



The Suffolk Intergroup

BULLETIN

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APRIL 2014

AA DONE DIFFERENTLY

In line with this month's Tradition, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.", the Bulletin is presenting a number of short articles on the way meetings are conducted in other parts of the country, written by Suffolk members whose travels have brought them into contact with other ways of managing the day-to-day business of A.A. If you have such a story, why not share it with us for future publication? First up is a report from Cyndy F., who has recently moved West:

I have been to meetings both in the United States and overseas. Regardless of where I am, AA is always consistent. People in the meeting are carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to those who have a desire to stop drinking. What is different however, may be the "way" in which the different places go about conducting meetings. The Fourth Tradition states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." When I arrived in Reno, Nevada, I began to experience AA in a way that was very different from the AA I was used to in Suffolk County, NY and SENY, Area 49.

First, there are the clubhouses. The one in the neighboring town is a smoking clubhouse, while the two in Reno are not. Meetings are held hourly from 6am till 10pm and these make up the bulk of the meetings in the area, although there are some in local church basements. Commitments differ in that, the secretary opens the meeting (as opposed to the chairperson), the chairperson is the speaker and the coffee commitment consists of serving coffee to people during the meeting. At the clubhouse, most of the meetings are open and are more often than not, tag meetings. This means that after the speaker qualifies, he/she chooses a person to share, this person then chooses the next person to share and so on. In addition, topics are usually chosen. Specialized meetings are held upstairs and they may or may not be open, and are generally show of hands. There is quite a bit of fellowship that goes on at the clubhouse and it is a busy place at all hours.

Interestingly, I have found that How It Works (including The 12 Steps) and The 12 Traditions are read at the beginning of every single meeting I

(Continued on page 5)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Intergroup Information

May Meetings

Page 6

ViewPoints

Page 1, 2

Monthly Group History

Page 3

"How It Doesn't Work"

Page 4

Step Four

Page 4

Announcements

Page 7

Tradition Four

Page 8

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.



ViewPoints: AA Done Differently

Sober Sunrises

Imagine sitting on a covered porch watching the sun rise over the inland waterway in 75 degree weather; not too difficult a task given the winter we have experienced this year. For over five years this has been an almost daily event for me when visiting my mother-in-law in Jupiter Florida.

The porch I refer to is the meeting place of the Jupiter Sunrise Group which meets 7 days a week from 7:00 to 8:00 A.M. No coffee is served. The meeting is opened by a group member who reads a short group conscience and then asks for someone to suggest a topic. People share spontaneously (without being called on) and no feedback is given which often results in periods of silence (meditation). Topics have ranged from how to stay sober during the holidays to "expectations". I am sure every step and tradition

...watching the sun rise over the inland waterway...

has been touched on in my short tenure at the meeting. Sobriety chips are given out at the end of each meeting as well as recognizing anniversaries which occur in the present month.

So despite being labeled by some as not a "real" meeting , I am one satisfied customer whose sobriety has been enhanced by appreciating sunrises, dolphins swimming and nature's endless beauty; all made possible by the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Incidentally Florida offers many beach and "clubhouse" meetings which are another unique experience if one is visiting in the area.

Tom W.,
Stony Brook Unity

Stepping Through Maine

At a Step meeting in Maine last year, I learned a different way to read and learn the Steps. In the meeting I attended, each person took turns reading the Step, as we do, but at the end of each paragraph, it was the group conscience to share if you needed to, rather than at the end of the chapter.

This was true even if more than one person wanted to share, and even the reader himself could stop and share.. We each took turns reading and, while I didn't share on what I read, I did share later on.

We didn't finish the Step that night, and the chairperson told us all to "Come back next meeting and just keep coming. Keep reading the Steps and don't try to rush things."

It's different, but an easy change to try. Use the business meetings and Tradition Two to keep working and living sober in our groups.

By Mike F.

...a little different, and yet exactly the same...

Florida Informal

The meetings here in South Palm Beach County are a little different, yet exactly the same. Very informal. All you have to do is say, "I'm a member." That's it! My group is "Downtown Delray", meeting 10:00 AM daily. Each meeting starts with a "go-around" where everyone introduces themselves.. After that, each day is different: Step, Speaker, Tradition, Beginners... If anyone has a "burning desire" to drink or feels they will harm themselves or others, we automatically make it a First Step meeting.

