

ADD-A-LINE

Published for AA Members in Northeast Florida Since November 1962

Northeast Florida

Intergroup

3128 Beach Boulevard

Jacksonville, FL 32207

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Website: www.neflaa.org

Email:

neflintergroup@gmail.com

9 am to 5 pm Mon.- Fri.

OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON
APRIL 7TH AND 10TH IN
OBSERVANCE OF GOOD FRIDAY
AND EASTER



Committee Meetings

Intergroup Steering

Committee

Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at

5:30PM at IG Office

Intergroup Business Meeting

Saturday, April 1, 2023 at 9:00

a.m.

Fellowship Starts at 8:30

with coffee and snacks

New Meeting Location

Riverplace Tower

1301 Riverplace Blvd, 15th

Floor

Jacksonville, FL 32207

Zoom information

Meeting ID: 897 7440 1312

Passcode: nefl3128

Committee Chair Positions

<u>Intergroup Chair</u> Holly C. nefligchair@gmail.com	904-662-0646
<u>Intergroup Vice Chair</u> Dan B. d.borcher@comcast.net	904-737-7532
<u>Treasurer</u> Walter S. wfstrickland@gmail.com	904-303-5071
<u>Steering Committee Chair</u> Roger L. rlehman25@yahoo.com	904-318-8535
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<u>Website</u> Ashley R. techitez2023@gmail.com	870-730-6822
<u>Zoom Host</u> Andrew (temporary) asmarch89@gmail.com	904-760-2009

STEP FOUR

“ Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

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TRADITION FOUR

“ Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

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FOURTH CONCEPT

“ At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.”

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ATTENTION:

GSRs, Alt. GSRs, District Committee Members
and all other interested AA Members



73rd General Service Conference
Pre-Conference Presentations

Presented by: Mary A., Delegate Area 14 Panel 73

“Together In Service”

Date	Host Districts	Location
Saturday March 11, 2023 1PM - 4PM	Orlando 9, 10, 11, 18, 31, 33	St Stephens Church 2140 W State Rd 434 Longwood FL 32779
Saturday March 18, 2023 11AM - 2PM	Space Coast 12, 15, 23	Trinity Wellsprings Church 638 South Patrick Drive Satellite Beach 32937
Saturday March 25, 2023 12:30PM - 4PM	HYBRID Jacksonville 1, 3, 6, 24, 25, 30	San Marco Club 1423 San Marco Blvd. Jacksonville FL 32207 ID: 871 4542 0705 Pc: Est1955
Sunday March 26, 2023 1:00PM - until done	Fernandina Beach 4	Fernandina Beach Amelia Room 906 S 7 th St. Fernandina Beach 32034
Saturday April 1, 2023 1:30PM - 4:30PM	Daytona 8, 19, 20, 21, 32	Almous Club 569 Foote Court Daytona Bch FL 32114
Saturday April 8, 2023 10AM - 12PM	Ocala 17	Dunnellon Presbyterian Church 20641 Chestnut Street Dunnellon FL 34431
Sunday April 9, 2023 Noon - until done	Gainesville, Lake City & Tallahassee 14, 16, 5	Alligator Lake Recreation Area Ponderosa Pavilion 420 SE Alligator Glen Lake City, FL 32025

*Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat (As Bill Sees It, p. 125)**

For more information: delegatela14p73@gmail.com



**FOUNDERS' DAY
FLORIDA STYLE**

Recovery-Unity- Service

June 9, 10, and 11, 2023

TALLAHASSEE AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

6800 MAHAN DRIVE, TALLAHASSEE, FL 32317

SPEAKERS	REGISTRATION
KATIE P - AUSTIN, TX (AA)	\$30.00 per person, in advance. \$35.00 at the door. Registration includes free admission to the Car Museum, and complementary Saturday Night Spaghetti dinner. Doors open at 4:30 on Friday, and the first speaker begins at 5:30. Please join us in our new Ballroom location!
CHARLIE P - AUSTIN, TX (AA)	
PAUL M - NY, NY (AA)	
TIM H - LOUISVILLE, KY (AA)	
CHIP B - DESTIN, FL (AA)	
JOE J- TALLAHASSEE (AA)	
CINDY H- CAMILLA, GA (AFG)	
WITH	
JANE D-L, and JAMES L as	
our MC'S FOR THE WEEKEND	

