

# The Voice

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## Central Office, Marion County Intergroup

Monthly Newsletter of Marion County Intergroup

SEPTEMBER 2023

### RETURN TO SENDER

BY: JOSEPH S | RENO, NEV

With a little help from his sponsor, the Big Book and the U.S. mail, he finally took the action to heal the past with his dad

**STEP NINE: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others**

After I'd been in the program for about three months, I started getting into the Steps, slowly. I kept hearing that the Fourth Step was really scary. But when I got to that Step, I thought all the people who said it was scary were nuts.

Writing about all the people that I was upset with, man, that was easy. However, looking at my part in these conflicts was not as easy. But I kept at it. I did the Fourth Step in the way my sponsor "suggested" and soon had a four-column inventory, just like the Big Book talked about. Being a rebel, I didn't write it down by hand. I typed it out. Then I hit print and had it in black and white in front of me.

The biggest resentment I had was toward my father, who had certainly done more harm to me than I had to him. Even after I did my Fifth Step, I still had a major

resentment toward my father. I could be sitting in a meeting and someone would be talking about his or her dad and I would get mad. They didn't even have to be talking about problems with fathers, it could be about the good times they were having with them now in sobriety and I'd be mad as a wet hen.

At one point I was told to try the "Page 552 trick," which refers to the story "Freedom From Bondage" in the Fourth Edition of the Big Book, which mentions praying for the person that you have the resentment against. You pray that they have all the good things you want in life. Do this for two weeks and by the time you're finished you will find you mean it.

Well, I did this for a full month every morning, and at the end I still sat in meetings getting angry when someone would talk about his or her father.

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### Important Dates

- **Sunday, September 10th**  
Intergroup/Central Office Representative meeting  
**@ Noon,**  
Lost & Found Club  
616 S. Pine Ave
- **Thursday, September 27th**  
District 17 monthly meeting, 6:45pm,  
Unity Place,  
525 NE Sanchez
- **Every Thursday** Area 14 Service. Workshop, 6:00pm; Hospitality, 5:45pm—New Topic every Thursday—Zoom Meeting ID: 828 5682 4762; pw: service
- **Sept 29—Oct 1 2023**  
N Florida Area Conference Quarterly Assembly  
Mission Inn Resort  
Howie-in-the Hills, FL

District 17  
Gratitude Dinner 2023  
**"INTO THE STEPS"**  
**Saturday, November 4th**

Mary Sue Rich  
Community Center  
1821 NW 21st Ave, Ocala

Dinner @ 6pm  
Speaker: John T  
Raffles, Cake Auction, 50/50  
\$20—Person  
Tickets available at  
Intergroup Office



Sheba



Bandit

**Intergroup's 4-legged Visitors  
are always welcome**



## Return to Sender *continued from page 1*

By three years in the program, I was on my third sponsor. The first two had both gone back out. "Isn't it time you did something about the resentment and the amends for your father?" my new sponsor said.

I reluctantly agreed to write to my father. So I typed up the letter and emailed it to my sponsor, asking for his opinion on what I had written. He responded by removing this and adding that. After sending the email back and forth a number of times, we came to an agreement. We hit a meeting after that and went to a local burger shop to talk it over. I read the letter again and we agreed it was ready to be sent.

Now, the Big Book talks about being willing, and I was still not really willing to send that letter. So when my sponsor said, "Send it," I handed him the letter, an envelope and a \$1 bill to buy a stamp. "I'm not going to send it," I said. He chuckled as he took the letter from me and said, "Good enough."

That meeting with my sponsor was on a Saturday. When I returned home from work the following Thursday, I checked the mailbox and the letter was in it. On it was written: "Return to sender."

I looked at the envelope in shock. I pulled out my cell phone and called my sponsor. I asked him to guess what was in the mail. He guessed it was a letter from my dad. Nope. I told him it was the very same letter we had sent. It was back. We talked about what that meant.

Since the day I got home and found the letter in my mailbox, my resentment is gone. I did my part. It's not up to me how my dad accepts or rejects my attempt to make things right. It's up to me to make the effort. That isn't to say that he and I are on speaking terms today, but I can share this story or hear others talk about their fathers with out getting upset now.


