

# The Voice

Volume 28, Number 12

December 2011



### One member's voice

## A lifetime of miracles

### A story of experience, strength, and hope

*"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

There are three parts to Step Twelve, all of equal importance. The first involves a spiritual awakening, which was alien to me. After running my life on self-will for many years and having little knowledge of the difference between a spiritual life and religion, I was basically very confused.

All who come into AA are encouraged — by their sponsors or groups or both — to read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the *Big Book*, and to work the steps with a sponsor so that they may experience a *spiritual awakening*. Many on their way out the door of AA would have us believe that they actually reached Step Twelve not having had a *spiritual awakening*, so they had to leave in spite of us. However, we alcoholics who have come

and experienced a *spiritual awakening* get to stay and experience it over and over.

A definite lack of knowledge started me on a journey to learn and change my attitude toward God, my fellows, and myself. Little did I know how my life would change so much for the better when I tried to lead a life of doing the right things for the right reasons. That happened, thanks to spiritual progress and finally a spiritual awakening.

I recently talked to a sponsee who has a long time in sobriety, but had a really tough go of finding an "attitude of gratitude." Nonetheless, she stayed and hung in there and recently related her deep distress on hearing about a "slip" one of her sponsees had and the ensuing pain of the relapse.

My sponsee related the gratitude she felt for her higher power allowing her to be sober and not hung over while trying to clean up yet another mess. This is truly a "spiritual

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## Keep Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous



See page 5 for twelve great tips on how to do it.

### A quote for December

*"It is not always the quantity of good things that you do, it is also the quality that counts. Above all, take it one day at a time."*

*As Bill Sees It, page 11*

### Tradition Twelve

## A spiritual foundation for enduring sobriety

*"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."*

In the beginning, anonymity was not born of confidence; it was the child of our early fears. Our first nameless groups of alcoholics were secret societies. New prospects could find us only through a few trusted friends. We were still afraid of public distrust and contempt.

When the *Big Book* was being written, the first title chosen was *The Way Out*, but after long and arduous discussions, the founders chose *Alcoholics Anonymous*. There was great fear in the early groups that large members of

incoming people might break our anonymity wide open.

To varying degrees, there is still a stigma attached to being an alcoholic. When I came into my first AA meeting in 1971, most families and friends were suffering shame and embarrassment that a husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister, mother or father could not stop drinking regardless of the consequences.

These non-alcoholics did not understand the "disease of alcoholism" as described by Dr. Silkworth in "The

"Doctor's Opinion" from the *Big Book*.

Members of Alcoholics Anonymous were terribly concerned that their employers, churches, or friends would find out about their alcoholism, and they would be fired, admonished, or abandoned by those they cared about and be unable to support their families.

As AA groups multiplied so did anonymity problems. Sometimes members' stories, which were meant only for their sponsor's ears became

*Continued, page 6—>*

## Congratulations December Birthdays!

This issue we celebrate anniversaries that add up to a collective **334 years**. That's more than **121,910 days of sobriety**. One day at a time!

Don C	46 years	Mike B	5 years
Dawn C	28 years	Ron F	5 years
Joe S	26 years	Ron R	5 years
Phil H	24 years	Bob R	4 years
Roger D	24 years	Gordana	4 years
Diane	17 years	Ward W	4 years
Eddie R	14 years	Kelly O	3 years
Lisa S	11 years	Marjorie T	3 years
Mary H	9 years	Theresa C	3 years
Beth S	8 years	Wayne Mc	3 years
Deb	8 years	Peter G	2 years
Diane I	7 years	Donna T	1 year
Bob H	6 years	Felix	1 year
Barbara K	5 years	John S	1 year
Kelli S	5 years	Keely C	1 year
Max R	5 years		

### November Birthdays

Peggy N 26 years

### October Birthdays

Bonnie J 20 years

Please share your AA birthday with all. Deadline for January birthdays is December 20.

Email: [thevoice@aaocalamarion.org](mailto:thevoice@aaocalamarion.org)  
Or phone: 352-867-0660

## Join the Birthday Club



Celebrate an AA anniversary—yours or another member's—with a contribution. Send name, sobriety date, years of sobriety, and a donation — suggested is \$1, \$5, or \$10 for each year of sobriety to:

Intergroup 17  
3666A N.E. 25th Street  
Ocala, Florida 34470

## A lifetime of miracles

Continued from page 1

awakening” when we as alcoholics, again and again, get to be part of our fellows’ miracles.

For me, the second part of Step Twelve — trying to carry a message of hope — was out of the norm. However, after going on twelfth-step calls with my sponsor, and later with others, I began to feel the importance of trying to help those who are still suffering. That helped a lot.

I now understand what it means when we say that intensive work with alcoholics can really ensure our sobriety. As rehab programs have come on the scene, along with at least a primary introduction to AA, I have missed going on all the twelfth-step calls to hospitals, homes, and bars.

We are taught to give with no reward, but soon find the reward in the many gifts of sobriety: our good name, our integrity, our families, new friends. In some cases, this is the first time in our lives that we even have friends.

