



# NATURE COAST JOURNAL

**MARCH 2021**



## Ours Is Not To Judge

By Bill W.

*Re-printed from August 1946 Grapevine*

The first edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous makes this brief statement about membership: "The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted." This expressed our feeling as of 1939, the year our book was published.

Since that day all kinds of experiments with membership have been tried. The number of membership rules which have been made (and mostly broken!) are legion. Two or three years ago the Central Office asked the groups to list their membership rules and send them in. After they arrived we set them all down. They took a great many sheets of paper. A little reflection upon these many rules brought us to an astonishing conclusion. If all of these edicts had been in force everywhere at once it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined Alcoholics Anonymous. About nine-tenths of our oldest and best members could never have got by!

### Who'd Have Lasted?

In some cases we would have been too discouraged by the demands made upon us. Most of the early members of A.A. would have been thrown out because they slipped too much, because their morals were too bad, because they had mental as well as alcoholic difficulties. Or, believe it or not, because they did not come from the so-called better classes of society. We oldsters could have been excluded for our failure to read the book Alcoholics Anonymous or the refusal of our sponsor to vouch for us as a candidate. And so on ad infinitum. The way our "worthy" alcoholics have sometime tried to judge the "less worthy" is, as we look back on it, rather comical. Imagine, if you can, one alcoholic judging another!

At one time or another most A.A. Groups go on rule-making benders. Naturally enough, too, as a Group commences to grow rapidly it is confronted with many alarming problems. Panhandlers begin to pan-handle. Members get drunk and sometimes get others drunk with them. Those with mental difficulties throw depressions or break out into paranoid denunciations of fellow members. Gossips gossip, and righteously denounce the local Wolves and Red Riding Hoods. Newcomers argue that they aren't alcoholics at all, but keep coming around ...*(continued on page 3)*...

**HOTLINE 352-621-0599**

## **Steps | Traditions | Concepts**

### **STEP 3**

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

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### **TRADITION 3**

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

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### **CONCEPT 3**

**"To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A.—the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives—with a traditional 'Right of Decision'"**

**"What it was like, What happened, and What it is like now"**

**Your story could appear in an upcoming issue.**

**Send your stories, poems, articles, and anniversary lists to  
[News@Ncintergroup.com](mailto:News@Ncintergroup.com)**

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Make checks payable to NFAC and send to:  
P.O. Box 10094  
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P.O. Box 459  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163

.... (continued from front page)... anyway. "Slippees" trade on the fair name of A.A., in order to get themselves jobs. Others refuse to accept all the 12 Steps of the Recovery Program. Some go still further, saying that, the "God business" is bunk and quite unnecessary. Under these conditions our conservative program-abiding members get scared. These appalling conditions must be controlled, they think. Else A.A. will surely go to rack and ruin. They view with alarm for the good of the Movement!

At this point the Group enters the rule and regulation phase. Charters, by-laws and membership rules are excitedly passed and authority is granted committees to filter out undesirables and discipline the evil doers. Then the Group Elders, now clothed with authority, commence to get busy. Recalcitrants are cast into the outer darkness, respectable busybodies throw stones at the sinners. As for the so-called sinners, they either insist on staying around, or else they form a new Group of their own. Or maybe they join a more congenial and less intolerant crowd in their neighborhood. The Elders soon discover that the rules and regulations aren't working very well. Most attempts at enforcement generate such waves of dissension and intolerance in the Group that this condition is presently recognized to be worse for the Group life than the very worst that the worst ever did.



After a time fear and intolerance subside. The Group survives unscathed. Everybody has learned a great deal. So it is, that few of us are any longer afraid of what any newcomer can do to our A.A. reputation or effectiveness. Those who slip, those who pan-handle, those who scandalize, those with mental twists, those who rebel at the program, those who trade on the A.A. reputation --all such persons seldom harm an A.A. Group for long. Some of these have become our most respected and best loved. Some have remained to try our patience, sober never-

theless. Others have drifted away. We have begun to regard these ones not as menaces, but rather as our teachers. They oblige us to cultivate patience, tolerance and humility. We finally see that they are only people sicker than the rest of us, that we who condemn them are the Pharisees whose false righteousness does our Group the deeper spiritual damage.

