

HOW

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HOW
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A NEW WAY OF THINKING

A few months ago, while she was arranging my grandmother's funeral, my mother was told that the ashes of her second husband were still stored at the mortuary. Mother married Theron when I was twelve, and they were married for seven or eight years. She and Theron divorced and both remarried before his death from cancer in 1984. No one had ever claimed his remains.

I was twelve the first time I got drunk. That evening, I blacked out, and when I was delivered to my home, I got sick. Theron cleaned me up and put me to bed. He was very patient and kind to me. As my disease progressed and I became more difficult, he also became more difficult. I was arrested several times, fired from jobs, stole their car, partied, and brought drugs into the house and attempted burglary at the home of a friend of Theron's. Finally, after being arrested again for drugs, this time at school, I was expelled and asked to leave their home.

My relationship with Theron had become intolerable. I know that my years of active alcoholism in that home contributed to the demise of the relationship between Theron and me as well as between him and my mother.

In 1992, eight years after he had died, I sobered up and started working the Steps. I put Theron's name on my Eighth Step list. I asked my Higher Power for the willingness to make amends, and believed this would be one I'd only be able to make indirectly, possibly just trying to live my life as a sober member of AA.

When I heard of the situation with his ashes, I inquired what was supposed to have happened to him. Mother told me that when he was dying, he had requested that his ashes be scattered over a nearby wilderness area in the Wallowa mountains. I knew this could be an opportunity to try to right a wrong. My sponsor agreed and suggested I make contact with Theron's wife, son, and daughter for their approval. I would be traveling to that area on my vacation, so I hoped to complete this goal. I was unsuccessful in locating his family, but I made the necessary arrangements to pick up his ashes.

The time came for me to strap on my backpack and hike into the wilderness area. I climbed the mountains overlooking a spot I knew he was fond of. I said a prayer thanking my Higher Power for this man in my life and the opportunity to grant his last request. This was a wonderful experience for me, yet it also brought on an awareness that inspired another amends.

When I returned to my mother's home a couple of days later, I was washing my pickup when a thought crossed my mind that I should make a deal with my mother to wash her car if she would let me use it that evening to go to a nearby town. My next thought was, "Why don't you just wash her car?" I began thinking about all the times I had used and abused--even stolen--her car in the past. I also thought about how she was retired and living on a limited income while I was working. So I washed her car, feeling grateful for the opportunity to be of service, and drove to town that evening in my own pickup.

This experience proved to me, once again, that I can act myself into a new way of thinking.

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8 Eight VIII

STEP

**“Made a list of all persons we had harmed,
and became willing to make amends to them all.”**

Every AA has found that he can make little headway in this new adventure of living until he first backtracks and really makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake. To a degree, he has already done this when taking moral inventory, but now the time has come to see how many people he has hurt, and in what ways. This reopening of emotional wounds, some old, some perhaps forgotten, and some still painfully festering, will at first look like a purposeless and pointless piece of surgery. But if a willing start is made, then the great advantages of doing this will so quickly reveal themselves that the pain will be lessened as one obstacle after another melts away.

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TRADITION

**“Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional,
but our service centers may employ special workers.”**

1. Is my own behavior accurately described by the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?
3. Do I sometimes try to get *some* reward—even if not money—for my personal AA efforts?
4. Do I try to sound in AA like an expert on alcoholism? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On AA itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters? Or, heaven help me, even on *humility*?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what AA employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I distinguish clearly among them?
6. In my own AA life, have I any experiences which illustrate the wisdom of this Tradition?
7. Have I paid enough attention to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*? To the pamphlet *AA Tradition—How It Developed*?