Many are able to once again pray to use the “gifts and talents” that God gave them. What a wonderful life we can have when we put sobriety first, and the spirit of giving comes back many fold in our lives.

The third and last part of Step Twelve is to “practice these principles in all our affairs.” The list of spiritual principles is

never ending. When the *Big Book* was first written, the principles referred to the Four Absolutes of the Oxford Group: absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.

Simple questions can guide our understanding of these. Honesty: Is it true, or is it false? Purity: Is it right or wrong? Unselfishness: Will it help another human being? Love: Is it beautiful or ugly?

Ideal principles? I wish I could adhere to them. I am making progress, slowly but surely.

I have tried to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous and not carry my own message. I carry the message that was given to me to the best of my ability. Some do not like the message; they prefer to distract themselves with new age “bull” rather than try and change.

That is not for me to quarrel about. I just need to read the book, study the steps, and share with others what was so freely given to me. We are given a chance to find our true purpose in life, and that is a “very big deal.”

So what then are we going to practice? Honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, brotherly love, discipline, perseverance, awareness of God, and service. When I do this on a daily basis, my life is full and brimming over with love and joy. I had no idea that the gift of sobriety would be a lifetime of miracles!

Kathy & John P  
Ocala, Florida  
December 2011

## Plan Ahead. Upcoming Area Events

- **Intergroup 17 Monthly Meeting December 11**, St. Marks UMC, Ocala. Page 9 and back page.  
**Steering Committee**, 4:30 pm  
**Intergroup Reps meeting**, 5:15 pm
- **Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve Alkathons, December 24 and December 31**, 5:30 pm to ?? Ocala Group, St. Marks United Methodist.
- **Christmas Dinner December 25**, 1-3 pm. Unity Place, Ocala. Free to all. Page 9 for more details.
- **District 17 Monthly Meeting December 29**, 6 pm. St. Marks UMC, Ocala. Page 4 for more details.
- **North Florida Area Assembly January 14-15, 2012**, St. Augustine, More info at on page 5 and at [www.aanorthflorida.org/assembly\\_agenda](http://www.aanorthflorida.org/assembly_agenda)
- **56th Florida State Convention Register before December 31 for prize drawing August 1-5, 2012**, Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort, Palm Harbor, Florida. Page 9. More info at [www.56flstateconvention.com](http://www.56flstateconvention.com)

**Groups. Are you planning a event?**  
Send your information to *The Voice* for publication. Reach our nearly 400 subscribers. Deadline for December issue: November 20. Send to: [thevoice@aaocalamarion.org](mailto:thevoice@aaocalamarion.org)

*The views, expressions, and opinions presented in these pages by individual members are those of the author and not necessarily those of Alcoholics Anonymous or Intergroup 17 Inc.*

# December by the Books

## STEP TWELVE

*Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

I remember my sponsor's answer when I told him that the Steps were "suggested." He replied that they are "suggested" in the same way that, if you were to jump out of an airplane with a parachute, it is "suggested" that you pull the ripcord to save your life. He pointed out that it was "suggested" I practice the Twelve Steps, if I wanted to save my life. So I try to remember daily that I have a whole program of recovery based on all twelve of the "suggested" steps.

*Daily Reflections, p. 344*

When we developed still more, we discovered the best possible source of emotional stability to be God Himself. We found that dependence upon His perfect justice, forgiveness, and love was healthy, and that it would work where nothing else would. If we really depended upon God, we couldn't play God to our fellows nor would we feel the urge wholly to rely on human protection and care. These were the new attitudes that finally brought many of us an inner strength and peace that could not be deeply shaken by the shortcomings of others or by any calamity not of our own making.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 116*

When a man or woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resource alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being.

*As Bill Sees It, p.84*

## TRADITION TWELVE

*Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

The spiritual substance of anonymity is sacrifice. Because AA's Twelve Traditions repeatedly ask us to give up personal desires for the common good, we realize that the sacrificial spirit—well symbolized by anonymity—is the foundation of them all. It is AA's proved willingness to make these sacrifices that gives people their high confidence in our future.

But in the beginning, anonymity was not born of confidence: it was the child of our early fears. Our first nameless groups of alcoholics were secret societies. New prospects could find us only through a few trusted friends. The bare hint of publicity, even for our work, shocked us. Though ex-drinkers, we still thought we had to hide from public distrust and contempt.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 184*

Dr. Bob was essentially a far more humble person than I, and anonymity came rather easily to him. When it was sure that he was mortally afflicted, some of his friends suggested that there should be a monument erected to in honor of him and his wife, Anne—befitting a founder and his lady. Telling me about this, Dr. Bob grinned broadly and said, God bless 'em. They mean well. But let's you and me get buried just like other folks." In the Akron cemetery where Dr. Bob and Anne lie, the simple stone says not a word about AA. This final example of self-effacement is of more permanent worth to AA than any amount of public attention or any great monument.