**SATURDAY NIGHT WILL FEATURE OUR RAFFLE BASKET
DRAWING, 50/50, AND THE SOBRIETY COUNTDOWN**

Mail your registration form to:
FDFS -P.O. BOX 38034, TALLAHASSEE, FL, 32315-8034
 Or register online at [www.Foundersdayflorida.org](http://wwwFOUNDERSDAYFLORIDA.ORG)

Name #1 _____	Number of attendees _____ x \$30= \$ _____
Name #2 _____	Scholarship Donation = \$ _____

*God
Grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage To change The things I can and
Wisdom to know the difference.*



INTERGROUP OFFICE LOG

February 2023

Description	2023	2022
Phone Army	115	224
A.A. Information	184	135
Administrative & Other Information	28	73
12 Step Calls	3	1
Visitors to the Office	199	85

66TH FLORIDA STATE CONVENTION 2023



THURSDAY AUGUST 10 - SUNDAY AUGUST 13

WWW.FLORIDASTATECONVENTION.COM

SADDLEBROOK RESORT - WESLEY

CHAPEL, FL 33543

WWW.SADDLEBROOK.COM



PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

AA, Al-Anon, Alateen, Spanish Speaking, LGBTQIA, YPG, First Nations, Old Timer's Panel, Marathon Meetings, Workshops, and Archives Display;

Friday and Saturday Banquets, Saturday BBQ lunch and Ice Cream Socials; Sports Activities include Golf, 5K Walk/Run, Pickle Ball, Morning Yoga, and Escorted Motorcycle Ride; Dances and Entertainment including South Florida's own "The A.A. Service Manual: The Musical"; Saturday Pool Party, and much more....

Some of our AA Friends...



...could use a little help!

Please volunteer to represent your Club or Group as a member of the Accessibilities Committee.

Contact Gene M at: emsailorman@gmail.com



Spanish Men

and Women

Speakers Needed!!!

Please Contact Phone Army Chair.

VOLUNTEER



Celebrate!

February

LoveNaction

RENEE B. 9 yrs.



Orange Park Step Sisters

Joyce V. 33 yrs.
Ute B. 14 yrs.

I Am Responsible...
When anyone, anywhere,
Reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. Always to
be there.
And for that:
I am responsible.

March

This Too Shall

Tim McV. 12 yrs.
Robert S. 5 yrs.
Sara S. 5 yrs.
Bob C. 21 yrs.

Billy Goat Hill

Dianne L. 42 yrs.
Tim L. 34 yrs.

Fiesta Group

Caiden 4 yrs.
Pam S. 31 yrs.
Polo P. 3 yrs.
Ellen O. 25 yrs.
Amy G. 15 yrs.
Luillna 2 yrs.
Candi 5 yrs.
Smoothy King 1 yr.

Orange Park Step Sisters

Mary G. 36 yrs.

April

Mandarin Women

Maureen 1 yrs.
Kristin 7 yrs.
Tonya 13 yrs.

Arlington Group

Scott K. 3 yrs.
Zach S. 2 yrs.
Jimmy M. 23 yrs.
Hayward H. 2 yrs.
Jack C. 4 yrs.
Michelle W. 2 yrs.
Charles M. 2 yrs.

Central Group

Jerry W. 41 yrs.
Bonnie P. 41 yrs.
Gary S. 33 yrs.
Michael P. 31 yrs.
Gerry K. 20 yrs.
Jeff W. 12 yrs.
Sandra B. 40 yrs.
Rick P. 5 yrs.
Nora M. 33 yrs.
Deborah M.



