

The Voice

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A quote for February

"We came. We came to. We came to believe."

Old AA saying

One member's voice

The prerequisite

A story of experience, strength, and hope

"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity"

People describe how they came to believe in a power greater than themselves in many ways. I have to say that my path took some very unusual and unconventional twists and turns.

Recently, I saw a movie that caused me to ask myself what I might consider the ultimate gift. At first thought, of course, it was sobriety, but after further consideration I realized that there was something that had to come before sobriety for me. I like to call it "The Prerequisite."

I first met John in the Levy County Jail where we were both locked up during Thanksgiving and Christmas of

2000. We remained pen pals and friends until he died in federal prison in South Carolina, September 11, 2005. What follows are excerpts from a letter I wrote to his mother after she called to tell me of his death.

Dear Mrs. M:

Once again, I offer my sympathy in the loss of your son. However, I also want you to know about the gift he gave to me.

I met John at the lowest point in my life. Because of my life of alcoholism and addiction I had lost most everything that makes living worthwhile. Sure, I had lost material things and even my physical freedom—none of that was

Continued page 4

Second Tradition Checklist

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority. . .a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants. . .they do not govern.

Ask yourself:

- Do I criticize or do I trust and support my group officers, AA committees, and office workers? Newcomers? Old-timers?
- Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with any AA Twelfth Step job or other AA responsibility?
- Do I look for credit in my AA jobs? Praise for my AA ideas?
- Do I have to save face in group discussions, or can I yield in good spirit to the group consensus and work cheerfully along with it?
- Although I have been sober a few years, am I still willing to serve my turn at AA chores?
- In group discussions, do I sound off about matters on which I have no experience and little knowledge?

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Congratulations February Birthdays!



This issue we celebrate anniversaries of our local AA family members that add up to a collective 354 years. That's 129,210 days of sobriety One Day At A Time!

Camden A. 44 years Boston Pete L. 37 years Bob L. 30 years Tom I. 27 years Joe H. 24 years Diane B. 21 years Brenda P. 12 years Joe F. 11 years Don S. 9 years Henry E. 8 years Cindy Mc. 5 years Tom C. 5 years Cindy K. 4 years Barry C. 4 years Maria W. 4 years Marvin P. 4 years	Andy K. 3 years JJ 3 years Jeff D. 3 years Phil M. 2 years Vernon H. 2 years Brenda G. 2 years Paul M. 2 years Phil H. 2 years Rich B. 2 years Buddy B. 1 year Jerry M. 1 year Pamela G. 1 year Sara W. 1 year	<p>More to Celebrate January 2009 Birthdays</p> Bill H. 25 years Peggy N. 24 years Willie R. 23 years Charles J. 12 years	<p>Please share your AA birthday with all. Deadline for March birthdays is February 20. E-mail to ocalaintergroup@msn.com or telephone 352-867-0660.</p>
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February by the Books

STEP TWO

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

... When I first looked at A. A. my reaction was just like yours. This A.A. business, I thought, is totally unscientific. This I can't swallow. I simply won't consider such nonsense.

Then I woke up. I had to admit that A.A. showed results, prodigious results. . . . It wasn't A.A. that had a closed mind, it was me. The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 27

TRADITION TWO

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.”

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 issues, no matter what your own convictions are.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 93

CONCEPT TWO

“The final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.”

When in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the actual maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference—excepting any changes in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter—the actual voice and effective conscience of our society as a whole.

Service opportunities.

Help take meetings to Local Correctional Institutions.

Volunteers are needed to help take AA meetings to local correctional institutions. Applications are available at the Intergroup 17 office.

Women's Meetings

Help carry the message to women in prison (women only). For more information, call Sherry R. at 352-633-4711

Men's Meetings

Monday and Wednesday evenings. More info, please contact Paul N. at 352-622-6967; John J. at 352-598-4319.

Hotline and 12-Step Call Volunteers needed!

Intergroup has a critical need for volunteers to help staff our 24-Hour Hotline after business hours from their own homes and to help respond to 12-Step calls. One year of sobriety is required. Call Intergroup 17 to volunteer: 352-867-0660.

You've got a Friend in the Hospital.