The "SCAAN" equals the Intergroup "Bulletin". It is basically the same, but I will say that the contributions are more bountiful than SIA.

Mike McA, Boynton Beach



Group History of the Month

East Northport 164 Group

Two A.A.s, Mike H. and Ken W. liked the Florida Big Book format at meetings. Influenced by Clarence S. (one of AA's first members, his story in the Big Book is The Home Brewmeister) and the Florida format, they started the 164 Group on December 4, 2002. It meets on Monday where the Big Book is read and shared on. Later an early Saturday closed meeting was added. Finally a Thursday night joined the schedule. As of this writing the group is doing well. It is named after the first 164 pages of the Big Book.

The 164 Group is a unique group. Its origins are from a Big Book study group in Florida called the Apopka BB that bases its meetings on the study of the first one hundred and sixty four pages of the book Alcoholics Anonymous. The individual stories of recovery are omitted. Members begin at the start of the Big Book text and work their way painstakingly through the entire book ending on page one sixty four. Members apply lessons from the readings to their current lives. The approach is akin to a daily living guide directly from the text. Approaching recovery this way takes one to two years to complete. The Twelve and Twelve is not used.

The group in New York began in November of 2002. The founders were Ken W. and Michael H. This group also has a unique approach to the steps. Most members take the first eight steps in one day, and then Steps Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve for a lifetime.

Group member Kew W. says the Big Book interpretation is not literal, but an incorporation of each person's experience, strength and hope as they apply in their lives based on the readings. He calls it the "spirit of the book that comes alive when I put it into action. I love this group! It has been my home group since it started. Personally, my life has changed since I have been a member. Putting the steps into my life versus thinking about them has been revolutionary."

"...man, if I only knew then..."

Following is a poem that I scribbled down in the year 2000. I was still drinking, and while feebly attempting to soul search, I started journaling after a nasty divorce. I often hear speakers say "My life truly is beyond my wildest dreams." Unfortunately I can't say that, but what I honestly can say right now is this: My life is what I make it. Is it hard? Yes. Is it perfect? No. But, is it good? Yes! I really believe if it were not for joining A.A., I would not feel this way...

Mary K., Lake Grove

Scribbles

*I hope one day to
Fill this book,*

*And take the time to
Take a look,*

*At pains and tears
And lessons taught,*

*And the gist of life
I hope I caught.*



*The meeting place of the East Northport 164 Group: Church of Christ Lutheran, Larkfield and Burr Roads East Northport
NY 11731*



HOW IT DOESN'T WORK

How it doesn't work, if these are the 12 Steps you follow:

1. If you stop going to meetings.
2. If your only friends are those still drinking.
3. If you think you don't need a group, sponsor or commitment.
4. If you feel you don't have to share with a sponsor, group, or just another alcoholic.
5. If you keep picking up the drink before the phone.
6. If you think you don't have to change, but instead keep up your old ways.
7. If you forget you are no better than the drunk sitting next to you.
8. If you are sharing about anything and everything except sobriety, and forget where you came from.
9. If you think you know everything (you are unteachable).
10. If you think you can make it without a god of your understanding (think again).
11. If you think you are "better" and can have a drink (hopefully, you'll hear "Welcome back").
12. If you're somewhere on this list and think you can make it alone (Lots of luck!).

By Ralph D., Brentwood Group

Step Four: The Easier, Softer Way

One of the men I sponsored stated that he came to A.A. not because he had seen the light, but because he felt the heat. This was true of me also. I was feeling heat from a number of sources and going to a few A.A. meetings was my short-term solution to a long time problem. I had no real interest in sobriety or steps because I refused to acknowledge that I was powerless over alcohol and that my life had become unmanageable. I simply hoped to put out some of the fires and reduce the heat.

After several months of attending meetings, I admitted to myself that I was an alcoholic. I believe I also realized at that time that a Higher Power was doing for me what I had been unable to do for myself. As for Step Three, I became willing to allow God to handle the alcohol issue but wanted to continue handling everything else myself since I had been doing such a wonderful job up to that time. That, along with part of Step Twelve (attempting to carry a message I did not yet really possess), was as far as I was willing to go with the Steps.