District Meetings

	DCM	EMAIL	PHONE	MONTHLY MEETING
District 1	Nora M	nmartin7924@gmail.com	(904) 910-1956	Zoom, 3 rd Tuesday @ 6:45pm: Zoom ID 9374405307, PWD 772699
District 3	Vacant			
District 4	Rhonda W	rhondaatt@gmail.com	(330) 571-5650	Zoom, 3 rd Thursday @ 7pm Zoom ID 81509711457 PWD 841276
District 6	Linda K	lindaeener2808@gmail.com	(904) 228-7785	In Person, 1 st Monday @ 6pm, Memorial Lutheran Church 3375 US 1 South, St. Augus-
District 24	Patrick O	patrickortiz45@gmail.com	(904) 814-9367	In Person, 1 st Wednesday @ 6:30pm, St Marks Episcopal Church 310 N Second Ave, Palatka, FL 32077
District 25	Jake K	jlkinter@yahoo.com	(937) 760-1086	Zoom, 1 st Sunday @ 5:30pm: Zoom ID 8848317 PWD 1234
District 30	JR E	jrfobaa@gmail.com	(757)472-2116	In Person, 4 th Saturday @ 9:30am, First Christian Church 11924 San Jose Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32223

ACCOUNT BALANCES FEBRUARY 28, 2023	
Checking/Savings	
1021 · Cash · Regions Bank	\$9,902.46
1024 · Cash in Drawer	\$99.03
Total Checking/Savings	\$10,001.49
1360 · Inventory	\$10,930.02
1400 · Prudent Reserve	
1476 · Regions Bank 5982- CD #001	\$10,180.46
1481 · Regions Bank 6794- CD #002	\$10,540.62
1486 · Regions Bank - CD #003	\$10,090.29
Total 1400 · Prudent Reserve	\$30,811.37

FAITHFUL FIVERS	
Anonymous	Johnathan B.
Anonymous	Kara K.
Anonymous	Lega L.
Barbara M.	Lon L.
Byron G.	Ruth R.
Carrie B.	Sherry T.
DK Woods	Susan I.
Holly C.	Susan G.
Jody T.	Yevette B.

Central Group's Old-timers 48th Annual Fish Fry!



Saturday, April 16th 2023

San Marco Clubhouse

1423 San Marco Boulevard 32207

Hear old-timers share their experience, strength and hope and the history of AA in Florida

Please bring a dessert (not required for attendance)

