



The Message

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

TRUSTED SERVANTS

INTERGROUP 5, INC DECEMBER 2008 TALLAHASSEE, FL

Intergroup

Chairman—Craig F—Living Sober
 Co-chairman—Mike F—New Hope
 Secretary—Carol H—New Hope
 Treasurer—Matt C—Nite Owl
 Literature—Vacant
 Website—Andy E—Men's Faith
 Activities—Laura A—Central
 Membership—Adam G—Central
 Newsletter—Sandy M & Julie W—
 Mustard Seed
 12 Step—Jeff D—Central

District 5

DCM—Joe D—Downtown
 Alternate DCM—Susan E—Central
 Secretary—Craig F—Living Sober
 Treasurer—Matt N—Central

Standing Committees

Public Info—AC—Happy Hour
 CPC—Steve H—Central
 Treatment—Kevin T—Happy Hour
 Corrections—David G—End of the
 Road
 Grapevine—Vern D—Northside
 Accessibilities—Janis T—Willing
 Archives—Rebecca—Central
 Bridging the Gap—Danny P—Central

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“And you will know the Truth and the Truth will set you Free”

I grew up in small town, blue collar eastern Conn. Being born in August made me the youngest in my school class. Although I was athletic and very competitive, I was physically immature. I had few close friends and always felt I was on the outside trying to break in. Being part of the group was made even harder by one particular bully who just had it out for me. This bully, whom I have not seen since 1978, had continued to haunt me up until I did my first 4th and 5th steps nearly 3 years ago. I now know that my focus on this resentment and many others had blocked me from the Sunlight of the Spirit. I was wandering in the darkness, wondering where God was.

My freshman year I went to a high school dance with some football teammates. We were going to get drunk. “Get me something strong, I want to get a really good buzz on!” A six pack of tall boy Colt 45 Malt liquor to be chased with cherry vodka. I remember walking into the dance, nothing more. That first night I drank was my first blackout, to be followed by many, many more. Wasn't this the way it was for everyone else? Didn't everyone blackout? I thought when everyone drank they had the same experience that I did. So I thought for 30 years.

As years passed and my drinking increased, I drank mostly at home and would drink until I fell asleep or passed out. On one of these drinking evenings, after about 4 large glasses of scotch on the rocks, my 14 year old daughter, Stephanie came out of her room and told me she had written a song for me. Its essence was that she was scared when I got drunk and that scared me. The last verse was blank and she told me that was my verse to write. I promised her that I would never drink again, and I meant it.

3 or 4 nights later, life had gotten in the way, the pain of the day, from people, events and circumstances had won. I knew no other way to make the pain go away and I could not wait for Stephanie to go to bed. 4 or 5 drinks later I hit my bottom. I had broken my promise to my daughter. I had reached that place of incomprehensible demoralization. My daughter was afraid of her Daddy. Little did I know how scared my wife had become after 20 years of my alcoholic drinking. I looked at the 1.75 liter bottle of Johnny Walker Red and admitted to my innermost self that I was beaten. Alcohol was my master. I couldn't beat it. I surrendered to the bottle. I was destined to go to the bitter end, jails, institutions, death, lose my wife, family, house, business, whatever would happen, because I could not stop.

3 or 4 days later I was in church and the Preacher gave a sermon entitled “The Promise of Hopelessness.” He explained that there are 1000s of self help books but the one self help book that has helped more people than all the others put together, because it really was not really a Self help book, was the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had that book, I had read that book. Though I cannot remember exactly who gave it to me or when, it has been in my nightstand for years.

I was truly hopeless, powerless over alcohol. Did I have to surrender to the bottle? Could I surrender to God instead? At that moment in time I KNEW, not in my mind, but in my heart, that I couldn't but God could. God was either everything, or he was nothing. I knew, with every cell of my body, that He was everything and that he could take the obsession to drink away from me, AND HE DID. I felt the weight of the world rise up from my body. I had surrendered to the bottle and turned it over 100% to God. I knew I could live without drinking.

Less than a week later I found once again that life had gotten in the way. I had this stress or tension in my chest that I could not handle. The obsession to drink had been

(cont.)

Experience, Strength and Hope

Step Twelve

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

In thinking about Step 12 I'm reminded of all the steps. For without all the steps I couldn't have made it to 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps I know I have a job to do. Practice the Presence of God and the Principles of this Program in all my affairs, and carry this Message to others. This is my goal for the rest of my life.