The Twelve and Twelve lists many of the reasons that people avoid Step Four ("Pride says You need not pass this way and Fear says, You dare not look."). My main reason was that I was too lazy to do the work. I was searching for the easier, softer way and for me, that meant skipping the remainder of the Steps. The Big Book, however, tells us several times that people who avoid Step Five have a very high likelihood of drinking again and you can't do Step Five without first completing Step Four. At some time after I had celebrated my second A.A. anniversary, I began to experience a feeling I knew very well. I wanted to drink. Fortunately, I called my sponsor and he told me it was time for Step Four. Fear is a great motivator and I finally got to work. I had some difficulty with how to proceed because I found the format in the Big Book confusing. Ultimately, I used several different formats but the important thing is that I completed a thorough inventory and, with my sponsor, continued my journey through the remaining steps. I know today that I was fortunate that my procrastination did not lead to a relapse.

I have a much better appreciation and understanding of the Twelve Steps today and hindsight is twenty-twenty. I advise men I sponsor not to make the mistakes I did. I tell them to begin the Steps as soon as possible and especially to avoid delaying Step Four and Five. I recommend that they use the Step Four format in the Big Book. I have learned that a thorough Step Four inventory will help to identify most of our character defects and the people we have harmed and, therefore, carry us through Step Nine. This is essential for our continued sobriety because we have to change the person we brought to the rooms of A.A. Failure to do that may be fatal. A man in my group with many years of sobriety frequently says that if you took all of the words in the twelve steps and mixed them up and consolidated them, the one word that would remain is "change." That is our goal with the steps.

Although it has been a while since I wrote my inventory, I have been fortunate to share Step Five with the men I have sponsored. This allows me to revisit Step Four and Five and it has always been rewarding for me and, I hope, for them also. At some point, I usually tell them that what we are doing together is the easier, softer way.

Dan S., Patchogue Group



AA DONE DIFFERENTLY

(Continued from page 1)

have gone to thus far, regardless of whether it's in a clubhouse or church basement. Also, as part of the beginning format at every meeting, people visiting from out of town or just coming back are welcomed, and a chip and a hug are offered for anyone who has 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 6 months, 1 year or multiple years. Anniversaries are not celebrated the way I have traditionally celebrated in Suffolk County, but for my 18th, I was given my coin after it was passed to each woman in my home- group. Because I joined a group that meets in a church basement, I can only speak to what we do with regard to business meetings. We hold ours 4 times a year. If we need to address anything that requires a group conscience, we call for a group conscience meeting for the following week and address the issue.

The Intergroup, NNIG (Northern Nevada Intergroup) or as it is commonly referred to as Central Office, is really, really active here. There is the something nearly every month. We have the Meeting and a Movie, where a meeting is held at the clubhouse and then a movie that has a relevant theme, alcoholism and recovery, is shown. People donate soda and popcorn and have great fellowship. March is Corn-beef and Cribbage, November is the Gratitude Dinner where groups donate raffle baskets, and December there's the New Year's Dance. The second Saturday of every month is a large speaker meeting where in a speaker from one group volunteers to speak. In March, the speaker was from a group in Sacramento, CA.

General Service is also different in Nevada. NAGSC, Northern Area General Service Committee, Area 42, covers both Northern Nevada and California. Reno has 2 districts, District 2 and 4. I am the GSR for my home-group in District 2. District meetings are held once a month, cluster meetings every 3 months and area assemblies with SAGSC (Southern Area) are held two times a year for an entire weekend in the spring and fall. By the time you read this, I will have attended my first assembly in Tonopah (about a 4 ½ hour drive from here). Ultimately, despite the autonomy which allows Reno to do things differently than what I had grown accustomed to in Suffolk, one thing has remained consistent. When I walk into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, no matter where I am, I hear the message of A.A. which enables me to stay sober, one day at a time.

A Word From the Editor

The following letter was forwarded to me by Fred H., the Intergroup Chair. It refers to a parody of a "letters to the editor" column that appeared in the January issue of the Bulletin:

Dear editor (and I use that term loosely),

I am writing to you today in response to your first edition of the Suffolk Intergroup Bulletin January 2014. Although I enjoyed many of the articles and found them very informative, your selection of Letters to the Editor are completely inappropriate and constitute grounds for your immediate resignation as editor. Particularly the letter from your ex-spouse requesting money. Your actions demands, at least, a direct apology to the Fellowship of Suffolk County Alcoholics Anonymous.