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CONCEPT

The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities:

- (a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs.
- (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

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TREATMENT: GROUP COMMITMENTS

ALCOHOPE

Meeting Open to AA Community
5925 37th St, Vero Beach, FL 32966
778-7215

CENTER FOR EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

CEBH - Meeting Closed to Public
1190 37th St, Vero Beach, FL 32960
563-4666

TUESDAYS

SATURDAYS

Indian River Men's	August 3	Candlelight	August 7
Midnight Oil	August 10	Discovery Women	August 14
New Awakening	August 17	Easy Does It	August 21
Noontime Recover	August 24	Fri Young People	August 28
ODAAT	August 31	Open- Labor Day	Sept 4
Royal Palm	Sept 7	Indian River Women	Sept 11
Serenity House	Sept 14	King's Highway	Sept 18
South Vero	Sept 21	Midnight Oil	Sept 25
Candlelight	Sept 28	New Awakening	October 2
Early Risers	October 5	Noontime Recovery	October 9
Easy Does It	October 12	ODAAT	October 16

MONDAYS

Safe Harbor Women Sept 6

South Vero	August 2	South Vero	Sept 13
Friday Young People	August 9	Friday Young People	Sept 20
Indian River Thursday	August 16	Indian River Thursday	Sept 27
Indian River Women	August 23	Indian River Women	Oct 4
Noontime Recovery	August 30	Noontime Recovery	Oct 11

Alchope and CEBH meetings are sponsored by the Treatment Committee of the Indian River Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous and should be conducted in keeping with AA guidelines.

If your group would like to participate in the rotating commitment for carrying the AA message into these facilities, please contact the Treatment Committee Chair, Parris W. at 770-1553.

CEBH is a speaker/discussion meeting. Our format (as with Alchope) is for two people to go to the facility, a meeting leader and a speaker. Unlike Alchope, however, this is NOT a public meeting. A copy of the AA *Preamble* and *How It Works* are at the front desk. Please return them after the meeting. Once the leader opens the meeting in the usual way, the speaker will share his/her experience, strength and hope as it pertains to alcoholism., making sure to leave adequate time for questions and answers. The meeting is closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Group commitments are currently needed for the CEBH meeting on Mondays at 7PM.

IN MEMORY OF JEAN

Jean Rider died on Thursday, July 8th, at the VNA Hospice facility in Vero Beach after a lengthy illness.

Jean was a well loved member of the Vero Beach 12 & 12 group and a beloved member of Indian River AA for 25 years since her move to Vero Beach from Hagerstown, MD. Jean's husband, Howard, is credited with the artwork on our Central Office letterhead, the two seagulls that are also used in our current *HOW* newsletters. A retired bookkeeper, Jean and her husband also raised six children, four sons and two daughters.

Jean Rider died as she lived, with grace and acceptance, and I'll be darned if she didn't have the last laugh on us all!

Jean was always quick to point out that strife is a part of everyday life but that it always passes... if we take *action*.

So here we are... it's Friday, July 16, at just about 4 PM, time for Jean's memorial service to get under way at Downy Pavilion at Riverside Park. Black clouds had moved in swiftly and then the heavens opened with a tremendous downpour of unprecedented proportions. I'll bet Jean was looking down at us in amusement, saying "See, I told you!"

Well action **was** taken and the service and all the "drowned rats" who turned out to pay final respects to Jean moved to the Our Savior Lutheran Church. It was a short but poignant service.

Continued on page 6...



F Y I . . . and Pass It On!

NEED SUPPORT
OPEN DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Monday 6PM

Newport Club ~ Outside Room

Thursday 7PM

The Source Mission
1872 Commerce Ave, Vero Beach

HELP WANTED

Indian River Central Office
PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE
NEEDS VOLUNTEERS TO SPEAK AT
(NON) AA MEETINGS
in the community
SIGN UP SHEET AVAILABLE
AT YOUR GROUP OR CALL
MARTY P. ~ 299-3296

NEW AWAKENING GROUP

NEEDS SUPPORT
Monday through Friday
OPEN DISCUSSION MEETINGS
7:30AM
CHURCH OF CHRIST
33rd Ave & Route 60

NEW GROUP

WEDNESDAYS 7:30PM

VERO BEACH STEP & TRADITION
CLOSED 12x12 BYOB* DISCUSSION
SALVATION ARMY DINING HALL
2655 5th ST SW
(Corner of 27th Ave and 5th St SW)
Entrance to building on 5th St SW side
* Bring Your Own Book

NEW !