*****50/50 Raffle*****

Eating begins at 12:30 and Speakers at 1:30

Questions??? Call Doug S. (904) 731-0821 or San Marco (904) 398-9977

	Feb 23	Jan-Feb 2023	22-Feb	Jan - Feb 2022
Ordinary Income/Expense				
Income				
4000 · Contribution Income				
4002 · Groups	3,335.01	7306.25	3846.33	12467.67
4003 · Pink Can Contribution	33.00	33.00		41.00
4005 · Faithful Five	145.00	295.00	130.00	170.00
4006 · Birthdays				42.00
4007 · Other Contributions	834.40	1861.40	52.00	52.00
4008 · Anonymous				177.50
4010 · IG Breakfast/Speaker Mtg			20.00	20.00
Total 4000 · Contribution Income	4,347.41	9495.65	4048.33	12970.17
4020 · Retail Income	4,734.28	10835.55	3117.32	5764.98
4040 · Other Income				
4042 · Business Meeting			2.00	2.00
Total 4040 · Other Income			2.00	2.00
4060 · Income Special Events				
4062 · Banquet				
4065 · Cake Auction				
4067 · Raffle Tickets				
Total 4060 · Income - Special Events				
Total Income	9,081.69	20,331.20	7167.65	18737.15
Cost of Goods Sold				
4510 · Cost of Retail Sales	3,588.08	8,663.00	2091.31	3855.91
5001 · Cost of Revenues - Other				
4540 · Cost of Event - Banquet Expense				
5215 · IG Business Meeting Expense	43.54	65.04	20.55	20.55
5195 · CC Fees	197.51	329.09	142.31	224.43
5290 · IG Breakfast Expense				
59900 · POS Inventory Adjustments	-107.04	-45.30	-7.60	-7.59
Total 5001 · Cost of Revenues - Other	134.01	348.83	155.26	237.39
Total COGS	3,722.09	9,011.83	2246.57	4093.30
Gross Profit	5,359.60	11,319.37	4921.08	14643.85
Expense				
60000 · Salaries and Benefits				
6560 · Wages	3,639.50	6,509.75	2200.13	4477.76
6561 · PTO			230.00	230.00
6565 · Payroll Taxes	303.93	543.64	205.56	510.39
Total 60000 · Salaries and Benefits	3,943.43	7,053.39	2635.69	5218.15
61000 · Office Expense				
Total 61000 · Office Expense	411.19	1,697.80	1183.28	5028.80
62000 · Facilities and maintenance				
Total 62000 · Facilities and maintenance	1,411.01	3031.73	1323.47	2865.08
5300 · When & Where Cost				
55000 · Committees Expense				
Total 55000 · Committees Expense	624.95	991.62	538.45	939.73
70900 · Business Expenses				
Total 70900 · Business Expenses	8.92	37.46	13.11	103.10
62100 · Contract Services				
Total 62100 · Contract Services	300.00	600	300.00	600.00
65100 · Other Expenses				
Total 65100 · Other Expenses	8.00	16	8.00	13.00
68300 · Travel and Meetings				
5235 · Training				
Total 68300 · Travel and Meetings				
Total Expense	6,804.25	13524.75	6066.00	14831.86
Net Ordinary Income	-1,444.65	-2205.38	-1144.92	-188.01
Other Income/Expense				
Other Income				
73000 · Miscellaneous Income				
73050 · Interest Income	0.77	2.1		1.33
6310 · Sales Tax Collection Allowance	10.86	16.09	4.79	12.63
Total 73000 · Miscellaneous Income	11.63	18.19	4.79	13.96
Total Other Income	11.63	18.19	4.79	13.96
Net Other Income	11.63	18.19	4.79	13.96
Net Income	-1,433.02	-2187.19	-1140.13	-174.05