*A.A. Comes of Age, pp, 136-137*

## CONCEPT TWELVE

*"The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principles; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action."*

Isn't it interesting the way God whispers to us? But we don't always hear his messages. That's why it is so important for me to work on my relationship with God. I believe the Divine to be Incarnate in all things, but the only way I know how to honor my Higher Power is to talk to him as if he were a person. I never ask him for things anymore, I don't believe he is a genie who grants wishes, but I do believe he gives me strength and hope and an appreciation of life and goodness. This concept is of great comfort to me, and I think it's what we try to achieve through the spiritual Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*Emotional Sobriety, p. 105*

Few of us are anonymous so far as our daily contacts go. We have dropped anonymity at this level because we think our friends and associates ought to know about AA and what it has done for us. We also wish to lose the fear of admitting that we are alcoholics. Though we earnestly request reporters not to disclose our identities, we frequently speak before semipublic gatherings. We wish to convince audiences that our alcoholism is a sickness we no longer fear to discuss before anyone.

*The Grapevine, January 1946*

Excerpts from *The Big Book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and other AA publications are reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

## District 17 Corner Archives. Discovering, documenting, and pre- serving the history of the fellowship.

The idea for organizing and documenting the history of the AA fellowship came from co-founder Bill W. in the early 1950s. Bill was becoming increasingly concerned that *“the history of Alcoholics Anonymous is still veiled in the deep fog.”* Knowing that the office correspondence was loosely maintained in desk and filing cabinet drawers at the General Headquarters, he set out to arrange our historical records.

Bill personally recorded oldtimers’ recollections in the Akron/Cleveland area; he sent out boxes of blank tapes to others, encouraging them to record their recollections. Bill’s far-reaching vision outlined an archival message that is still sound today:

*“Every one of the new and unexpected developments (in AA) has, lying just underneath, an enormous amount of dramatic incident and experience—stories galore.... It isn’t hard to prepare a fact sheet of what happened—that is, dates when people came in, groups started and so forth. The hard thing to lay hold of is the atmosphere of the whole proceedings and anecdotal material that will make the early experience alive.”*

After many decades of tireless organizing and arranging, the GSO Archives room was opened with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony in November 1975.

Since then, the GSO archivists and the trustees serving on the Archives Committee of the General Service

Board have encouraged the importance of archival service, which is vital to the survival of the Fellowship. As a result of that work, today almost all areas have set up archival collections, and there is a significant growth at the district level.

Historical records help us to sift through our day-to-day experience in recovery and reach back for the shared experience from the past. As we sort out the myth from the facts, we ensure that our original message of recovery, unity and service remains the same in a changing, growing, expanding Fellowship that constantly renews itself

District 17 maintains a service position responsible for, among other duties, discovering, documenting, and preserving the history of the AA fellowship in Ocala and Marion County. The District 17 archives are housed at Intergroup 17 headquarters and are available for anyone to see and study during office hours.

Currently, the position of District 17 archivist is open, and we are looking for a person or team to take on the Archives Chair position. If you’re interested or just want to learn more, contact us at 352-867-0660 or attend the December 29 District 17 meeting.

Rick D, DCM, District 17

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## District 17 Officers & Service Coordinators

DCM: Rick D  
 Alternate DCM: Diane I  
 Secretary: Lydia N  
 Treasurer: Open  
 Accessibilities: Carson F  
 Archives: Open  
 Bridging the Gap: Andy K  
 CPC/PI: Open  
 Corrections, Women: Sherry R  
 Corrections, Men: Bob L  
 Grapevine: Carol W  
 Intergroup: Ruth T  
 Literature: Max R  
 Treatment: James M

### Group GSRs

164 Pages Group: Barbara B  
 Breakfast Club: Barbara K  
 Cabin in the Woods: Shelly O  
 Came to Believe: John D  
 Conscientious Contact: Jim B  
 Free to Be: Jennifer A  
 Happy, Joyous & Free: Rick F  
 Headstart: Max R (alt)  
 Keep It Simple: Tina T  
 Living Sober: Diane I  
 Mano Abierto: Benjamin O  
 Men’s Group: Cory S  
 New Attitudes: Coral M  
 Ocala Group: Hunter B  
 Shores of Sobriety: Rafael Q  
 Sober Yankees: Ginger H  
 Sobriety in Marion Oaks: John S  
 We Give Up: Carol W  
 Weir Crazy: Jennifer M  
 Young People’s Group: Pamela Z

To contact a District 17 officer, service chair, or GSR, call 352.867.0660 or email: [district17@aaocalamarion.org](mailto:district17@aaocalamarion.org)

## Great Gifts for the AA Member on Your List

Intergroup 17 carries a nice selection of AA conference approved literature and other recovery related items at affordable prices. Stop buy and pick up a holiday gift for someone special



### Office Hours

Monday-Friday 10 am to 5 pm  
 Saturday 10 am to 2 pm

3666-A N.E. 25th Street, Ocala, Florida  
 352 867-0660  
[aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com](mailto:aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com)

## Service & Sobriety

District 17. Get Involved.  
 Service Opportunities

Service Positions Open  
 Treasurer

Archives Service Coordinator  
 Cooperation with the Professional  
 Community/Public Information

Learn more

Next Meeting. All Welcome.

