held somebody in your arms while they died, then you don't know Jack shit about the disease of alcoholism. The first 5 people I tried to help died. One shot himself. When I went into the room, there was blood everywhere. That's a tough wrap. That's hard to accept. I talked to my sponsor about it but not until the 5th one died and then I called my sponsor and he wasn't home, so I called my sponsor's sponsor, another Irishman and when I called him I told him the story. A guy just blew his head right off. He said, "Ahh." I said, "What the heck is this, John?" He said, "It's not your fault." "You know everybody I touch dies. Why would I want to do this?" He said, "Well, why wouldn't ya?" I didn't answer that. It still hurts today and you know it's not easy to think about it. The thing that was always instilled in me was no matter what happens, my sponsor told me this, no matter what happens, no matter how bad it is, if you don't take a drink, you're going to win and here I am. I'm a winner. I don't care what you think about me. Anybody that can stay sober this long has got to be considered a winner whether you like what he has to say or not. I'm not any different in a meeting except that the one thing that I got here that I didn't get in Pittsburgh is a Big Book study group. I think it's paramount that groups do this all over the country. We read it sentence by sentence and after about 4 or 5 paragraphs we will have a discussion on those paragraphs.

**AN ALCOHOLIC
DOES NOT
SIMPLY HAVE**

C: How did you feel about doing the steps and what problems you might have had with them? **R:** First of all you have to understand that when I came to the program I couldn't read. I had dyslexia but back then they didn't know what that was. They thought you were a fake, phony in Catholic schools. The nuns said, "This kid is not dumb. He does math and gets A's in all of his math work and E's in everything else" E was a bad mark back then. I didn't read a book until I was 46; the first book I read was the Big Book. Once at a meeting somebody handed me "How it Works" to read and it was upside down. I didn't know it was upside down. I read it because I got it memorized. I read this and Jack M., another Irishman, was sitting beside me.

Ron E. (con't). He leaned over the table and he said, "Ron, why didn't you tell me you couldn't read?" I said what the are you talking about, I just read the 5th chapter for you. What the hell is wrong with you?" He said, "You always read with the card upside down?" Caught. I said, "Yea Jack, okay, so what?" Jack told Coleman M. who asked his wife to teach me how to read. So, I go to Coleman's and he introduced me to his wife, who was gorgeous. I talked to her a little bit and she said, "Okay, we're going to go back here and do this Ron and I want to talk to Coleman for a minute before we start. Just go to this room." Well, she's Irish too. The Irish don't know how to whisper. They whisper and everybody in the whole house can hear them. She said, "Don't you dare leave me alone with that crazy person." So, I had a reputation even back then. I had to tell you that because it was funny.

Coleman would not go on a 12-step call without me. He would take me on every one because he and I were the only two guys that would go into a black neighborhood and speak and/or visit if somebody called and wanted to get some help. I remember that somebody asked me to speak at this meeting in Elmwood and I said, "Yea, sure." That's my kind of meeting. People were down to earth. So, I go to the meeting and there was this big guy out front of this place who is like 6 feet 8 inches, weighs 400 pounds. I pull up with the brand new Cadillac that I bought for my wife. Anyway, when I got out of the car he said to me, "That's a nice car you got there boy." I said, "Yea, I like it too." He said, "I'm gonna watch it for you." He said, "I'll be out here the whole time you're in the meeting. Somebody mess with that car, they're gonna have to mess with me." He was one of the members of the group and he knew I was coming to talk and it was good. He watched the car while I was in there. I decided from then on I'd take my truck.



C: How's AA changed over the years? **Ron:** I think it has to do with the institutions you have. When I came to AA, there was one institution in the whole state, 22 to 25 million people, there was one institution. The difference is that is all we had and there were a couple of hospitals that took in drunks. One was in Johnstown, St. Mary's in Johnstown, and St. John's in Pittsburgh, which I frequented a lot of the time. They had an AA ward and that's where I watched people get sober. They used to give you embalming fluid to get you off the juice, paraldehyde? Today most everyone comes to us from an institution and none of these differentiate between alcohol and drugs.

Whenever I speak I mention that I do not know a thing about drugs. I never took a drug in my life. I never smoked a left-handed cigarette. I never took a pill for any reason other than when I was force fed something in the hospital. Whenever I speak I want everyone to know I don't know anything about drugs. I'm here to talk about alcoholism. I am anti-institution except that it can be a place that you can get dried out.

C: Going back to 1961, do you think the formats were any different than they are today? **R.:** Pretty much the same. If you're in Arizona or New Mexico meetings are often in Spanish. When I was in Puerto Rico, I went to a Spanish meeting there. It's really funny. They have this meeting in Spanish and when the meeting is over everybody speaks English. It's like, "Oh, what is this?" I don't think there is a big change in meetings anywhere. I think basically it's the same, except small cities that are different, friendlier. Out west, anything past the Mississippi River, the people are entirely different; polite, "Yes sir, No sir," no matter who you are. If I was going to move anywhere, I would go to Bend or Portland. Portland is kind of my favorite.