Contributions February 2023

Group Name	Feb ' 23	YTD Feb '23	Att Mar '23 Mtg	Group Name	Feb ' 23	YTD Feb '23	Att Mar '23 Mtg
100 Proof	\$250.00	\$250.00		More About Alcoholism	\$182.50	\$182.50	
5th Tradition				Morning After		\$75.00	
7/11 Meditation Group	\$246.50	\$246.50		Nassauville			
A Design For Living				Neptune Beach Book Study			
A Way Out				New Beginnings			
AA Night Owls Group				New Life Group St. Aug			
Arlington				Nocatee Promises		\$84.00	
Alexis	\$30.00	\$30.00		Nocatee Saturday AM			
Aloha Step 11	\$193.50	\$193.50		Nocatee Sobriety		\$281.00	
Amethyst Group		\$32.50		Oak Tree Men's		\$200.00	
As Bill Saw It				Orange Park			
As Bill Sees It				Orange Park Step Sisters	\$57.82	\$57.82	X
Azalea City Group				Other Side of the Bridge		\$50.00	
BAA				Palm Valley Mens		\$83.50	
Baymeadows				Phoenix Men's			
Bch Agnostics & Free Thinkers				Primary Purpose			
Beach Side Step Study				Reborn	\$50.00	\$150.00	
Beaches Unity 7 AM Meeting				Riverside (Tom S)			
Beaches Unity (BUG)		\$300.00		Rule 62			X
BLIS				St. Nicholas			
Callahan				Salisbury Mens			
Central			X	Sandpiper			
Clean & Free			X	Saturday Night Live			
Coffee and Readings				Seascape	\$135.00	\$249.00	
Conscious Contact		\$86.00		Serenity at Noon			
Coyote Men's Group			X	Sicker Than Others			
Design for Living				Sober on Purpose	\$250.00	\$250.00	
District 6				Sober Sisters			
Diverse Views				Solutions	\$90.00	\$90.00	
Downtown Group	\$100.00	\$100.00		Sons of the Spirit			
Drop The Rock				Sounds of Sobriety			
Dunes				Spiritual Awakenings			
Durban 12 & 12				Spiritual Knights			
Early Sobriety				Step A Month			
Eastside		\$180.00		Stepping Up Group			
End of Meeting YPG				Stepping Stones			
Evergreen				Sunday Morning Palatka			
Fernandina Beach				Sunday Sunrise Beach			
Fiesta	\$627.29	\$1,289.67	X	Switzerland			
Free Mens		\$232.50		The Alcoholics Group			
Free Thinkers				The Herd	\$203.00	\$443.00	
From The Heart		\$300.00	X	The Grove Group (Sat 10 AM)		\$140.88	
Fruit Cove Women				The Outsiders Group			
Greenland Road	\$25.00	\$25.00		This Too Shall Pass			
Half Way Through				Third St Third Tradition			
Happy Joyous and Free				Timuquana Ladies			
Heart To Heart				Trout River			
Hold On PPG				Valley Mens Group			
How It Works				Village Womens			
I Am Responsible		\$180.00		Villagers		\$52.40	
Island Serenity Group		\$69.00		Way Out		\$100.00	
It's In The Book				Wesconnett			
James Gang II				Westside			
Jumping Off Place				What's The Point		\$158.00	
Keep It Simple	\$100.00	\$100.00		Winners			
Ladies Unity		\$36.64		Winning Game			
Language of The Heart				Women Enjoying Sobriety			X
Lest We Forget	\$239.40	\$239.40		Women in Recovery			
Living In The Light				Women Speak			
Living Now				Women Upstart Group			
Los Lobos Mens				Women YPG			X
Love N Action				Womens' Candlelight			
Macclenny Friends of Bill				Yulee			
Mandarin				Zoom Meeting 7 AM Penman Rd	\$205.00	\$318.44	
Mandarin Big Book Study			X	TOTAL	\$3,335.01	\$7,306.25	
Mandarin Women in Recovery		\$100.00	X				
Men's Blackeye	\$250.00	\$250.00					
Men's Redeye							
Men's Solution							
Middleburg	\$100.00	\$100.00					

IG Reps Attending Mar 2023 Meeting = 11 Total Attending = 25
 Groups Contributing in Feb 2023 = 19 Feb. 2023 YTD = 39

An Old Timer's Story

Tom H. is one of Jacksonville's AA old-timers. Tom had his last drink in 1972 (50 years ago) and has been an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous since. Tom was interviewed last year, and the following has been excerpted from that interview with his permission. (interviewed by Dave S. and edited by Charlie M.)

David: Tom, tell us where you were born and how did it all start?

Tom: I was born in 1954 and I grew up in Rumson, New Jersey. I hit bottom and joined Alcoholics Anonymous at age 17. Many circumstances contributed to me joining AA as a teenager. I had a genetic predisposition to alcoholism, a strong family history, and a local culture that condoned alcohol excess. Also, I had childhood traumas and emotional sensitivity that probably contributed to my "early start" on the road to alcoholism.

When I was three years old, my two-year-old sister died from cancer. My mother drank alcoholically for the next eight years. My father distanced himself from the family and lived mostly with his girlfriend in New York City. These and other traumatic events influenced my character, and how I experience relationships today.

My father was a man of contradictions. He was a successful businessman with a strong, intimidating personality. And he was a narcissistic philanderer, given to fits of overpowering fears, depression, and explosive rage. He also could be compassionate and sensitive to the difficulties of people less fortunate than himself. He was the first one to recognize my alcoholism and direct me to Alcoholics Anonymous.

My mother died 5 years ago with over 50 years of continuous sobriety. Following a terrifying night of driving drunk with her 4 children, she had her last drink on October 30th, 1961. She was an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous and she was my role model in early recovery.

Age 14 at an all-boys boarding school, I began to drink and immediately fell in love with the effects of alcohol. Very soon I recognized that my reaction to drinking was different from my peers. I clearly remember wondering, "life is so much better with a few drinks, why don't people just drink all the time?"