Thursday, December 29

St. Mark’s United Methodist  
 1839 NE 8th Avenue  
 Ocala, FL

## District 17 is Self-Supporting.

Send group donations to District 17  
 P.O. Box 3081, Ocala, FL 34478

See GSO guidelines for group donations, page 7.

## Urgent Need. Women to take meetings to prisons.

Corrections Committee needs women volunteers to take meetings into local correctional institutions. The need is critical. The service is great. Apply now. For more information, contact Sherry R through Intergroup 17 at 352-867-0660.

From the archives of Alcoholics Anonymous, December 1944

## Greetings from Bill W

### A remembrance from AA's Tenth Christmas, 1944

Yes, it's in the air! The spirit of Christmas once more warms this poor distraught world. Over the whole globe millions are looking forward to that one day when strife can be forgotten, when it will be remembered that all human beings — even the least — are loved by God, when men will hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace as they never hoped before.

But there is another world which is not poor. Neither is it distraught. It is the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, where thousands dwell happily and secure. Secure because each of us, in his own way, knows a greater power who is love, who is just, and who can be trusted.

Nor can men and women of AA ever forget that only through suffering did they find enough humility to enter the portals of that New World.

How privileged we are to understand so well the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection; that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.

Knowing it's full worth and purpose, we can no longer fear adversity, we have found prosperity where there was poverty, peace and joy have sprung out of the very midst of chaos. Great indeed, our blessings! And so,

Merry Christmas to you all — from the Trustees, from Bobbie and from Lois and me.

Bill Wilson

*District 17 Archives house the written and oral history of AA in Ocala-Marion County. If you have a story, memory, documents, photos, or other memorabilia that relate to our local history, please relay it through the Intergroup office to District 17 Archives Committee Chair. 352-867-0660. Email: aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com*

## Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new AAs. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.

1. **Line up extra AA activities** for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.
2. **Be host to AA friends**, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.
3. **Keep your AA telephone list with you** all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an AA.
4. **Find out about the special holiday parties**, meetings, or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.
5. **Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about**. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.
6. **If you have to go to a drinking party** and can't take an AA with you, keep some candy handy.
7. **Don't think you have to stay late**. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.
8. **Worship in your own way**.
9. **Don't sit around brooding**. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.
10. **Don't start now getting worked up** about all those holiday temptations. Remember—"one day at a time."
11. **Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy**. Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.
12. **"Having had a . . ."** No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

Reprinted from *Box 4-5-9*, Holiday 2008 by permission of AA World Service, Inc.

### Area 14 North Florida Area Assembly January 14-15, 2011 St. Augustine

**GSRs plan now to attend.  
All members welcome.  
Tentative Schedule. Subject to Change.**

#### Saturday January 14, 2011

8:00 am - 5:30 pm Registration  
9:00 am - 4:15 pm Workshops  
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm Dinner  
7:30 pm - 9:30 pm Agenda items meeting

#### Sunday January 15, 2011

8:00 am - 9:00 am Registration  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm Business Meeting

#### Full Agenda Online

[www.aanorthflorida.org/assembly\\_agenda](http://www.aanorthflorida.org/assembly_agenda)

#### Location and Hotel Reservations

The Renaissance Resort,  
500 South Legacy Trail,  
St. Augustine, Florida 320921  
Tel: 904-940-8000  
Link to online booking at:  
[www.aanorthflorida.org/assembly\\_agenda](http://www.aanorthflorida.org/assembly_agenda)

### District 17 to Host Registration

North Florida Area Assembly  
January 14-15, 2011

**Volunteers needed to staff  
the registration desk.**

**To volunteer or for more  
information:**

Phone: 352 867-0660  
Email: [district17@aaocalamarion.org](mailto:district17@aaocalamarion.org)

Or volunteer in person at the next District 17 meeting, Thursday, December 29. See facing page for details.

### TREASURER SOUGHT

District 17 is seeking a volunteer to serve as District Treasurer. Simple bookkeeping and budget management skills **needed**. Two years of sobriety required. If you love service, learn more. Call 352 867-0660 or attend the December District 17 meeting.

## A Spiritual Foundation

*Continued from page 1*

Public, and the members would then rightly declare that their trust had been broken. Clearly, each AA member's name and story too, had to be kept confidential, if the individual wished it to be.

However, some of our newcomers did not care at all about personal anonymity and wanted to shout about AA from the housetops and did. Sometimes they changed from AA members to AA show-offs — selfishness and self-centeredness at work.

As a rule, the average newcomers wanted their families to know immediately what they were trying to do. They also wanted to tell others who had tried to help — doctors, ministers, and close friends. As they gained confidence, they felt it right to explain their new way of life to their employers and business associates. When opportunities to be helpful came along, they found they could talk easily about AA to almost anyone.

These quiet disclosures helped them to lose their fear of the alcoholic stigma and to spread the news of AA's existence in their community. Though not within the strict letter of anonymity, these communications were well within its spirit.

But it became apparent that the word of mouth method of letting people know about AA was limited. Our work, as such, needed to be publicized. AA groups wanted quickly to reach as many despairing alcoholics as they could.