**(OPEN DISCUSSION /
SMOKING)
MEETING**
SUNDAYS ~ 7PM
NEWPORT CLUB

NEW !

NEW BEGINNINGS GROUP
Meets at Roseland Fire Department
8025 129th Court, Roseland
OPEN DISCUSSION/
SMOKING MEETING
WEDNESDAYS @ NOON

WAKE UP GROUP

MEETS TUESDAYS
7-8AM
ROSELAND METHODIST CHURCH (LIBRARY)
OPEN DISCUSSION
12962 ROSELAND ROAD

SOUTH VERO GROUP

ANNUAL LABOR DAY PICNIC

FT. PIERCE INLET STATE PARK, PAVILION #5
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5th ~ Begins @ 11AM
COME ONE... COME ALL
\$3.50 PER VEHICLE PARK FEE
*** PLEASE BRING A COVERED DISH ***

**SERENITY WEEKEND
WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

September 10th - 12th
Holiday Inn Beach Resort
2605 N Hwy A1A, Melbourne, FL
321-777-4100 or 800-465-4329
Rooms from \$75/Night

Conference Registration:

Fee = \$25 Non-refundable or \$30 after 9/1/04
Mail check payable to SWWC and mail to:
Ann Pemberton
9025 Gillette Ct
Orlando, FL 32836
TEL = 407-876-4430

VERO BEACH GROUP

SUNDAYS 8PM - OPEN DOUBLE SPEAKER MEETING
ST. HELEN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
NOW NON-SMOKING

INDIAN RIVER CENTRAL OFFICE

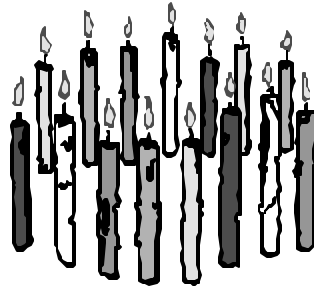
OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

HAS MOVED!

NOW LOCATED AT 1600 26th STREET, SUITE 6
ADJACENT TO NEWPORT CLUB
SAME PHONE # ~ SAME HOURS ~ SAME VOLUNTEER STAFF
SAME PURPOSE



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS



HAPPY AA BIRTHDAY!

To publish announcements of birthdays being celebrated by your Group's members each month, please bring list of names and numbers of years to Central Office and put in filing cabinet in folder labeled "HOW Editor," send via e-mail to irhow@yahoo.com, or use link from website at indianriveraa.freesevers.com.

EASY DOES IT		I AM RESPONSIBLE		SURFSIDE	
Dawn A.	1	Mardi H.	1	<i>Celebrates last Thursday</i>	
Michael M.	16	Karen P.	6	Chris H.	3
<i>July:</i>		Bill R.	27	John R.	22
Frank B.	13	Joe S.	36	ODAAAT	
SOUTH VERO GROUP		<i>July:</i>		<i>Celebrates Last Friday</i>	
<i>Celebrates Last Wednesday</i>		John N.	6	Sandra T.	1
Bill E.	1	Art W.	10	Todd J.	1
Connie J.	1	John D.	26	Kelly McC.	2
Geneva J.	3	HIBISCUS THURSDAY		Trish O'B.	3
Parris W.	3	Leslie T.	1	Liz F.	3
Bruce P.	4	INDIAN RIVER MEN'S		Lori L.	4
Ken C.	6	Bill J.	1	George C.	7
Joe H.	20	Frank T.	1	Ginny H.	11
Jim L.	21	Steve V.	2	Bill C.	16
John M.	24	Dick P.	38	Tom McG.	18
FREE & EASY		BAREFOOT BAY		Ginny W.	21
<i>Celebrates last Thursday</i>		Terri M.	13	Susan L.	24
Melanie B.	2	Peter D.	33	KING'S HIGHWAY	
Susan C.	2	INDIAN RIVER THURSDAY		Karen K.	6
Captain Bob	7	<i>Celebrates Last Thursday</i>		Millie D.	14
Teresa L.	7	Christy H.	1	VERO BEACH MEN'S	
<i>July:</i>		Darlene H.	4	Chris H.	3
Sharon D.	6	Muriel C.	30	Lane S.	3
Lenny	6	NEW AWAKENING		Tom F.	4
SAFE HARBOR WOMEN'S		Susan E.	4		
Ellie Y.	5	Don E.	7		
Sandy	10	ROSELAND METHODIST			
Stephanie C.	24	SUNDAY BEGINNERS			
HIBISCUS MONDAY NIGHT		Joe L.	13		
Ryan D.	2	Susan B.	17		
George R.	4	DISCOVERY WOMEN'S			
Theresa L.	7	Paula C.	7		
Bob S.	14	Peggy H.	19		
SERENITY HOUSE					
Peggy H.	19				