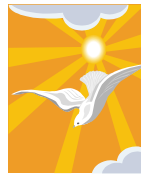
Eddie F. is organizing meetings for hospital-bound members of our fellowship and asks for your help in carrying the message. Cell phone: 352-207-5144. Office: 352-237-8800.
E-mail: eddie@ferrentinoandson.com

Heard it through *The Grapevine*? Donate your old copies to help carry the message.

Many of our brothers and sisters in area corrections facilities enjoy reading *The AA Grapevine*. Drop off your old copies at the Intergroup Office, or coordinate a group effort through your GSR. The District 17 Grapevine Committee will make sure the copies are delivered where they'll do the most good. Just think: recycling not only saves trees, it might help save a drunk.

Publicize your service opportunities here.

Send full details to:
ocalaintergroup@msn.com
Or call 352-867-0660



It is with much sadness that we note the passing of a beloved member of Alcoholics Anonymous. John T. passed away on January 11, 2009.

A memorial service was held at the Breakfast Club for his friends and family. John was the co-founder (along with George M.) of the Breakfast Club meeting in Southwest Ocala. George moved to Ocala from Virginia about 4 years ago and was soon followed by his friend, John, two weeks later. They missed their old 'Breakfast Club' meeting in Virginia and soon started another one here in Ocala on May 22nd of 2006. The first two meetings were just John and George and a Big Book. But, then on the third day there were more. And just yesterday, the attendance was 37 folks. This little group makes mighty contributions to all of AAs service areas: Intergroup 17, GSONY, NFLA and District 17. John was adamant about this aspect of AA service. Thanks, John! We expect you have made it to that BIG "Breakfast Club" in the sky. But we still miss you.



Hi Everyone!

I hope this finds that we are all making it through the tough times safe and sober.

And now I must apologize to Max R. who puts this wonderful publication together for us every month. Max works hard to get this newsletter out on time and it seems that his only stumbling block in doing so lately, has been me. Please forgive me. My creative juices are so stubborn recently. Thanks for allowing me to be your 'thorn.'

Now then, as always Intergroup needs volunteers. Things that I see that could be really helpful are:

- 1) I would like to design and print a catalog of all that we have for sale at the Intergroup Bookstore. If you are computer savvy and the least bit creative, this should be a lot of fun. And really, really is needed!
- 2) Information on local detox, inpatient and outpatient facilities, halfway houses for men and women, etc. needs desperately to be updated. I think from the horses mouth would be best. In other words, mini-excursions to the various different agencies. "Hi, my name is Cindy Mc and I am here on behalf of AA Intergroup 17 in Ocala and I need to get some current information on your program, facility, requirements, etc. We sponsor a 24-Hour Hotline and receive requests for all kinds of help services and information." Put a couple of folks in a car and enjoy the drive! Stop for lunch . . .



Love and Peace,
Cindy Mc

District 17 Service can start here.

Don't wait to be asked. District 17 has opportunities for service in areas as diverse as corrections and treatment facilities to public information and accessibility.

Come to the next District 17 meeting to learn more: Thursday, February 26, 2009, 6:00 pm, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 1839 N.E. 8th Avenue, Ocala, FL.

The Round-Ups are coming . . .

Are you ready? ~**March 21, 2009**~



What's a ROUND-UP?

Have you every heard of something called 'Bridging The Gap?'

"As you know, one of the more "slippery" places in the journey to sobriety is between the door of the facility and the nearest AA group or meeting. Bridging the Gap is designed to help a problem drinker in a treatment program make the transition from the institution to AA."

So what happens is this: As a temporary sponsor contact you may receive a call from your Treatment Chairperson, your local Intergroup, or another BTG volunteer, saying, "I have Jane Doe who is getting out of Vista in one week and she will be living in Ocala. Do you have someone there who is willing to be a temporary sponsor and see that she gets to a meeting there as soon as she is discharged?" Then you are usually given more information and asked how you would like to arrange the contact (phone calls, etc.). This is a wonderfully rewarding type of service work. There are many in our fellowship here in Ocala who got 'hooked up' with our Ocala AA community in just this way. If you are interested please attend the District 17 meeting and Ask HOW!