I don't know if you were going for some sort of shock effect or just trying to stir up some interest in The Bulletin but your experiment has no place in this life saving service tool. I think in the future you would be better served if you followed the examples of Lou C. giving a positive suggestion to take one day off a year and volunteer for the hotline or Joe, The Office Manger, who gave information about what services are available at the office. Maybe the space would be put to better use if you used it to post up coming events of Districts, The Area and Groups like The Unity Breakfast, The Salt City Roundup, The SENY Area Convention and local area Group Anniversaries.

My biggest concern is what if this was some new comer's first exposure to a service entity. How turned off do you think they would be? Or perhaps even worse, what if a not-yet member read that and you just prolonged their agony. I showed this letter to some friends and the responses were all negative. The one I found most interesting was one friend said "see this is exactly why I don't get involved with SIA". Brian an immediate Tenth Step is definitely in order and in the future you

(Continued on page 8)



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The Bulletin

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Please note:

Inclusion of articles and announcements in The Bulletin does not constitute endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous or Suffolk Intergroup Association. Rather, members of Alcoholics Anonymous have been encouraged to share their experience, strength and hope through this publication. Opinions expressed are those of the writer unless otherwise noted. Suffolk Intergroup makes these articles and announcements available solely as a service to the reader.

Brian C., Editor

Next Up on the HotLine: **April Commitments**

District 100: Dave, Phone Captain-
Coram Steps to Life

District 80: Donny/ Woof, Captains-
West Islip Group

District 240: Donald C., Phone Captain-
Center Moriches Sunrise Serenity

District 210: Willie, Phone Captain

District 90: Dave, Phone Captain

Thanks to These March volunteers

District 230: Madeline, Acting Captain- Into Action; District 220: Bob, Captain- South St Sobriety; District 40: Bob, Captain- Melville High Noon; District 50: Ron Captain- Babylon Off Main; Mid-Island. Thank you all!

Intergroup Officers

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May Meetings

Archives Committee: 5/7/2014 8:00 PM SIA Office

Institutions Committee: 5/21/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Public Information Committee:
5/20/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

SIA Monthly Business Meeting:
5/13/2014 Cleary School

6:30 PM New Group Rep Orientation

6:30 PM Share-a-Thon

7:30 PM Intergroup Meeting

SIA Officers & Chairpersons:
5/6/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Suffolk General Service: 5/16/2014 8:00 PM
Trinity Lutheran Church,
Rocky Point

L.I.C.Y.P.A.A. 5/12/2014 8:15 PM
400 Sunrise Hwy, Amityville



ANNOUNCEMENTS

ARCHIVES SEEKING WEB PROGRAMMER

The Archives Committee is seeking a qualified volunteer who is interested in providing service work in updating our website, <http://suffolkaaarchives.com>. The work involves posting meeting details and oral histories to the website. The website is not built on a Content Management System (CMS), so we are seeking a volunteer with some basic web programming knowledge. Ideally, this person will have some experience with [ASP.net](http://asp.net), HTML, CSS, and FTP. The position requires a couple hours of service per week and the work can be completed remotely.

SPEAKING AT NON-AA MEETINGS

Are you interested in carrying the message into schools and to organizations like the Kiwanis or the Rotary? The Public Information and Third Legacy Committees will be holding training one hour before each month's SIA meeting for people willing to speak at non-AA meetings. Interested people should have at least two years continuous sobriety. Contact either Kevin at pubinfo@suffolkny-aa.org or Kevin at thirdleg@suffolkny-aa.org

Meeting Updates

The Sobriety Plus Group, meeting in the Lake Beach Pavilion, Lake Ronkonkoma at 10:15 AM Tuesdays and Thursdays (Closed Discussion with Step meeting the first Tuesday of each month) needs your support. Please come down and join us.

Announcing the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Edition of The Big Book

The official publication date of the first printing of our Big Book was April 10, 1939. There were 4,730 books printed, with red cloth binding, wide columns, thick paper (which was why it was called the Big Book), and a red, yellow, black and white dust jacket, which came to be known as the "circus cover."