In this writing I'll talk about carrying the Message in prison. Several years ago some people tried to get me involved in prison ministry and I finally decided I would with the realization that but for the Grace of God I'd be in prison too. Then in 2001 the Chaplain asked me to lead a 12 Step Recovery Ministry, and after some consideration I decided to and have been doing so ever since. This is not an AA meeting but a God-Centered 12 Step Recovery Ministry. We have singing and praying and sharing that really brings unity and a godly atmosphere to the group. This has been one of the best things to happen to me in my recovery. I've been able to grow into a closer understanding of my Higher Power. I've been able to learn to practice these principles more closely in all my affairs. I've been able to learn to show others how to recover better by being involved with lots of men. I've been able to make lots of new friends and see hundreds of people recover through dependence on God, fellowship with other like minded fellows, and practicing the Godly principles of recovery. Now that's what this ministry is all about.

At this time we are using a 25 lesson workbook which cover all 12 steps. We've been using this book for a couple of years. This step study usually takes about 15 weeks. We have about 50 men who are committed to this 12 step study and if they sign up are required to come every week. We are about 14 volunteers, all in recovery who go to the prison on Saturday mornings to help others recover from alcohol, drugs, and other hurts, hang-ups, and habits. We get about 2 1/2 hours with the men every week. We take in coffee, sugar, lots of sugar, cream, cups. Men in prison don't get to indulge in many amenities so we like to allow them have that pleasure. We start with prayer and let some of the inside guys lead. We also enjoy some singing, usually old gospel hymns or gospel soul. This really puts you in the Spirit. Then we read the steps along with their biblical comparisons. Next we do our book study on the step we're on that week. We then break into small groups of about 6 inmates and 2 volunteers. Each lesson has 8 or 10 questions to answer concerning the step. This is done before the morning group begins. The exercise aids in learning to put pen to paper about inventory and their thoughts on each step. These thoughts are shared with one another in the small group and what's shared there stays there. This sharing is great in building trust and bonding which many have never done. Before our time is up we come back together as a big group for more prayer usually on our knees and maybe more singing if time permits. (Speaking of on our knees, it's a real spiritual experience to see a group of 65 men on their knees giving themselves to God in the 3rd step.) Each meeting ends with this strengthening through prayer and encouragement to go back into the compound for them and into the world for us to practice the principles and carry the message. We know this is our job to carry this message to those in prison. We go with the intent of doing this job to the best of our ability and we leave the results to God.

Bobby C.--Central Group

(cont.)

lifted, I had not thought of drinking, but I did not know how to live life without alcohol. I needed to medicate. I knew what would make the pain go away. I had 3 martinis that night, March 10, 2006, my sobriety date.

Every time I drove up Gadsden Street I had looked at that house #909, imagining and fearing what was behind those doors. I knew exactly where it was. I needed help, I was willing, and I was going there. At noon I was there and I admitted to everyone that I was an alcoholic, and I meant it. They shared their experience, strength and hope with me. I heard my story being told by strangers who obviously had been through what I had been through. They understood my condition. I was home.

I sat in a meeting one afternoon when we were discussing the 3rd step. In that meeting, I shared of my struggle to move on to the 4th. A young women shared and as she finished she looked at me and said, "and to the man who is stuck on his 3rd step,NIKE! JUST DO IT! The next morning I started. For 2 weeks I got up 15 minutes early every day and wrote.

And then I was done. I could not find another resentment; I was as honest and thorough as I could be at that time. I was ready to be rid of all of it and I needed to do it now! But had I been completely honest and thorough? There were 3 things I could not share with anyone. I did not have them on my list. Three, the deepest, darkest most shameful of my issues. I had to get rid of them. I came up with a plan. I called the Catholic Church, they would be in, they would be male, I would never go to a Catholic service again! I needed to get this over with now. Father Craig picked up the phone. I explained to him that I was working a recovery program and needed to see him now. He agreed. I shared with him my deepest and darkest. He did not bat an eye. When I was done he said something about compassion and humility, 2 character issues which I needed and lacked. I left there a little more compassionate and humble. Off to meet with the person from AA who had agreed to hear my 5th step. 5 1/2 hours later I finished.

Selfishness, not in the way that I wouldn't share what I had, but in the way that the world and the people in it were here for me and if they would behave as I thought best things would be great, for them and for me. Selfishness and fear controlled every aspect of my life. They were the root of my troubles. I never knew!

Now, the rest of my 5th step story. I still have not been to a Catholic service for any reason, however, my wife's Uncle is very active in the Catholic Church and sponsors a number of golf events which he graciously invites me to play in. A few months after I met with Father Craig I was invited to play in such an event. As I carried my golf bag to the golf cart I looked at the name tags posted on every cart to find my place and see who I was playing with. God has a plan and God has a sense of humor. Father Craig, right next to me for the next 4 hours. When I saw him he looked at me as though he didn't remember a thing I had told him. I knew I was forgiven. As Christ said, "It is finished."