The Prerequisite

Continued from page 1

important, really. More material things and freedom still would not have spelled hope. I had been places, seen and done things that had caused me to be cynical, disillusioned . . . and jaded. I trusted no one, not even myself. Apparently, I was addicted- to pain. How this had happened, I wasn't sure. At the age of 43, I was sure there was no way out.

I don't know what John's motives were in our relationship, but I choose to believe that they were honest and noble. John wrote me beautiful letters and poetry. He talked of the values that I had once believed in—truth, honor, love, valor, justice, courage, integrity, and chivalry.

He told me stories of colorful people and faraway places, much like a fairytale. As a young girl I had always loved fairytales and even believed that they could come true! I believed in magic . . . I believed in miracles . . . and I believed in a loving and caring God. But that had been a long, long time ago. I had grown up to see that life

sucked, and love was just a lie. A cruel lie.

So here comes John. He writes of things that I used to dream of . . . and read about. Knights and warriors, ladies and gentlemen, castles and royal families, works of art, his own German heritage, and serving God and doing good works—my imagination was finally sparked! Desperately seeking hope, I got a *Big Book* from the jail's library and I began to read the *Bible*. This is all pretty far-fetched stuff. But . . . what if . . . just maybe . . . it could all be true? Would I take a chance?

It took four more years in and out of jails and in and out of hospitals. And, finally the inevitable, "You may have only two more weeks to live" before I was able to surrender ALL my fight and give my life to the God that I hoped still wanted to help me.

Being finally sober and sane, it was always in the back of my mind that perhaps John embellished the truth a little, or maybe even a lot. But "he" was real. Maybe he was real crazy, but so am I . . . in a wonderful way!

I have worked hard to undo all the ugliness that I had created with my self-will. Once again, I write poetry and songs. I am an artist. I am reading the classics and study European history, literature, and culture, hoping to visit Europe someday. I can even help others.

So the priceless gift that John gave me was this: He gave me back my imagination. I had to have an imagination to believe in God. I can't see God. I must imagine Him. And I had lost my imagination, my child-like wonder. John inspired the rebirth of my hopes and my dreams—my imagination.

I was a powerless and therefore hopeless alcoholic, but given the gift of imagination I was finally able to conceive of a "power greater than myself" who could solve my problems. I made a decision and thoroughly followed the rest of the AA program, which gained me the gift of sobriety. Simply Amazing!!

*Cindy Mc
February 2009
Ocala, Florida*

The thoughts, expressions, and opinions expressed here are those of the author and not necessarily those of Alcoholics Anonymous or Intergroup 17. Ocala-Marion County, Florida.

How Groups and Individuals Support the Work of AA

Group contributions are the major funding source for the work of Intergroup 17 and other areas of AA. Many groups 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 Worldwide General Services Office
- 10 percent to North Florida Area Assembly
- 10 percent to District 17

Send group contributions to:

Intergroup 17
P.O. Box 1192
Ocala, FL 34478

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

NFACAA
Marilyn Balliet
Inverness, FL 34452

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

Some individual members choose to provide financial support to Intergroup 17 in various ways.

- *Faithful Fivers*: \$5 each month
- *Double Nickel*: \$10 each month
- *Birthday Club Members*: \$1 or more per year of sobriety, on their AA "birthday"

All contributions large and small make a difference. Send to:

Intergroup 17
P.O. Box 1192
Ocala, FL 34478

THANKS!



I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. For that I am responsible.