HAPPY AA BIRTHDAY!



Continued from page 3...

Jean's daughter, Johanna, spoke briefly but eloquently and from the heart. After the service, which featured a harmonica rendition of "Amazing Grace," Johanna released white balloons, one at a time, to the strains of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

It was a fitting memorial to a great lady and a passionately dedicated AA who this past February 3rd celebrated 36 years of continuous sobriety.

Jean was instrumental in the formation and the operation and growth of the Central Office of AA here in Indian River County. She was active in its affairs until just a short time before her death. Jean wrote a column in the early newsletter for the Central Office where she related tidbits of information about the AA community which at the time was in its infancy. She worked to keep the AA community connected and even though it was a little like a social column, for that time in Vero... it worked. She later became the editor of the *HOW*, a position she kept for many years. And she was a source of authentic counsel for many *HOW* editors through the years who followed in her wake. Jean also held a spot in the desk duty rotation at Central Office, as well, usually going to the office after her daily swim at the Jungle Club.

Her passion for helping other alcoholics during all her years in the AA program did not waiver in spite of prolonged illness, increasing discomfort and declining health. She was an active and supportive member of her home group, her district and her general service area until the end of her days. She held the position of Liaison from our Central Office to District 6 of the South Florida Area for many, many years. Though she finally relinquished that position 3 years ago due to health reasons, there were few District Meetings she failed to attend.

Jean, in her role as a Service Sponsor, had the good fortune and honor of being Service Sponsor to two South Florida Area Delegates to the General Service Conference, including our current Delegate, Beth D., who attended the Memorial Service and who shares our loss.

Personally I had known Jean for only 12 years, but her impact on my life will be with me forever. The widfelt loss of this great AA is by comparison a small testament to her huge legacy of love and service to our AA community.

She died as she lived, with grace and acceptance.

Dutch VN, South Vero Group



JEAN F. RYDER
5/27/22 - 7/08/04
~ REST IN PEACE ~



REACHING OUT

Loners, Internationalists, Homers

"Loners" are AAs *who* are unable to attend meetings because there are no groups nearby. As of July, 2003, there were about 220 Loners in 81 countries. Seagoing AAs, known as "Internationalists," numbered about 76 as well as 50 Port Contacts. There were 175 "Homers," AAs who are housebound due to illness or physical disability. Homers, Loners and Internationalists stay sober by sharing with each other through letters, tapes and e-mails. Each new Loner, Homer and Internationalist receives a directory of members, a subscription to *Box 4-5-9* and the *Loners/Internationalists Meeting-by-Mail (LIM)*, a confidential bimonthly bulletin which shares excerpts of letters received at G.S.O. from *LIM* members. There were a year ago also more than 446 Loners Sponsors, who share AA activities and personal experience.

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SERVICE FANATIC

RECENTLY, an AA friend of mine was telling another local member about the role service work has played in his recovery. He was shocked when she said, "People have told me about you and service work. I don't think it's at all important. They say you're out to save the world and you're so busy helping other people, there's no time left for yourself."