Consequently, many groups began to hold open meetings so that interested friends, individuals who worked in the health care field, ministers, or average citizens could see for themselves what AA was all about.

Soon groups began to receive requests for AA speakers to appear before civic organizations, church groups, and medical societies. Reports were cautioned against the use of the full name or pictures.

Then came the first excursions into major publicity, and the results were breathtaking. In Cleveland after the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper published articles about AA, the AA membership in that city rocketed from a few

dozen into hundreds overnight. A news story about a dinner held for AA by John Rockefeller doubled our total membership in a year's time. Jack Alexander's article in the *Saturday Evening Post* made AA a national institution.

These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all pervading spiritual quality, which today keynotes AA life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as AA members both among fellow alcoholics and before the general public. Each of us is responsible for weaving a protective mantle which covers our whole society and under which we may grow and work in unity.

It is anonymity, or perhaps the lack of it, at the level of press, radio, and film as originally described, and now on television and the wonderful world of the Internet, that often creates widespread concern. When we see photos of individuals who have been arrested for alcohol-related offenses posted on Facebook and other social media, it causes many to wonder if we've forgotten what anonymity is about. Even positive and well-intentioned posts about recovery and recovery-related events sometimes seem to compromise anonymity.

We often hear in meetings that only the alcoholic has the right to declare his or her membership to anyone and that "who you see here and what you hear here should stay here." To me this says that anonymity is not just about us as individuals — it is also about the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and its importance to our unity and continued effectiveness. It is about placing principles before personalities.

The responsibility statement says it all when it comes to the importance of Tradition 12: When anyone any where reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there and for that I am responsible.

*Prepared for The Voice by Diane R.*

*The thoughts, expressions, and opinions of the writer are not necessarily those of AA or Intergroup 17 as a whole. The ideas and excerpts taken from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age are used by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.*

## Intergroup 17 Book of the Month **The Soul of Sponsorship** **The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J. and Bill Wilson in Letters** By Robert Fitzgerald, S.J.

*From the preface.*

"I do hope that a good biography comes out about Father Ed Dowling. He was made of stuff of the saints," Bill W. wrote in a letter to a man who asked what Father Ed's sponsorship meant to Bill. "In a very real sense, he was my spiritual adviser, just as he was to many hundreds in AA."

Five years earlier Bill had written to Anna, Father Ed Dowling's sister and secretary, "Have you ever thought of a book that someone might do, a biography of Father Ed? In my book he is a saint, and a most colorful one too. His benefactions to me are among my brightest memories."

This is not that biography. Rather, it focuses on 195 letters between the two men. All but ten of the letters came from the Dowling archives of Maryville College in St. Louis; the other ten came from the New York AA Archives. These letters offer an intimate view of their twenty-year friendship.

I am drawn to tell this story. I feel close to both men. I trained as a Jesuit at St. Stanislaus Seminary in Florissant, Missouri, and at St. Louis University for arts and philosophy, the very same places Father Ed did his Jesuit training. I too, experienced the Ignatian vocation as mediated by the Missouri Province Jesuits. As I wrote this book, Father Ed's spirit mentored me.

I do feel close to Bill W., also. Since 1977 I have struggled with my own issues, many the same as Bill's. I too have been helped by close friendships in recovery.

I will tell the story of their meeting, their backgrounds, and the twenty years of letters between them. I want to celebrate their friendship.

***The Soul of Sponsorship***  
**by Robert Fitzgerald, SJ**  
**\$10.00**

**Available for purchase today at Intergroup 17. Check out our expanded selection of books, medals, and other recovery related material.**

## Group Contributions to Intergroup 17 October 2011

**Intergroup 17's fiscal year runs June 2011-May 2012.  
Contributions below are from June 1, 2010 through October 31, 2011.  
Please report any errors or discrepancies to Intergroup 17.**

GROUP NAME	Oct '11 Contribu- tions	Contribu- tions 6/1/11- 10/31/11	GROUP NAME	Oct '11 Contribu- tions	Contribu- tions 6/1/11- 10/30/11
11th Step Group	\$10.00	\$ 50.00	Lifesaver Group		153.23
164 Pages Group		167.50	Living Sober Group		35.05
Acceptance			Lunch Bunch Group		
Alive and Well		50.00	Marion Oaks Group		1.69
All You Need Group		45.00	Men's Group Ocala		262.50
As Bill Sees It	\$ 102.00	247.25	New Attitudes Group	0.18	0.27
Belleview Eye Opener		50.00	No Name Group	45.00	45.00
Belleview God's Way		5.02	Ocala Group	250.15	556.90
Belleview Group			One Day at a Time	225.41	325.41
Breakfast Club	450.00	1,265.50	Primary Purpose Group		39.00
Cabin in the Woods		200.00	Shores of Sobriety		59.27
Came To Believe		48.16	Sisters of Serenity		75.00
Citra Group		.82	Serenity Group		
Come As You Are			Sober Yankees		100.00
Conscious Contact		77.56	Start A New Life		200.00
Experience, Strength & Hope			Strength In Numbers		10.00
Forest Group		20.07	Summerfield Group		
Forest Men's Group	25.00	75.57	Sundae Social Group		
Fountain of Gratitude			TLC Group, The Centers		
Free To Be	10.00	10.00	Together We Can		5.00
Fresh Start		.26	We Give Up		50.00
Grace Group	0.07	0.07	Weir Crazy		20.09
Grateful Gals		35.00	Westside Recovery	100.00	100.00
Grupo Mano Abierta			Young People's Group		
Happy Hour Group			Zion-Blichton Group	12.00	61.12
Happy, Joyous & Free	38.96	1,095.55	Archives		
Headstart Group	24.88	102.96	District 17		219.62
Healing Group		30.00	Birthday Club (personal)	34.00	34.00
It's In The Book			Faithful 5-ers (personal)		30.00
It's Not Them Group	.31	.31	Individuals members	38.33	94.94
Keep It Green			<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,255.91</b>	<b>\$6,510.61</b>
Keep It Simple		355.65			
Last Call Group		100.00			