Roland H.

Intergroup 5 News

Step Twelve Tidbits

Chapter 7 is dedicated in its entirety to Step 12. "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." The bulk of this chapter is dedicated to carrying the message. It is written in a general way of Sponsorship. Remember Bill is writing the book in NY, and Dr. Bob in Akron and Clarence in Cleveland are implementing it, so sponsorship was born out of the implementation of the book. Bill, in the 12 and 12 lists sponsorship with spiritual advisor. There are many places in the book suggesting sponsorship. During the period of time when the book was written there were about 60 to 100 members sober - this after 4 years of work. There were 2 basic activity centers: New York which was intellectual/psychological, and Akron/Cleveland which were more evangelical in nature. When originally written the 12th Step said this: "Having had a spiritual experience as the result of this course of action, we tried to carry this message to others - especially alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." Clearly the mindset is one of conversion, spreading the word. Chapter 7 was written with the idea that it was (a) good to increase our numbers and that (b) carrying the message is the way to do it. They also believed that the message wasn't one that required a "personality" to convey it. Certainly Bill and Bob weren't about to go on tour. This book was the perfect vehicle to carry the message. By 1940, even Bill was surprised at the book's success in carrying the message.

When we read through these pages we see things that astonish us: We aren't convincing anyone that they need this program - we are demonstrating what it has done for us. We are attracting, not promoting. The assumption is that the alcoholic is ready to listen to the message. Page 94 - paragraph 1: "Make it plain he is not under pressure, that he needn't see you again if he doesn't want to." There is an old saying that isn't repeated often today - "AA is a program for those who want it, not necessarily for those who need it."

We will also be astonished at the length to which we are expected to go in helping others. Paragraph 1 on page 97 really details what is expected of us:

"Never avoid these responsibilities, but be sure you are doing the right thing if you assume them. Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night. Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home, or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with him if he is violent. Sometimes you will have to call a doctor and administer sedatives under his direction. Another time you may have to send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such conditions." That's pretty involved!

Diz T.

November 2008 Treasurer's report

General Fund

Checking:	
Beginning Balance 10/31/08	<u>\$1,231.00</u>
Contributions:	
Apachicola Bay	15.00
Bradfordville	100.00
Central	200.00
Crawfordville	30.00
Home Group	5.00
Northside	73.00
Office Insurance Refund	9.21
Total Contributions	<u>432.21</u>
Less:	
Disbursements:	
Answering service	204.00
Office Coordinator Travel/Rel. Exp	147.62
Internet monthly charge	56.96
Printing Newsletter/ W&W	75.75
Rent	257.01
Telephone	46.21
Total Expense Disbursements:	<u>787.55</u>
Ending Balance 11/30/08	<u>875.66</u>
Prudent Reserve Savings:	
Beginning 10/31/08 balance	955.87
Interest earned	0.13
Ending Balance 11/30/08	<u>956.00</u>
Literature Fund	
Beginning 10/31/08 Balance	<u>2,056.95</u>
Literature sales	539.80
Sales Tax collected	40.48
Total Receipts	<u>580.28</u>
Less: Literature Purchases	<u>440.89</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>440.89</u>
Ending Balance 11/30/08	<u>2,196.34</u>

Thanks for the opportunity to serve, Matt C.

Happy A.A. November Anniversary

Bradfordville: Tammei - 2, Trae - 4, Jeff - 6, Tom M. - 9
Central: Doug K. - 1, Lauren - 1, Mark H. - 1
 May - 1, Robert O. - 1, Cynthia - 2, Maggi W. - 2
 Karen J. - 3, Lynn S. - 3, Vern - 4, Charlie W. - 13,
 Joanne W. - 15, Kevin K. - 15, Althea - 17
 Bob I. - 27, Robert N. - 29
Crawfordville: Al S. - 17
Mustard Seed: Tammy - 8



EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

INTERGROUP 5 NEWS

Web stats: 5,218 pages were sent from Intergroup5.org's website.

Phone Stats: The phone volunteers at the Intergroup 5 office answered 34 hot line calls of the following types:

Al-Anon - 3, AA info - 9, Misc. - 4, Agency info - 1, Meeting info - 17

Thanks to all the intergroup phone volunteers for helping others into recovery and life.

Do you want to be useful? Do you want to give back to AA? Volunteer now - call Rob K @ 850.545.3833, the Intergroup 5 office @ 850.224.1818 or email office-coordinator @ intergroup5.org

***IG5 office needs a printer.
If you have an extra please donate.***

"Carrying the Message -- Women Behind Bars and YOU"

For some time now, it has been an honor and a privilege to be able to bring a big book meeting with another sober sister behind bars to the women in Gadsden Correctional Facility. The female inmates, who attend their AA Meeting Tuesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., are in desperate need of seeing other sober women like you --- to come to the facility and share your experience, strength and hope with them.