### **Ours Not to Judge**

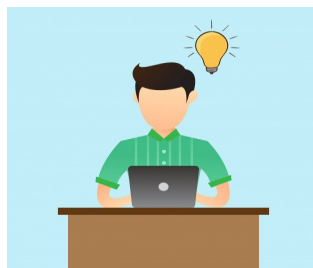
Every older A.A. shudders when he remembers the names of persons he once condemned; people he confidently predicted would never sober up; persons he was sure ought to be thrown out of A.A. for the good of the movement. Now that some of these very persons have been sober for years, and may be numbered among his best friends, the oldtimer thinks to himself "What if everybody had judged these people as I once did? What if A.A. had slammed its door in their faces? Where would they be now?"

That is why we all judge the newcomer less and less. If alcohol is an uncontrollable problem to him and he wishes to do something about it, that is enough for us. We care not whether his case is severe or light, whether his morals are good or bad, whether he has other complications or not. Our A.A. door stands wide open, and if he passes through it and commences to do anything at all about his problem, he is considered a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. He signs nothing, agrees to nothing, promises nothing. We demand nothing. He joins us on his own say (continued on page 4)

... (continued from page 3)... so. Nowadays, in most Groups, he doesn't even have to admit he is an alcoholic. He can join A.A. on the mere suspicion that he may be one, that he may already show the fatal symptoms of our malady.

Of course this is not the universal state of affairs throughout A.A. Membership rules still exist. If a member persists in coming to meetings drunk he may be led outside; we may ask someone to take him away. But in most Groups he can come back next day, if sober. Though he may be thrown out of a club, nobody thinks of throwing him out of A.A. He is a member as long as he says he is. While this broad concept of A.A. membership is not yet unanimous, it does represent the main current of A.A. thought today. We do not wish to deny anyone his chance to recover from alcoholism. We wish to be just as inclusive as we can, never exclusive.

Perhaps this trend signifies something much deeper than a mere change of attitude on the question of membership. Perhaps it means that we are losing all fear of those violent emotional storms which sometimes cross our alcoholic world; perhaps it bespeaks our confidence that every storm will be followed by a calm; a calm which is more understanding, more compassionate, more tolerant than any we ever knew before.



**FOR THE LATEST MEETING TIMES,  
LOCATIONS, NEWS, AND RESOURCES  
VISIT  
[NCINTERGROUP.COM](http://NCINTERGROUP.COM)**

## F.Y.I.

### **Nature Coast Intergroup and District 28 Business Meetings Will Be Held**

**Sunday March 7th at 4.30pm (District Meeting Immediately  
Following Intergroup)**

**Located at Beverly Hills Community Center, 82 Civic Circle,  
Beverly Hills, FL 34465**

### **A fruitful moment of silence**

The custom of observing a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer at the beginning of an AA meeting is widespread. Its primary purpose, of course, is to enable members to quiet their minds and focus on the situation at hand: the meeting. This is exactly what I did for many years--pause and prepare for sharing.

As the meeting progressed and I listened intently to the comments by the participating members, I'd weigh each one and consider whether I could identify or learn or even agree with what was being said. But after a few years of this at my home group, listening to many of the same people, I gradually became aware that I was, in my thoughts, standing in judgment and criticism concerning several of the long-comers: John always uses so much profanity--how can this be a Higher Power speaking through a member? Then there's Mary--she always says the same thing ad infinitum. And Betty--her comments never reflect the true AA philosophy.

My attitude continued in this vein for a considerable period of time until one day I became aware of my conduct: after a number of Steps Four and Five over the past ten years, I still had outstanding defects in the area of impatience and judgmentalism.

I'd lived in the program long enough to know that, having once identified my character shortcomings, immediate action was required. As I pondered this, it occurred to me that I had a convenient tool to use: from that point on at every meeting, when we were asked to observe the moment of silence, I would pray that I'd remain openminded to whatever anyone said. Who was I to question through whom messages were being sent?

Shortly after this, I expanded my prayer, and now as I bow my head and close my eyes, I quiet myself and focus by praying, "Dear God, keep me openminded as I listen to my fellow members and make me be prudent in whatever I have to say."

It works, and meetings are never boring anymore.