My friend protested that helping others was helping himself, and she replied, "Don't you know it's a selfish program and you have to take care of yourself first? You people are really fanatics."

Five years ago, I could easily have said everything that woman told my friend about working a "selfish program." When I left treatment and entered AA, that was my approach exactly. I want to be very clear on this point: Treatment never showed me anything that could hurt my AA program; treatment saved my life. But somewhere between the treatment center and AA, some information slipped through the cracks and was lost for a while.

Most people--especially other young people--I met in AA seemed to ask the same question first: "Where did you go to treatment?" I found a couple of groups that felt comfortable for me, because they used familiar sayings like "Do what you think you need for you today" and "How do you feel about how you feel?" These AA groups called themselves feelings groups, social groups, growth groups, support groups, or loving-confrontation groups. Our Twelfth Step effort was usually accomplished as the newcomer stepped out of detox. And when anyone relapsed, we almost invariably took that person back to treatment.

For the rough times, we rarely suggested sponsors, the Twelve Steps, service work, or even attending more meetings; we usually sought out another form of therapy, since AA obviously wasn't working too well for us. We worked with the tools we knew, and that program usually wasn't exactly traditional AA.

Now, that style of involvement is not taught by AA literature, and that's my point. Many newcomers in our area, regardless of age, aren't being given AA literature. And many of us miss getting the message in the original fashion, eye-to-eye from an older member. Most people in my area first get

the message of AA the way I got it, from somebody paid to give it to them. I might have been told--but I quickly forgot--that the spiritual life is not a theory; it has to be lived. And I am not the only one.

I had a slip at fourteen months. I returned, not to treatment, but to ninety meetings in ninety days and my first International Conference of Young People in AA. It was then, and only then, that I found the beginnings of a spiritual program, in place of my "selfish" one.

That new road has made all the difference. You see, to me and to dozens, maybe hundreds, like me, Alcoholics Anonymous had sounded like just another institution, serviced and maintained by those "other folks" who worked an "old-fashioned" program. I rarely talked to them, because they didn't seem to like my therapeutic approach to recovery, and they rarely talked to me, because I showed no desire to hear quotations from the Big Book or suggestions that I get more involved.

"This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united," says our Unity Declaration.

The program I practice today relies heavily on unity. I once assumed Alcoholics Anonymous would always be there, no matter what I did. I assumed "somebody" was taking care of it, so I could go about working my "own program." I had no idea that the Twelve Traditions and the Three Legacies applied to me. I thought the groups took care of service work without the individuals. I was really the only fellow in my "fellowship." Today, I know the basic text is titled *Alcoholics Anonymous*, not *Alcoholic Anonymous*. And today, I am not alone.

I do want the hand of AA to be there for every newcomer, but I'm not out to save the world. I'm just trying to be sober, the best way I know how, one day at a time. And that's the truth, as I understand it today, knowing full well the truth has a habit of changing every time you think you know it. (Never let it be said that the Higher Power has no sense of humor.) I hope to see many of you at young people's conferences, and if all this makes me a fanatic, let's just say I'm a very *grateful* fanatic.



ON TRADITION EIGHT

*"Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional,
but our service centers may employ special workers."*

Throughout the world AAs are twelfth-stepping with thousands of new prospects a month. Between one and two thousand of these stick on our first presentation; past experience shows that most of the remainder will come back to us later on. Almost entirely unorganized and completely non-professional, this mighty spiritual current is now flowing from alcoholics who are well to those who are sick. One alcoholic talking to another - that's all.

Could this vast and vital face-to-face effort ever be professionalized or even organized? Most emphatically, it could not. The few efforts to professionalized straight Twelfth Step work have always failed quickly. Today, no AA will tolerate the idea of paid "AA therapists" or "organizers." Nor does any AA like to be told just how he must handle that new prospect of his. No, this great life-giving stream can never be dammed up by paid do-gooders or professionals. Alcoholics Anonymous is never going to cut its own lifelines. To a man, we are sure of that.