Ocala-Marion County Group Contributions to Intergroup 17—from June 2008

Group	Fiscal YTD	Group	Fiscal YTD	Group	Fiscal YTD
11th Step Group		Grace Group		Primary Purpose	\$ 64.00
17th Street Group		Grateful Gals	\$ 84.00	Shores of Sobriety	\$ 120.00
164 Pages Group		Happy Highlanders - Dunnellon		Sisters of Serenity - Ocklawaha	
ACOA		Happy Hour Group	\$ 100.00	Start A New Life	\$ 33.60
ALANON	\$ 60.00	Happy, Joyous & Free	\$ 117.78	Steps and Promises	
Acceptance	\$ 0.21	Headstart Group	\$ 458.29	Stop Whining and Sober Up	\$ 50.00
Alive and Well		It's In The Book		Strength In Numbers - Belleview	
Anonymity Group		Keep It Simple	\$ 200.00	Summerfield Group	
As Bill Sees It - The Villages	\$ 306.75	Last Call Group		Sundae Social Group	\$ 175.00
Belleview Eye Opener Group	\$ 80.00	Last House On The Block		TLC Group - the Centers	
Belleview Group	\$ 190.00	Life Is Good Sober - The Refuge		TenBroek Group	
Bonfire Group - The Refuge		Living Sober	\$ 224.19	Unity Group	
Breakfast Club	\$ 1,675.00	Lunch Bunch	\$ 250.31	We Give Thanks	\$ 115.00
Came To Believe	\$ 10.40	Mano Abierta		We Give Up	\$ 99.89
Citra Group	\$ 25.00	Marion Oaks Group		Weir Crazy - Summerfield	\$ 275.00
Come As You Are		McIntosh Group		Young People's Group - YPG	\$ 10.00
Conscious Contact		New Attitudes	\$ 256.20		
Experience, Strength & Hope		New Life Group	\$ 20.83	BIRTHDAY CLUB	\$ 91.00
Forest Group	\$ 195.00	No Name Group	\$ 76.35	DOUBLE NICKELS	\$ 20.00
Ft. McCoy Group	\$ 80.00	Nueva Vida		FAITHFUL FIVERS	\$ 10.00
Fountain of Gratitude - Salt Springs	\$ 150.00	Ocala AM Men's Group	\$ 505.00	INDIVIDUALS	\$ 52.70
Free To Be		Ocala Group	\$ 2000.42		
God's Way Group	\$ 7.50	Ocklawaha AM Group		DISTRICT 17	\$776.00
		One Page At A Time			

Local Events and Meetings of Interest

Ocala/Marion County

For a complete listing of the more than 170 meetings of AA per week in Ocala/Marion county visit:
www.aaocalamarion.org

Monday

Beginners Meeting

17th Street Group

6:00pm every Monday
 Church of Christ

2730 SE Maricamp Rd., Ocala

Wednesday

Meditation

Conscious Contact

7:00pm every Wednesday

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

3452 NE Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala

Spanish Speaking

Grupo Nueva Vida

7:00pm every Wednesday

150-A SW 23rd Ave. (1/2 block South of Ft. King), Ocala

Thursday

Eat 'n Speak

Keep It Simple Group

Last Thursday of the month

Eat: 7:00pm Speaker: 8:00pm

Small fee for meal

ALL INVITED!

Ascension Lutheran Church

5730 SE 28th Street, Ocala

District 17 Monthly Meeting

6:00 pm last Thursday of the month

All GSRs. Everyone welcome.

St. Mark's United Methodist

1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

Friday

Speaker Meeting

Experience, Strength and Hope

8:00pm every Friday

Druid Hills Methodist Church

1712 SE Lake Weir Blvd., Ocala

Spanish Speaking

Grupo Mano Abierta

7:00pm every Friday

2082 Walnut Street

Dunnellon, FL

Saturday

Eat 'n Speak

Ocala Group

Last Saturday of the month

Eat: 7:00pm Speaker: 8:00pm

Small fee for meal

EVERYONE INVITED!

St. Mark's United Methodist

1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

Spanish Speaking

Grupo Mano Abierta

7:00pm every Saturday

2082 Walnut Street

Dunnellon, FL

Sunday

Intergroup 17 Monthly

5:15 pm second Sunday of month

Intergroup reps. Everyone welcome.

St. Mark's United Methodist

1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

New Meetings

"No Name Yet" Group

Open meeting, 7:30pm

Every Friday

9200 Sunset Harbor Road

Summerfield, FL

Info: Mike G. 352-245-3272

Lifesaver Group

Starting February

Open meeting, 12:00 noon

Monday through Saturday

Recovery Road at CornerStone Ctr.