### How Groups and Individuals Support the Work of AA

Group contributions fund the work of Intergroup 17 and other areas of AA General Services. Many groups choose to follow the 50-30-10-10 plan of support after they meet their own financial needs:

- 50 percent to Intergroup 17
- 30 percent to AA General Service Office
- 10 percent to North Florida Area Conference
- 10 percent to District 17

#### Group contributions

**Intergroup District 17 Inc.**  
3666A NE 25th Street  
Ocala, FL 34470

**The General Service Office**  
P.O. Box 459  
6035 E. Tudor St.  
New York, NY 10164

**NFAC ADDRESS CHANGE**  
5205 N. Sonora Terrace  
Beverly Hills FL 34465

**District 17**  
P.O. Box 3081  
Ocala, FL 34478

### Intergroup 17 Financial Statements

Monthly financial statements for Intergroup 17 are available for review at the Intergroup 17 office during regular office hours. Please telephone in advance:  
352-867-0660.

### CARRY THE MESSAGE MAN-TO-MAN WITHOUT LEAVING HOME

GSO Corrections Correspondence Services needs male AA members on the "outside" to correspond with male AA members in correctional facilities. For more information:

**Mail:** Corrections Desk, General Service Office, PO Box 459, NY, NY 10163  
**Phone:** 212-870-3400  
**Email:** corrections@aa.org

### First Contact



**Can YOU?  
Yes YOU can!  
Will YOU?**



**Just say "Yes" to answering 12th  
Step calls, we'll show you the rest.  
Call Intergroup to learn more.  
352 867-0660**



**Live by the books?  
Buy the books!**

Find a complete selection of AA conference approved literature available now at the Intergroup 17 office. The holidays are coming. Find a great gift for that special sober someone in your life. Call 352 867-0660 or visit.

## Group Meetings News, and More

### Looking for a local meeting?

Choose from more than 140 meetings a week.

**When and Where online!**  
**www.aocalamarion.org**

Print copies available through home groups or at Intergroup 17 office.

Here's just a sampling. Find scores more online.

### Beginners Meetings

Tuesdays

**Living Sober Group**

**Your support requested!**

Living Sober beginners meeting  
7:30 pm every Tuesday  
Congregational Church  
7171 SW State Rd 200, Ocala

### Meditation

Wednesdays

**Conscious Contact**

7:00 pm every Wednesday  
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church  
3452 NE Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala

### Spanish Speaking

Wednesdays

**Grupo Nueva Vida**

7:00 pm Wed, Thurs, Sat, Sun  
150-A SW 23rd Ave. (1/2 block South of Ft. King), Ocala

Fridays and Saturdays

**Grupo Mano Abierta**

7:00 pm Monday & Friday  
St. John's Methodist Church  
12390 West SR328, Ocala

### Eat 'n Speak

**Keep It Simple Group**

Last Thursday of the month  
Eat: 7:00 pm Speaker: 8:00 pm  
Small fee for meal  
Ascension Lutheran Church  
5730 SE 28th Street, Ocala

### 164 Pages Women's Meeting

Last Monday of the month  
6:00 pm  
Ocklawaha United Methodist  
13333 East Hwy 25, Ocklawaha

### New & Newer Meetings

#### New Closed Meeting

**Joy of Living**

**Starting January 2, 2012**

Weekdays, Noon to 1 pm  
Monday—Thursday, Closed Discussion  
Fridays, Closed Beginner Discussion  
Ocala West United Methodist Church  
9330 SW 105th Street, Ocala, Florida

#### New meeting

**It's Not Them**

Closed Big Book Study  
Wednesdays, 6:30 pm (90 minutes)  
Church of the Incarnation  
9300 Spring Road (blinking Pine Road)  
Silver Springs Shores

#### Needs your support

**The Serenity Group**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Noon  
Episcopal Church of the Advent  
11251 SW Highway 484, Ocala

#### New meeting

**Total Surrender Group**

Thursdays, 7:00 pm  
Fort King Presbyterian Church  
13 NE 36th Avenue  
Ocala

#### New group

**Sobriety in Marion Oaks**

Open discussion, Mondays, 7:00 pm  
Community Congregational  
15056 SW 29<sup>th</sup> Terrace Road, Ocala

#### New format

**Experience, Strength & Hope**

Ice Cream Social/Speaker Meeting  
First Friday of month, 7:00 pm  
Church of Christ, 2750 SE Maricamp Road,  
Ocala

#### Grapevine meeting

**Sober Yankees**

Second Tuesday, 7:00 pm  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
5200 SW SR200, Ocala

#### Speaker & dessert meeting

**Ocala Group**

Fridays, 8:00 pm  
St. Mark's United Methodist  
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala  
Desserts welcome!