To commemorate this historic event, the 2013 General Service Conference approved the creation of the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous, a faithful replica of the original.

Copies of the commemorative edition will soon be available at the SIA office or at the monthly SIA meeting at Intergroup's discount price. Call ahead to make sure they've arrived.

We're on the Web!

www.Suffolkny-aa.org



We'd Like to Hear From You...

Write us and tell us what you think of, well, pretty much anything A.A. related. We'd like to make the Bulletin the voice of the members of A.A. in Suffolk County. This means YOU! Tell us what we're doing right; tell us what we're doing wrong; share your experience with others.



Tradition Four: Autonomy

A reader provides a segue from last month's article on Tradition Three to the more serious aspects of Tradition Four:

A few years ago there was a fair amount of publicity when the Toronto Intergroup refused to list agnostic/non believer meetings. The same thing happened recently in Vancouver. It is my understanding that there are somewhere between 100 and 150 such meetings that are listed by various Intergroups in various places. I'm hearing that this refusal to list these types of meetings is becoming quite an issue.

Similar issues have also arisen in California. The debate in the Intergroups in question has revolved around the use by the agnostic meetings of variations on the Twelve Steps. There are several such variations, one may be found here: <http://www.aaagnostics.org/agnostic12steps.html>. The argument on the part of the Intergroups seems to be that if you do not use the "standard" Twelve Steps, you are not carrying the AA message, you are not an AA group and you should not be in a meeting list. The agnostic groups contend that the Steps, in the words of Step Two, "are but suggestions". The groups also point out that, in discussing the Traditions in 1947, Bill wrote, "With respect to its own affairs, the group may make any decisions, adopt any attitudes that it likes. No overall or intergroup authority should challenge this primary privilege. We feel this ought to be so, even though the group might sometimes act with complete indifference to our Tradition. For example, an AA group could, if it wished, hire a paid preacher and support him out of the proceeds of a group nightclub." Further, Tradition Three states, "We believe that any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation." Is there a place in AA for these groups? Or should they, like *Alcoholics Victorious* (a Christian 12 Step program that holds that the only true "Higher Power" is Jesus) did in 1947, branch off from Alcoholics Anonymous? These issues, and the evolution of the Traditions, are very much on-going even today.

Boldly go where few have ventured!!!!

...the SIA office located in downtown Patchogue! Come down say "hello" to our grateful volunteers. Buy some literature. Pick up some *BULLETINS* and meeting lists. We're open 9-3 Monday thru Friday and 9-1 on Saturday. We're also looking for phone volunteers for regular shifts or emergencies. Thanks, your trusted servant, Joe

From the Editor (Continued from page 5)

would be wise the practice restraint of tongue and pen. And as John D. Suggests "Learn your job..."

(unsigned)

I will take this opportunity to apologize to our disgruntled friend and any other readers who did not understand that the "Letters to the Editor" column was a parody and who were upset thereby. Let me be perfectly clear: there were no letters in the "letters to the editor": it was all written by me. The "letters" were a thinly veiled attempt to drum up submissions with a touch of humor, as was the "article" in which I threatened to come to groups and pout at people unless they submitted something they had written.

Our unknown friend does bring up an important point, however. Is there a place for humor in a newsletter like the *Bulletin*? We all see humor differently. Some of what I see as clearly humorous can be taken seriously by someone else (obviously). Unless we stick to the least common denominator (fart jokes?) misunderstandings are inevitable. Should we leave humor out? Consign it to a special section like "Ham on Wry" in the *Grapevine*? Label each article? There is a parody of the Steps in the current issue that uses humor to make a serious point, should we worry that someone might take those parodic Steps seriously? Write us with your opinion.

The letter writer also raises a point about announcing AA activities in the *Bulletin*. The policy I intend to maintain in relation to events is very simple: If you want it in the *Bulletin*, someone in a position of responsibility for the event has to ask that an announcement be printed. If I heard about an event and printed an announcement, a lot more people could show up than are expected, and I'm not going to be responsible for that. In the case of the Salt City Round-Up, it's in Syracuse. Syracuse is a bit outside the operating area of Intergroup. There are round-ups in Hawaii, too. You won't see those here either. On the other hand, if you are organizing a trip for local AA's, I'll gladly announce it for you, as long as you're not trying to profit by it.