6789 SW Highway 200

Ocala

Ocala Group

Open meeting, 5:30pm

Monday through Saturday

St. Mark's United Methodist

1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

Happy, Joyous and Free

Open meeting, 12:00 noon

Monday through Friday

St Matthews Lutheran Church

3452 NE Silver Springs Blvd.,

Ocala

**The Belleview Group
 invites you to visit at
 their brand new home.**



**The Belleview Lions Club
 5850 Lillian Circle
 Belleview, FL 34420**

Monday 8:00 pm

Big Book Study

Friday 5:00 pm

First Step Meeting

Friday 6:30 pm

Step and Tradition Meeting

Friday 8:00 pm

Open Discussion Meeting

Directions

Behind the water tower and
 across from the playground on
 Lake Lillian

Happy 6th Anniversary Grupo Mano Abierta



**You're invited
to join the celebration/**

**5:30 pm, Friday
February 21, 2009**

**St John's
United Methodist Church
12390 Hwy 328
Ocala, FL**

**Dinner will be served
after the meeting.
All are invited.**

Join the Intergroup 17 Birthday Club

Celebrate an AA anniversary—yours or another member's—with a contribution to help Intergroup 17 carry the message to other alcoholics in Ocala and Marion County.

To join, send name, sobriety date, years of sobriety, and a donation—suggested is \$1 for each year of sobriety.

Make checks payable to and send with celebrant's information to:

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



**Special Invitation
Please support our meeting.**



One Page at a Time Group Big Book Study Meeting

Sundays, 4:00 pm
Unity Place
525 NE Sanchez Ave
Ocala, FL

AA Jeopardy Coming Soon

Rescheduled.
New date to be announced.

**~Intergroup Spring Picnic~
May 31st—Ray Wayside Park**

**Check out Intergroup 17 online
www.aocalamarion.org**

Regional Events and Meetings

Lake Sumter Intergroup Back to Basics Workshop March 28, 2009

Leesburg Community Center
109 East Dixie Avenue
Leesburg, FL

Intensive one-day workshop led by Wally P. of Tucson, Arizona. Modeled on the original Beginners Meeting format from the 1940s. All twelve steps in one day. Registration fee: \$25. Dinner and speaker: additional \$15. Each fee increases \$5 after February 28, 2009. Registration forms available at Intergroup 17, Ocala. For more information, contact Rhonda H. at 352-787-3340 or 352-504-1953.

Plan Ahead 53rd Florida State Convention July 29th - August 2, 2009 Jacksonville, Florida

Speakers from around the U.S.A.
Marathon Meetings
Family Workshops
Young People Meeting
Buffet Friday
Golf Tournament
Horseshoes Tournament
Comedian Jeff Allen
5k Run/Walk
Ice Cream Socials
Dances and Entertainment
Non-English Speaking Meetings
Grapevine
Dr. Bob's Archives
Old Timers Meeting
Meditation Meetings
Al-Anon & Alateen
More information:
www.53.flstateconvention.com

Florida State Convention Book your hotel room now! www.jacksonville.hyatt.com

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront
225 East Coastline Drive,
Jacksonville, Florida, USA 32202
Tel: +1 904 588 1234
Fax: +1 904 634 4554

Publicize your special events or meetings in **The Voice**. Send complete details including contact information to—
www.aocalamarion.org
or call: 352-867-0660.



**InterGroup 17 Meetings
You're invited!**

Anyone interested is urged to attend and learn more about all the great opportunities for service work within our local AA community.

Next Meeting

Sunday, February 8, 5:15 pm
St Mark's United Methodist
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

InterGroup Reps., please send your contact info to:
ocalaintergroup@msn.com or call
352-867-0660.

**InterGroup 17
Ocala-Marion County
Florida**

3666-A N.E. 25th Street, Ocala, Florida 34470
Phone: 352-867-0660 Fax: 352-867-7819
Email: ocalaintergroup@msn.com

Hours of operation

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

Website

www.aaocalamarion.org

24-Hour Hotline

352-867-0660

Free Subscription. The Voice by e-mail.

For your free monthly subscription,
send an e-mail with "Free Voice" in the subject line to:

ocalaintergroup@msn.com.

The Voice sent by e-mail is in PDF format and can be read using Adobe Reader. Free download available at www.adobe.com. Printed copies available at InterGroup office.

**INTERGROUP 17, Inc.
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Stamp