Make no mistake -- it is a commitment unlike any other: you will have training, fingerprinting, U/A, a host of forms to fill out and a list of rules the likes of which you can't imagine unless... well -- you know... Unless you've been there too. But I would do it all again to be able to carry our message of recovery. Each Tuesday I'm given another 'gift' of MY sobriety to see an inmate smile with the realization that there really *IS* hope after the 'death' of her world that brought her behind bars, and the reluctant acceptance of a steel-cold truth... That ultimately, to drink is to die. A hope for these women that they too can lead the same productive lives as you, or me, if they just "ACT" instead of "think" their way into right actions.

My hope for the New Year (and the facility's next training session in January!) is that YOU will step UP to the plate and make the sacrifice that these women so desperately need --- to hear your voice, to cling to your experience, your strength and your hope that if they DO what you did, this journey into recovery through the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous will work for them, too.

Imagine the Strength of the Steps as 3 or 4 or more women take part in our recovery as a team sharing with others just like me? Who, but for the Grace of God --- could have BEEN Me? Or you?

Your presence and help, is so desperately --- so sincerely needed. Please join me! If you'd like more information, call 850-445-3532.

In Loving Service, Beth H.

CURRENT EVENTS

Holiday Dinner: December 13, 2008
Jackson Masonic Lodge, Apalachee Parkway
Tallahassee, FL

District 5 Meeting: December 17, 2008

Area Assembly: January 9, 10 & 11, 2008
Paramount Resort & Conference Center, 2900 SW 13th St.
Gainesville, FL 32608. (352) 377- 4000 or 877-992-9229

*****ALCATHONS***** - The Bradfordville Group is hosting "Alcathons" on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Meetings will be held every 2 hours beginning at 6:15 p.m. through 6:15 a.m. the following morning. The Group meets in the "little church" building of Bradfordville First Baptist Church - just south of the larger church building. 6494 Thomasville Road.

Westside Group - Open Big Book/12&12 beginning January 6, 2009 will meet @ 7:00, Tuesday nights @ Bethel Methodist Church Fellowship Hall.

IMPORTANT DECEMBER DATES IN AA HISTORY

- Dec 1934 to May 1935 - Bill works with alcoholics, but fails to sober any of them. Lois reminds him HE is sober.
- Dec 1938 - Twelve Steps written.
- Nov/Dec 1939 - Akron group withdraws from association with Oxford Group. Meetings moved from T Henry & Clarence Williams to Dr Bob and other members' homes.
- Dec 1939 - First AA group in mental institution, Rockland State Hospital, NY.
- Dec 1939 - Matt Talbot Club has 88 members, uses wagons to collect old furniture to recondition & sell, not A.A., used A.A. program, material, marked 1st effort reach alcoholics outside married middle-class category.
- Dec 1948 - Dr. Bob's last major talk, in Detroit.
- Dec 1950 - Grapevine article signed by both Bill and Dr Bob recommend establishing AA General Service Conference.
- Dec 1955 - 'Man on the Bed' painting by Robert M. 1st appeared in Grapevine. Painting originally called 'Came to Believe'
- Dec 1982 - Nell Wing retires from GSO after 35 years service.
- Dec 1, 1940 - Chicago Daily Tribune begins a series of articles on AA by Nall Hamilton.
- Dec 5, 1985 - Dave B, founder of Montreal Group dies weeks before 50th anniversary. His story added to 4th Edition BB.
- Dec 6, 1939 - Bert the Tailor lends Works Publishing \$1000.
- Dec 6, 1979 - Akron Beacon reports death of Henrietta Sieberling.
- Dec 7, 1949 - Sister Ignatia received Poverello Medal on behalf of A.A.
- Dec 10, 1975 - Birds of a Feather AA group for pilots formed.
- Dec 11, 1934 - Bill admitted to Towns Hosp 4th/last time (fall '33, '34 in summer, midsummer and final admittance).
- Dec 12, 1934 - Bill has Spiritual Experience at Towns Hospital.
- Dec 12, 1937 - Bill meets with Rockefeller Foundation and tries to get money.
- Dec 13 or 14, 1934 - Ebby visited Bill at hospital, brought William James's book, "Varieties of Religious Experience".
- Dec 20, 1945 - Rowland H dies (he carried the Oxford Group message to Ebby).
- Dec 27, 1893 - Rev. Samuel Shoemaker is born.

Diz T.