#### 12&12 and Grapevine meetings

**Headstart Group**

12&12: Mondays, 7:30 am  
Grapevine: Wednesdays, 7:30 am  
Lost & Found Club  
339 NE Sanchez Avenue  
Ocala

#### Loose Horse Group

Fridays, 7:00 pm  
Friendship Baptist Church  
15115 Gainesville Road  
Reddick

### Group News and Meeting Changes

#### Discontinued

**Together We Can Group**

Marion Oaks. All meetings discontinued.

#### We Give Up Group

Thursday meetings have been discontinued.  
Monday meetings are still being held.  
Please join us. Ascension Lutheran Church,  
5730 SE 28th Street, Ocala

#### New meeting location

**11th Step Group**

Sundays, 8 pm. Church of Christ 2750 SE  
Maricamp Rd Ocala

#### Bellevue Eye Opener

Thursday, 8:00 am. St Paul's Parish PNCC,

corner of Rte. 441 & SE 53 Court, Bellevue  
34420 as of March 30. Behind the Kangaroo  
gas station on 441.

#### Thursday Night Step Group

Church of Christ, 2750 SE Maricamp Road,  
Ocala

#### New Date

**Experience, Strength, and Hope  
Ice Cream Social**

Moved to first Friday of the month starting  
November 4, 7:00 pm, *Big Book* study and  
Ice Cream Social., Church of Christ, 2750  
SE Maricamp Road, Ocala

## Special Events, Celebrations, Notices

### Eat 'n Speak Meetings

#### Keep It Simple

Last Thursday of the Month  
Dinner 7:00 pm Speaker 8:00 pm  
Ascension Lutheran Church  
5730 SE 28th Street, Ocala

#### 164 Pages Group, Women's Meeting

Last Monday of the Month  
6:00 pm

Ocklawaha United Methodist  
13333 East Hwy 25, Ocklawaha, Florida

### Speaker Meetings

#### Living Sober Group

Sunday, December 11, 7:30 pm  
Speaker: Brian J

Congregational Church, 7171 SW State Rd 200  
Ocala, Florida

#### Ocala Group

Every Friday, 8:00 pm  
Speaker & Dessert

St. Mark's United Methodist Church  
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala, Florida

Desserts & snacks to share are welcome

### An Invitation from Unity Place Christmas Dinner



1:00 to 3:00 pm, Sunday, December 25  
Unity Place, 525 NE Sanchez, Ocala

All invited.. No charge. Desserts welcomed.

### 56th Annual Florida State Convention

August 1-5, 2012

Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort  
Palm Harbor, Florida

Register before December 31

Win a free 5-day, 4-night stay

Complete information and online registration  
[56.flstateconvention.com](http://56.flstateconvention.com)

#### DISCLAIMER

The Voice newsletter is published by Intergroup 17 Ocala-Marion County, Florida, and is created by alcoholics for alcoholics. Articles in the newsletter written by individual members of Alcoholics Anonymous are expressions of their own experiences and opinions and not necessarily those of Intergroup 17 or AA as a whole. The Voice editorial committee reserves the right to accept, edit, or decline information submitted by members or others for publication.

### January Retreat

#### Day of Reflection

Spiritual Cornerstones of AA  
with Fr. Patrick O'D

Wednesday, January 11, 2012  
9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Queen of Peace Parish Hall  
\$7 for pizza lunch, coffee & sodas

For more information or to reserve  
your spot at the retreat:

Email: [jshannon67@gmail.com](mailto:jshannon67@gmail.com)

Phone: Joe S at 240-216-4198.

### Lost & Found Club Annual Christmas Eve Party.

Bring the kids.

Saturday, December 24

339 NE Sanchez Avenue, Ocala

5 pm: Covered dish dinner

7:00 pm The big guy with a white beard  
and red suit will appear

The Lost and Found Club is not affiliated with  
Alcoholics Anonymous World Services or Intergroup  
17. Local AA groups and others rent space from the  
club for meetings and events.

## Intergroup Insights

### Seasonal gifts to celebrate the life-time gifts of recovery

The Intergroup 17 office shelves are stocked with a treasure trove of new items great for gift giving this holiday season. Stop by and browse, even if you don't buy anything, we'd love to have you visit. Fellowship with another alcoholic and a hot cup of coffee are always available during regular business hours.