*Reprinted from July 1996 A.A. Grapevine, Inc.*



**FRUIT FOR  
THOUGHT**

## Area 14 North Florida Come Celebrate Service with us!

**Every Wednesday**

6:00 PM EST \* 5:00 PM CST \* 4:00 PM MST \* 3:00 PST

**ID 828 5682 4762**

**Phone 646 558 8656 US**

**Passcode service**

**Password 8865328**

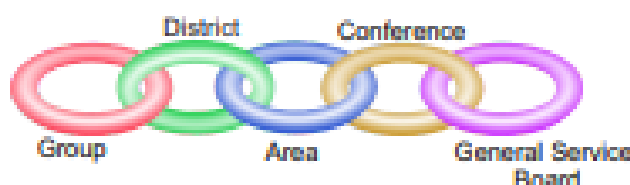
Presented by Past Delegates, , Area Officers, Chairs and  
Service Coordinators and **YOU!**

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 3/03/2021 | Meet Our Area Accessibilities Service Coordinator Tia M.<br>Is There A Map to the Background Material? How do I find stuff? |
| 3/10/2021 | Meet Our Area Archives Service Coordinator Bob C.<br>All About GSR - Vivian F.  |
| 3/17/2021 | Meet Our Area Corrections Service Coordinator Nanette R<br>All About DCMs   |
| 3/24/2021 | Spotlight TBA<br>Roberts Rules of Order Revealed  |
| 3/31/2021 | Spotlight TBA<br>Service Sponsorship  |

### **Discuss All Things Service**

What does the Service Manual suggest?  
Why do we do it this way?  
A workshop? Where do I start?  
What else do I need to know?

What resources are available?  
Service at all Levels  
Where do I fit?  
Ask all your questions



**Embrace  
Change Through Education**



**James Burwell (March 23, 1898 – September 8, 1974)**, known as Jim B. or Jimmy B., was one of the Alcoholics Anonymous founding members. He was among the first ten members of AA on the East Coast, and was responsible for starting Alcoholics Anonymous in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Later in life, he and Rosa, his wife, moved to San Diego, California and were instrumental in the growth of AA there.

His most crucial contribution at the founding of AA came from his atheism—or as he later termed it, his "militant agnosticism." He argued strongly with the early group in New York that it needed to tone down what he called the "God bit". This resulted in the much more inclusive "Higher Power" and "God as we understand Him" concepts that are now so closely associated with Alcoholics Anonymous. This compromise was crucial—without it, AA would probably not have survived at all, much less have reached the number of people it has worldwide today. Jim B.'s contribution to Alcoholics Anonymous is considered second only to that of AA's two co-founders, Bill W. and Dr Bob.

He was instrumental in the publication of the all important Saturday Evening Post article by Jack Alexander that first brought nationwide publicity to AA in March 1941. As mentioned by Bill W. in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (pp. 143 – 145), Jim B. is credited with the adoption of AA's Third Tradition: "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." In the foreword to the first edition of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous", historically prior to the standardization of the 12 Traditions, it is stated that "the only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking".

According to Clarence Snyder (an early AA member from Cleveland): "Jimmy remained steadfast, throughout his life and 'preached' his particular [non-God] brand of AA wherever he went."

His story, "The Vicious Cycle," was published in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th edition of the AA Big Book.

Jim B. is buried in the Christ Episcopal Church cemetery in Owensville, Maryland near his boyhood friend, John Henry Fitzhugh Mayo, known as "Fitz M.", (AA Big Book Story "Our Southern Friend"). Jim. B. and Fitz M. were among the first members of AA to get and stay sober with Bill W. in New York.

*-Submitted by Dean B.*

**A New-Found Providence** When dealing with a prospect of agnostic or atheistic bent, you had better use everyday language to describe spiritual principles. There is no use arousing any prejudice he may have against certain theological terms and conceptions, about which he may already be confused. Don't raise such issues, no matter what your own convictions are.

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● Every man and woman who has joined A.A. and intends to stick has, without realizing it, made a beginning on Step Three. Isn't it true that, in all matters touching upon alcohol, each of them has decided to turn his or her life over to the care, protection, and guidance of A.A.?

● Already a willingness has been achieved to cast out one's own will and one's own ideas about the alcohol problem in favor of those suggested by A.A. Now if this is not turning one's will and life over to a new-found "Providence," then what is it?

## UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES

MARCH 2021



### YOU HAVE A CHOICE

Alli	3
Chuck (February)	34

### WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP

Linda G.	41
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### REAL HAPPY HOUR

Jim	5
Sharon	3

### SOBER SAND GNATS

Buddy H.	45
Jack R.	8
Scott M.	6
Michael	2

## WE NEED YOUR STORIES!

Tell us about "what it was like, what happened and what it is like now."

In upcoming issues, Nature Coast Journal will publish your brief stories about:

Laughter and Fun in Sobriety, Balance in and out of AA , The Steps ,

Living Your Dreams In Sobriety , AA Humor/ Jokes

Send your stories on any sobriety  
related topic!

e-mail: [news@ncintergroup.com](mailto:news@ncintergroup.com)