Dave: How is your drinking different from nonalcoholics?

Tom: I am convinced that the reaction I have to alcohol is different than the reaction of a nonalcoholic. The essential fact of my alcoholism is that when I am drunk, I don't think I'm drunk. It feels the alcohol is not working and I want more. When I drank, I usually drank until I passed out. I stay sober today in part because I think drinking has the potential to be immediately fatal.

Alcohol made me feel so great that if I could drink all the time, I would. At age 16 that opportunity presented itself. I went to San Francisco with a friend and we lived unsupervised for 3 months. I had a fake driver's license and I drank every day. At the end of that summer, I was briefly suicidal for reasons I didn't understand. I didn't know I was depressed and it didn't occur to me that my feelings were related to my daily alcohol consumption.

I came back to boarding school for a year, rebelled, left, and enrolled in the public high school for my senior year. My drinking progressed and there were consequences. For a year, I drank two to three times a week until I blacked out. I had no control over how much I was going to drink when I started. And I couldn't stop drinking.

Dave: What got you to your first AA meeting?

Tom: One night I got picked up by the local police for breaking into a neighbor's house in a blackout. My father picked me up and told me what I needed to hear. He said, "Your mother is an alcoholic. She goes to AA. You're an alcoholic. You should go to AA". That seemed like a reasonable compromise because I thought I was going to get sent to an inpatient mental hospital.

Dave: You came in at 17 and you were still in high school. What was that like?

Tom: It was awkward and very lonely. I never felt like I "fit in" with my high school classmates. Being a sober member of AA certainly didn't help that situation. Also, I felt like an imposter in AA. I was too young to belong in AA; my bottom wasn't low enough. I had hair down to my shoulders, rode a motorcycle, and worried about being drafted and sent to Viet Nam. AA in Rumson, NJ was suburban, middle-aged and upper middle class. I struggled to "identify, not compare". But I was terrified of drinking. I was afraid I would die. That is what I learned in my first 90 days in

AA. I learned I was definitely an alcoholic and alcoholism was worse than I thought it was. Dave: Tell me about your last drink.

Tom: It was March 19, 1972. I drove my girlfriend to the airport. She knew I was an alcoholic and she told me so. That night my mother asked me to take a young lady to the Young People's Meeting in Keyport, NJ. My plan was to stay sober until my girlfriend got back from her trip and win her heart with my new found sobriety. When she got back 2 months later, I was still going to AA, I was sober 60 days but I had another girlfriend!

Early on the thing that kept me sober was the fear of dying, fear of going to jail and fear of being confined to an insane asylum. At every AA meeting, I heard stories of people who had drunk like me, but they had continued until they lost their families, lost their jobs, had DTs, or went to jail. I heard stories of people

who woke up from blackouts in jail or in a hospital. I knew that could happen to me. I knew that was in my future. I stayed sober largely because of fear.

Dave: You first had a plan to stay there for a couple of months. Was there a time that when you decided this was the life for you?

Tom: Yes and no. Right away there was something about Alcoholics Anonymous that appealed to me. It was okay to be different there. Everybody was different there. It was like the Island of Misfit Toys. I was beginning to appreciate the simple wisdom of the AA way of life. I wanted temporary relief from emotional pain and the consequences of my drinking, but I insisted on reserving my right to drink in the future. So, I did it one day at a time. I didn't want to become *an AA member*. I didn't want that identity or lifestyle. That wasn't me. I was seventeen. I didn't want to go to Denny's Diner on Friday night and drink coffee with a bunch of old alcoholics. I wanted to go to fraternity parties and look for college girls.

Dave: Then what happened?

Tom: After being sober about two years, as I walked into a Tuesday night men's meeting, the thought occurred to me, "why don't I just stop fighting and work the program". I felt a great relief. To this day I internally reserve the right to drink in the future; I still stay sober one day at a time. But on that Tuesday night with 2 years of sobriety I abandoned the idea that I was in a battle with the higher power over who would control my life.

Dave: Kind of a Step 3 moment?