But what about those who serve us full time in other capacities -- are our cooks, caretakers, and paid Intergroup secretaries (where they exist) "AA professionals"?

Because our thinking about these people is still unclear, we often feel and act as though they were such. The impression of professionalism subtly attaches to them, so we frequently hear they are "making money out of AA" or that they are "professionalizing" AA. Seemingly, if they do take our AA dollars they don't quite belong with us AAs anymore. We sometimes go further; we underpay them on the theory they ought to be glad to "cook" for AA cheap.

Now isn't this carrying our fears of professionalism rather far? If these fears ever got too strong, none but a saint or an incompetent could work for Alcoholics Anonymous. Our supply of saints being quite small, we would certainly wind up with less competent workers than we need.

We are beginning to see that our few paid workers are performing only those service tasks that our volunteers cannot consistently handle. Primarily these folks are not doing Twelfth Step work. They are just making more and better Twelfth Step work possible. Secretaries at their desks are valuable points of contact, information, and public relations. That is what they are paid for, and nothing else. They help carry the good news of AA to the outside world and bring our prospects face to face with us. That's not "AA therapy;" it's just a lot of very necessary but often thankless work.

So, where needed, let's revise our attitude toward those who labor at our special services. Let us treat them as AA associated, and not as hired help; let's recompense them fairly and, above all, let's absolve them from the label of professionalism.

Let us also distinguish clearly between "organizing the AA movement" and setting up, in a reasonably businesslike manner, its few essential services of contact and propagation. Once we do that, all will be well. The million or so fellow alcoholics who are still sick will then continue to get the break we sixty thousand* AAs have already had.

Let's give our "service desks" the hand they so well deserve.

* As of January 2003, the estimated number of members worldwide exceeded 2 million.

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A SMOOTH MOVE

The Central Office move to its new location at 1600 26th Street took place on Wednesday afternoon, July 7th. Volunteers began moving boxes into a truck at 2:30. At 3:00 more trucks arrived and by 3:30 all was loaded and on its way. By 4:30 we could have conducted business! My thanks to all who took part in the move and setup. It was truly *a smooth move!*

Sue L., Desk Coordinator



A LIFE OF SERVICE

25 years ago the Alcoholics Anonymous groups in Indian River County banded together to start a central office to enable them to do some things collectively that they could not do individually such as stock and sell AA literature, maintain a hotline and publish a newsletter.

Jean Rider was there at the beginning, volunteering her time to help other alcoholics. She wrote a monthly column in the newsletter called *Jean's Jottings* for years. A sample from January, 1980, goes like this: "A warm thank you to Jerry L. for the Christmas goodies he baked and sent to the AA Prison group in Atlanta." From February, 1980: "John, the undertaker/mayor, from Illinois has a tremendous story... you should hear it." From March of 1980: "Glad to see Helen B. and Dottie S. on the road to recovery after suffering from broken bones. These things happen when we're sober too."

She went on to become editor of the newsletter. Here is an excerpt from March, 1982 that captures how Jean was always thinking of service to others: "You never know when you are going to plant a seed to carry the message. I had a visit to a hair salon recently and the operator doing my hair spotted my *Where & When* with *The Serenity Prayer* clipped inside my pocketbook. He asked about the beautiful prayer. When I gave him the *Where & When* he set it up on his work area. Who knows what troubled gal it might help!"

Jean did all the jobs at the Central Office. She was secretary/treasurer and she worked the desk for years. When we set up the Hotline she picked Sunday as her day to volunteer her time for telephone duty because she went to meetings Monday through Friday.

When I met Jean, one of her jobs was ordering the literature. Jean knew the principles of AA and if anyone veered from one of them she let them know it in no uncertain terms. She seemed to go on and on in the literature job and when I asked her about the principle of rotation she said nobody wanted this job. I suspected that she loved service so much that she didn't want to give it up. She had built and maintained relationships with all the people from AA and all the vendors from whom she ordered our literature.