### Congratulations and a word of gratitude to our new steering committee members

Many thanks to all who chose to be of service. We now have a full Intergroup Steering Committee: John J., Chair; Barbara B., Co-Chair; Peggy N., Secretary; Ken W., Treasurer; Rafael Q., Member at Large; Linda B., Member at Large; Ruth T., Member at Large; and James N., Intergroup District 17 Liaison.

### New Closed Meeting

#### Joy of Living

Starting January 2, 2012

Weekdays, Noon to 1 pm

Monday—Thursday, Closed Discussion  
Fridays, Closed Beginner Discussion

#### Ocala West

United Methodist Church

9330 SW 105th Street

Ocala, Florida

#### Note from Intergroup 17

Closed meetings are for AA members and others who have a desire to stop drinking. If you think you may have a problem with alcohol, you are welcome to attend any meeting.

### Experience Strength & Hope Group Speaker Meeting

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

New Date. First Fridays.

We bring the ice cream,  
you bring the toppings!

First Friday of every month!

Church of Christ

2750 SE Maricamp Road, Ocala

### Immediate need for after-hours volunteers

There is an opening for a desk volunteer Saturdays. 10 am to 2 pm. Would you consider giving of your time to answer phones, provide information, and most of all, be the hand of AA when the sick and suffering alcoholic reaches out for help? Contact me either by phone or email if you're interested.

### Thank You Volunteers

To those who give of their service for Intergroup, a special "thank you." The desk, after hours, and other volunteers keep your Intergroup in motion and able to carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic and to serve those in Ocala and Marion County who choose to follow our way of life.

Happy Sober Holidays!

Connie C

Intergroup 17 Office Manager



## Intergroup 17 Meetings Everyone invited!

Open to all. Learn more about AA, Intergroup 17, the great opportunities for service work, and more.

**Sunday, December 11, 5:15 pm**  
St. Mark's UMC  
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

Steering Committee, 4:30 pm. All invited.  
For more information: 352-867-0660

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*The Voice by e-mail.*



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with "Free Voice" in  
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## Intergroup 17 Ocala-Marion County Florida

Intergroup District 17 Inc.  
3666A NE 25th Street  
Ocala, FL 34470  
Phone: 352-867-0660  
[www.aaocalamarion.org](http://www.aaocalamarion.org)

### Office Hours

Monday-Friday 10 am to 5 pm  
Saturday 10 am to 2 pm

**24-Hour Hotline**  
**Everyday of the year**  
**352-867-0660**

## Service. The Third Legacy.

### Intergroup 17, Front Desk

Intergroup 17 is seeking a volunteer to staff the call center desk on Saturdays 10 am to 2:00 pm. Duties include answering phone calls, greeting office visitors, assisting with merchandise sales, and other general office duties. Call Connie at the Intergroup office, 352 867-0660, for more info. One year of continuous sobriety is required.

### Immediate need, District 17 Treasurer and more

The position of District 17 Treasurer is open and must be filled. Two years of continuous sobriety is required. Other service chair positions are open in Archives and Public Information and Communication with the Professional Community. Contact the Intergroup office, 352 867-0660, for more info or attend the next District 17 meeting, December 29. See page 4 for details..

### Take meetings to nursing homes, hospitals, and more.

Some members simply can't get to a meeting because of physical limitations. The Accessibilities Committee seeks volunteers to take meetings to shut-ins, nursing homes/ALF residents, and hospitals. Call Intergroup to learn more. 352 867-0660.

### Urgent Need.

### Women to take meetings to prisons. Volunteer now!

Corrections committee needs women volunteers to take meetings into local correctional institutions. The need is critical. The service is great. Contact Sherry R immediately through Intergroup.

Applications for both women's and men's prison meetings are also available at Intergroup 17 office. Call 352-867-0660. Or attend the next District 17 meeting. (Page 4)

*Publicize your group's service opportunities in The Voice. Call 352 867-0660 or email to [thevoice@aaocalamarion.org](mailto:thevoice@aaocalamarion.org)*

### Intergroup 17 Call Center October 2011

Meeting info requests	88
Office	78
Twelfth Step Calls	5
Visitors	23
AI-Anon*	6
Miscellaneous	76

\*Calls requesting information relating to AI-Anon Family Groups are promptly and respectfully referred to the appropriate local and national resources.

### Ocala Group

**Christmas & New Year's Eve Alkathons**  
**Saturday December 24 and 31**  
**Continuous meetings, food, fellowship**  
**Meetings begin at 5:30 pm**  
St. Mark's United Methodist Church  
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala, Florida  
**Desserts & snacks to share are welcome**

### Attitude of GrAAitude

Intergroup 17 is fully self-supporting through the generosity of our local AA groups. Thank you to all who contributed to Intergroup 17 in August:

- 11 Step Group
- As Bill Sees It Group
- Breakfast Club
- Forest Group
- Happy Joyous & Free
- Headstart Group
- No Name Group
- Ocala Group
- Sober Yankees Group
- One Day at a Time Group
- Zion-Blichton Group

All who have contributed this year are acknowledged on page 7. If your group isn't listed, please consider giving.

Intergroup 17 also thanks all who give their time so freely to make our service possible including our office and after-hours volunteers and others who help us carry the message in so many different ways.