Tom: Yes. You could say that. That was Step 3.

Dave: When you decided that this might be a longer-term thing for you, did you get a sponsor and start working the steps?

Tom: Again, I would answer, yes and no. I went to college and I got a sponsor named Harry, who pushed me to complete Steps 4 and 5. My 4th step was 80 pages long and there were parts I couldn't talk about because I thought they were too shameful. Slowly, Harry and I got through all 12 steps.

After freshman year of college, I was accepted to study in southern France for a year. Harry had a lot of concerns about me going over there and staying sober. His concerns were justifiable. I was NOT the AA poster boy. My commitment to my recovery was lukewarm at best. But I said, "Harry, if AA means I can't live the life I want to live then I might as well get drunk". In the end he gave me his blessing. I went to France and I stayed sober. It was amazing.

Dave: Did you go to meetings in France?

Tom: In France in 1975, there were no cell phones, no internet and very few AA meetings. To make a phone call I had to go to the post office and wait an hour. The General Service Office in New York published a catalogue of "AA Loners". Through that I began a weekly written correspondence with an American expat writer living in Paris. He was a wise man with great sobriety, and he was a professional writer. His letters were prompt and thoughtful. We exchanged letters every week for a year.

Dave: So, you came back from France, went back to college. What happened then?

Tom: I was still going to meetings. I worked in a hospital when my sister was admitted to a mental hospital. I decided to be a psychiatrist. I had been an underachiever most of my life. I was that student that scored high on standardized tests and had a low GPA. Everyone thought I was lazy and unmotivated. I realize today that I was depressed and had terrible low self-esteem. With two to three years of sobriety, the tools of the program had begun to do their work. Simple practices like doing my best and trusting God with the results took hold. I slowly abandoned my victim mentality. I was less depressed, and my academic performance soared. I went from being a C student to an A student and on March 19, 1977, five years after my last drink, I was accepted to Georgetown School of Medicine.

Dave: Did you go to AA meetings during medical school?

Tom: At Georgetown I had a rigid routine. There were classes in the AM, study early afternoon, attend the 4 PM meeting on P street in Georgetown, early light dinner, study some more, and early to bed. I did that roughly seven days a week for four years. When people tell me that they are too busy to go to meetings, they are talking to the wrong guy.

Dave: Tell us a little about your life after medical school.

Tom: I married my first wife, Carolyn, the mother of my 3 children when I was sober 10 years, and for 10 to 15 years she was my best friend. With more than a little spiritual pride, I thought that our marriage was bulletproof. I saw myself as a sober mature guy that would never get divorced. I self-righteously thought people who got divorced were quitters. Today, obviously, I see that differently. Divorce was the hardest thing I have experienced in recovery. And it was the most liberating. "...the process of gaining a new perspective was unbelievably painful!"

Dave: What was it like being a doctor, a husband, a father and an active member of AA?

Tom: Busy. It was really busy. Having a balanced life with career, family and recovery was a constant juggling act.

I think I did an OK job. But it wasn't always pretty.

Dave: What was it like trying to live the principles with your kids?

Tom: I think it was good. The program taught me to put a high value on personal honesty and personal accountability, and patience. I think my three kids admired these characteristics in me, and today I see these characteristics in all three of my children. My 3 children are honest, disciplined and have a well-



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developed sense of personal accountability. They are willing to own their own part of things.

Dave: What do you do for service work?

Tom: Mainly I show up at meetings and I am available when called. I am more available now because my career has slowed down. I have always had a sponsor and I sponsor 2 - 3 guys. I speak at meetings, and I start new meetings. Over the years, meetings seem to have become bigger and more impersonal. It's important to start new meetings that are small, local, and more intimate. Actually, I'm starting a new meeting this week.

Dave: Is AA part of your social life?

Tom: One thing I've done consistently is celebrate significant life events for my AA friends. I regularly host birthday parties, wedding anniversaries, AA anniversaries and the like. I see social entertainment as part of my responsibility to my AA tribe.

Dave: How do you practice the program at work?