Jean also served for a considerable time as Liaison between the Central Office and District 6. I firmly believe God gave me the job of Treasurer for the District because Jean needed a ride to that meeting in Ft. Pierce each month.

Jean was my service sponsor and we drove to many Quarterly meetings in Tampa, Sarasota, Palm Beach and Key West. When you are in a car together alone for 6 hours you get to know one another quite well. Being with her at any meeting was fun because she knew everyone and they all came to give Jean a big hug. She always saved a seat for me at the 12 & 12 group meeting and, when I didn't show up for a meeting one night, I always got a call from Jean the next morning.

Jean never missed a Gratitude Dinner, a Birthday Dinner, a Spaghetti Dinner or an Ice Cream Social, even when she could only swallow mashed potatoes and ice cream.

Like many of us Jean didn't like change. When we revised the meeting list to make it friendlier to newcomers she strenuously objected. She said the old list had been good enough for 20 years... "Why change it now?" She was also a regular at The Jungle Club and, when they built the new building, she objected because it blocked the sun from the pool on winter afternoons.

Jean continued working at the Central Office until the very end. I got a call from her on July 4th from the Hospice House saying that the Hotline was still going to her home even though she wasn't there.

Jean had a favorite saying. "Bloom where you're planted," she said, and she lived this each and every day of her life.

I loved Jean. She was a good friend and I'm going to miss her.

John H.
District 6 Treasurer
Central Office Literature Coordinator
Past Central Office Chair



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all."

As one who has been going to Step meetings for years, I think we sometimes get hung up on the letter of the Steps and maybe miss the spirit. The opening paragraph on Step Eight in the "Twelve and Twelve" broadens the scope of Steps Eight and Nine with one simple declarative sentence: "Steps Eight and Nine are concerned with human relations." Yet most discussions focus on making a list and going to people and making direct amends.

What about the larger question? What about *why*?

The "Twelve and Twelve" says something else of overwhelming importance that often gets very little attention in discussions of Step Eight. It says that beyond making a list and becoming willing to mend fences with others, I must try to extract from a close examination of my human relations "every bit of information" about myself that I can. The idea is so important I'd like to quote it in full: "In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse.

"While the purpose of making restitution to others is paramount, it is equally necessary that we extricate from an examination of our personal relations every bit of information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties that we can. . . ." And a little further on it says, "Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives."

What a testament! How much more interesting and meaningful than merely a hit list of harms done and apologies in order. A list is a good start. But if that was all there were to it, I'm afraid the program would be pretty much like running the one-minute mile. You start here. You end there. You sweep off your side of the street and then what?

I can only speak for myself but I know from talking to a lot of other drunks that a lot of us never got up one morning and decided to do the program. Every time I came around to Steps Eight and Nine, I always felt cramped and hedged in with a lot of little spiritual hoops to jump through. I couldn't make a personal connection with the Step. I knew what

"they" wanted me to say; but I didn't know what I wanted to say. The paragraphs I have quoted pointed the way.

This isn't a game of spiritual hopscotch where I go from one amends to the next, knocking them off like hitting beer cans on a rail fence with rocks. There is a dynamic, exciting dimension to this Step that, as it says, goes far beyond the superficial. To get all caught up in the wrong, the wronged, and the "street sweeping," I may be efficient, I may be thorough, but am I really realizing all that this Step has to offer?

When I came to Step Nine, I had the same problem. I do have some great Step Nine stories to tell at Step meetings; but I can remember telling them and feeling very empty because it was like a recitation. It was as if I had done my homework and was now giving a book report. There's so much more to making amends than just going and saying I'm sorry.

What Step Eight has done, and continues to do for me, is to make me conscious of my relations with others. It allows me to pay attention to how I behave with myself and others. It encourages me to focus on how I'm related to others and to myself. It allows me to see how fear, delusional thinking, and grandiosity made it impossible to have any kind of sane partnership with another person.