Did you do the steps rapidly or was it slow. **R.:** I'm a believer in slow. Anybody that asks me to sponsor them I tell them that up front. I'm not going to tell you how fast to go or how slow to go. The slower, in my case, was better for me. I was 12 years sober before I read the Big Book. You just have to listen to the people that are talking to you, people that you trust. You have to learn how to trust. It takes some education before you can jump into the fourth and the fifth, and they say, "Well if you do it right away, then you'll be done with that and then you can move on." To what, what are you gonna move on to? You still won't know what end is up. Ninety meetings in 90 days, I don't have a problem with that but that's what they tell you in the institutions and if you get out of there and your wife takes you back, if you're fortunate to have a wife that will put up with you, you can't have her be a AA widow. You can't and expect that to last because generally speaking you would be sober but your wife is alone, your family is alone and how do you justify that. I can't justify it. I'm thinking slow. It's just my opinion now. I'm thinking there is a better way to go because somebody is teaching you. That whole 12 years, somebody is teaching you. I'm not saying that anybody should do exactly what I did. I'm just saying slow it down. I didn't do the fourth and the fifth step until I was sober about eight years. That did not mean that I was not working on it. That did not mean that I was not studying and trying to be a better person. I stayed on that first step for 2-1/2 years and then I moved on. I always had my Higher Power. I didn't have to look for one. That was not a problem for me. I needed to do it right instead of what I thought was right. I think that's what happened.

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Ron: (con't) In any case, I was taken to Founder's Day by my sponsor, who's Bill D., and his sponsor, John M., who is deceased. When I got to the meeting there must have been 500 people in line waiting to get their book signed, and my sponsor asked me, "If you want to do that, get a book signed, just get in line?" I said, "I don't care. I'm not going to do that." My sponsor took me over in front of all these people and said to me, "You're going to meet him, be cool. Don't be some dumb ass, okay?" So, we walked to the front of the line. I was introduced to him, and he said, "John and Bill told me that they were going to bring you over but they didn't tell me that they were going to bring you to the front of the line." Obviously, we all laughed. He said, "We're going to meet later on and have a talk." We met and had dinner. It was Founder's Day that's why it was over in Akron that day. So, we talked about me and the trouble I was having. That I didn't feel like I was able to help anybody for any reason, and AA works for other people and it doesn't seem to work for me and that was the general conversation that we had. Bill Wilson told me how lucky I was to know that I had these people in my life, meaning my sponsor and his sponsor, that cared enough about you to bring you here to talk to me and I'm just a man like you. I'm not any different than you. Most of us don't have these kinds of tragedies in our lives but some of the things that happened to you were, you know, in your eyes inexplicable, but in our eyes, it's what happens to people who continue to drink. That's all they have to look forward to and you jumping in front of that door so that his wife and children couldn't see that mess in the bedroom was heroic. You made sure that your children didn't see that and nobody else was exposed you handled the police. You gave your wife the keys to the car and told her to take the kids out of there.

The other two meetings with Bill Wilson were relatively fun because we had talked to a lot of people since then and it was really a pleasure and I guess that those encouraging things from Bill really helped, you know, because he told me about some things that happened with him and some things that happened with other people that he knew in very early AA.

I don't know what else I have to say about that, although I can say it had an effect on my life. It made me actually feel special that I had that opportunity but I didn't learn that right away either; that came later. I felt wow how lucky I was to have the sponsor that I had and his sponsor that were friends with Bill and how lucky I was to get a chance to talk to him about the things that most people don't get the opportunity.

My second meeting with Bill was at Founder's Day again, my sponsor and his sponsor, the same scenario. We were walking in and I made a comment to my sponsor. I said, "That's probably that same line of people that I got ahead of last time." So, as we were walking up passed the thing because I wasn't going to get in line. An autograph is not going to keep you sober. If you get lucky, God will help you. So anyway, I'm walking passed him, maybe 30 yards away and he hollers, "Hey Ron!" I'm looking around because I heard my name called and I'm looking around and Bill Wilson is over at the desk waving his hand at me like this. I put my hand up dumfounded like and waved back, and I said to my sponsor, "Is he waving at me?" He said, "Yea, do you see anybody else here he's waving at? Do you see anybody else waving back?" I was not laughing at the time but I couldn't believe he remembered my name. I was quite shocked that he remembered my name because I don't think I said anything to him that would have impressed him. So, it's just funny but that happened; I couldn't believe that he remembered my name, I could not.



William (Bill) Wilson

C: Any closing remarks about AA? R: AA is not for everybody. For me it's a life saver. I'm 83 years old. I've had five heart attacks and I've had heart surgery twice. I've had cancer surgery. I'm not what you could call a healthy person. I've been blessed that I got through all this and I'm still sober. I've never forgotten where I came from. You can't ever forget where you came from because you can go back there in a heartbeat.

C: Thank you Ron.