Tom: I practice the program at work the same way I do at home: honesty and accountability. And I try to keep the mood light. The most important thing I can bring to any relationship at work, at home, or in the fellowship is be happy. Negativity has an enormous cost. Keeping a daily written gratitude list helps me to stay positive.

Dave: Do you have concerns with respect to the health of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole moving into the future? Tom: Yes. I see parallels between the health and wellbeing of the fellowship and my own personal sobriety.

Complacency is our biggest threat. "We are not cured of alcoholism. What we have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual program". To remain viable, my sobriety depends on willingness to let go of old ideas and on continued spiritual development. Similarly, I think that for the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to remain vibrant and relevant, it must to continue to evolve.

Dave: That's interesting. Can you give an example?

Tom: Many AA members see the fellowship as an established, stable and mature organization. That is an incomplete truth. AA is a young organization (85 years) compared to other service organizations. I would like more members to see AA as fragile and susceptible to extinction. I would like to see more individual alcoholics in AA start to think that unless we all do our part AA could become slowly irrelevant. We need to keep it alive for the next generation. AA needs leadership.

Dave: How could AA become irrelevant?

Tom: The social and cultural landscape of alcoholism has changed. In the early days of AA, the typical member was a middle-class Caucasian American male in his 50s whose drug of choice was alcohol. That is no longer true. That alcoholic subtype may actually be a minority. Most newcomers are under age 50, and drugs are part of their story.

Many groups have tacitly adopted a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regarding discussion of drugs other than alcohol. People who have problems with drugs in addition to problems with alcohol, are allowed to attend AA meetings but they are subtly discouraged from talking about their drug related experience. They have kind of a second-class citizen status. When the number of people for whom alcohol was not the drug of choice exceeds the number of "pure" alcoholics, that is when AA could become less relevant. Old school culture dictates that our obligation is to the *alcoholic* who still suffers. I get that. But rigid adherence to that commitment could compromise AA's future.

I think dogmatism could kill AA. Exclusive adherence to a limited reading list of "AA approved literature" could limit our growth. I think there may come a time to rewrite the big book. If the Bible can be rewritten, can't the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous? To survive, AA has to be flexible like it was when the traditions were being hammered out. It is understandable that with success people can be afraid of change. A "let's not mess this up" mentality prevails.

But the survival of the fellowship is like the success of the individual. It's grow or go.

Some parting thoughts:

1. Start more AA meetings. Members who commit to small intimate meetings stay sober.
2. Have a sponsor to improve the quality of your decisions and the quality of your life.
3. Sponsor others to survive the disease of alcoholism.
4. In spiritual growth, don't expect overnight miracles. Change takes time.
5. Meantime, remember, God uses us as we are, not as we think we should be.
6. Never stop going to meetings. Physical attendance is key to surviving the disease.

Dave: Thanks very much for sharing your thoughts today.





Grapevine Humor



The next day when I crawled into work, a co-worker asked me if I had had enough yet. What a question. The hand of AA was reaching out to me. My new friend, who was to become my first sponsor, took me to my first AA meeting. He told me the only requirement was a desire to stop drinking. He also told me that I needed two things: an open mind and a willingness to learn. I had been a steady drink-

er since I was 13. Yes, I had a desire to stop drinking and I was also willing to go to any lengths.

Looking back over my life, I am now able to see that something or someone was always looking out for me. The nuns at school, helping me to complete high school. The union getting me my apprenticeship back and helping me complete my training for a journeyman's card. My uncle getting me out of juvenile detention more times than I care to count.

I am comfortably retired now. I am living a

productive life and have a loving wife of more than 30 years. With the help of AA and the example of the hundreds of AA brothers and sisters, I've not had a drink since my first meeting. I still attend at least three meetings a week and it's a joy for me.

I'm now able to more freely give back what was given to me 38 years ago. I get to ask other men ... Have you had enough yet? I know that when that person has had enough, we will be there for him.

PATRICK J.
Albuquerque,
N.M.



"If I had been as picky choosing a husband as I am choosing a sponsor, I'd still be married!"