The "Twelve and Twelve" says that self-examination, meditation, and prayer can form an unshakable foundation for life. So self-examination, like everything else in AA, is an ongoing thing. Step Ten says that the time spent in looking at my relations with others will not be a joy-killer but very rewarding. It will make all the other hours of the day more interesting. And so it does.

With Step Eight in my life, I don't have to be afraid of resentments, hurt feelings, or misunderstandings. I don't have to hide from these things. They are the lighthouses that describe my boundaries as an individual. Even my defects of character are interesting, because they reveal me to myself (as long as I don't turn my back on me).

So the list of harms done is not only not scary, it is the beginning of an adventure in living sober. No more fight or flight. I can stand still and deal with what is really happening. But there's another list I have to make and deal with in Step Eight if I'm going to have this healing of memories that happens when I start to look at human relations. This is the list of people who have harmed me, in real or imagined ways.

I've heard people say, "Never mind about that. It's who you harmed that counts." But if I really believe

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I've been harmed and simply deny it, then I'm practicing something that helped make me ill to start with. I'm trying to do something I don't believe in order to be accepted. . .in this case by people who hold a different view of Step Eight. All my life I acquiesced to ideas I didn't believe, in order to be accepted. But the Big Book offers this challenge: "Don't let any prejudice you may have about spiritual ideas keep you from asking what they honestly mean to you."

What about these feelings of having been abused, what about the depression that comes when people don't treat me the way I think they should? Am I to brush this aside because it's the "right" thing to do?

I grew up with no clear boundaries and no sense of personal autonomy. I never knew how to stand up for myself. Sometimes it seems I'm being asked to accept unacceptable behavior and it pushes buttons from a childhood where most of the adults were al-kies and much of what went on was abusive. That "acceptance" started me on the road to my own alcoholism. If I'm going to have the best possible relations with others it has to be on a basis of honesty, self-honesty first and foremost.

The "Twelve and Twelve" says we never knew how to form a true partnership with another human being.

Experience has taught me that part of this learning process involves having the courage to tell those I care about that I don't like the way they are behaving, that I have a grudge or a resentment or hurt feelings. I could never do these things before, so I drank. Now that I'm sober, if I don't change my old ways, I could drink again. So I have something I call Step Eight-and-a-half; I made a list of all persons who had harmed me, in real or imagined ways, and went to them and talked things out, except when to do so would cause more harm.

I don't do this with everyone, only with people who matter--friends, family, loved ones. The deep-rooted tendency to fight or run has to be abandoned. The ability to stand still and stay with someone even when things are rocky is difficult, but Step Eight has shown me that every troubled human relation is an opportunity to get to know myself a little better. It's an invitation to face the truth about myself and the world around me in a way that will, if I persist, leave me rightly related to myself, to others, and to God.

This Step is much more than a checklist of spiritual debts. It is just what Bill said it is: the high road to a new freedom.

Jim N., Agawam, MA

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WHAT'S A LEGACY?

In ordinary life we think of a legacy as an inheritance. We usually think of someone giving us something, usually money or some other material thing. The dictionary tells us a legacy may also be a *right* or a *privilege*. An attorney will tell you a legacy may also involve a *debt*.

In AA we think of our three legacies: Recovery (the Twelve Steps)--Unity (the Twelve Traditions) and World Service (the Twelve Concepts). How well these are named--legacies!

Certainly there is material well being in recovery and sobriety. Just think of the money we *don't* spend, the bills we can now pay, and the bartenders we don't send to Florida each winter. There is our right to be unified by the common principles of our Twelve Traditions. And it sure is a privilege to be able to choose between the old life and this shiny new one which we share.

And there is a debt. We owe it to those who came before us, and to those yet to come, to pass the message along.

World Service, of course, enables us to pass the message *everywhere*--in Calcutta as well as Cleveland, in Africa as well as Akron. You may never attend an AA meeting in Australia, but you can make your influence felt there. . . through World Service.

We try to live the first two legacies in our daily lives. Let's try to be sure to live the third one, also. Let our gratitude remind us to help pass the program along by supporting World Service.

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HOW



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