About two years after this happened, my sister contacted me saying that if I wanted to talk to

to our dad I had better hurry because his health was failing. "The last time I sent him a letter it came back unopened," I told her, and she thought that over. "Don't try to contact him," she said. "He has not changed."

I spoke with my sponsor at the time and he asked how long had it been since I thought about dad. It was hard to answer that question, as the resentment was gone.

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**Calling all AA Authors  
of Marion County**



**Where are you? I know for a fact there is much experience, strength and hope to be shared by AA members.**

### AA Historical Events in September

- 1930—Bill wrote 4th (last promise) in the family Bible to quit drinking
- 9/13/37—Florence R, first female in AA in NY
- 9/21/38—Bill W and Hank P form Works Publishing Co.
- 9/1/39—First AA group founded in Chicago
- 9/13/41—WHJP in Jacksonville, FL airs Spotlight on AA
- 9/24/40—Bill 12th stepped Bobbie V, who later replaced Ruth Hock as his secretary in NY

### Raise Your Voice. Tell Your Story.

Each month The Voice would like to **feature a local member** to share their experience, strength, and hope about the step of the month. We invite you to submit yours for consideration and possible publication. Choose a step that's particularly meaningful to you and put "pen to paper." Keep it between 500 and 700 words.

**Call Central Office for more info**  
and to claim your step  
352-867-0660



## WHO'S IN CHARGE

BY: GEORGE H. | KINGSTON, NH

A member shares his thoughts on how AA is organized and who's the ultimate authority

***TRADITION NINE: A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve***

When I got sober, I never thought much about the organization of AA. Initially I never cared much. As long as it worked for me, I wasn't interested in what made it all operate. I was selfish and double-dumb, meaning I didn't know that I didn't know. At my first AA meeting, I felt like everyone had authority over me, which was just my low self-esteem. I had been battered into submission by active alcoholism. The fact that I couldn't understand what was going on in the meeting felt threatening to me. Not only were these people at this men's meeting speaking a different language, but they were laughing and joking without alcohol or drugs, which I also found disconcerting. The chairman at the table in the front of the room looked like the guy in charge. He appeared to set the tone of the meeting. As I saw it, he controlled our fate and, from my very myopic point of view, he controlled the entire fate of AA. I found out later that he wasn't in charge of AA, and he only served as the meeting chairman for six months.

My early impression of AA was that it was a cult or that it at least exhibited "cultish" behavior. My cult comparison quickly faded as I saw the ease with which a person could join and/or leave AA, and also the lack of specific rules to adhere to. But my ideas of some kind of formal organizational structure remained.

My formative years in the world took place in the 60s and 70s. Most corporate structures at the time were hierarchical and very much rules based. So I was familiar with that type of organization and expected to see that same structure in AA. Soon though, I learned that AA is "loosely organized." I took that to mean we could start new meetings if we wanted to as long as we adhered to the Twelve Traditions.

The truth is that there is no central authority in AA. If there is a structure to it, it resembles the

upside-down triangle with the wide part on top. Being the individual AA groups. AA Traditions are not legally binding laws that the group must follow for fear of expulsion. They serve as guideposts that almost every AA group I've ever known adheres to fairly closely. Organization is part of life. We create a plan for our lives now that we're sober. That's the responsible thing to do, right? I spent years trying to make my life fit into a plan to satisfy my ego, which I usually found answered in chasing material solutions. And I was always left wanting, despite achieving some of the trappings of success. There was always some thing amiss in the way I was living, and I couldn't quite pin down what that was. Finally, after a deep dive into the Steps, I had my answer after the Fifth Step. The truth was simple. My plans were extraordinarily selfish. And it wasn't until the habits imbued in Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve, practiced repeatedly, that I began to see my error.

As our cofounder Bill W. states in his story: "I must turn in all things to the Father of light who presides over us all," and not lean into my own understanding and my little plans and designs. By experience, I've found this a most comforting way to live.

And so too, every AA group has motives specific to their own gaggle of drunks that are not that altruistic. Say, for example, the group wants to keep actively drunken people out of meetings because a drunk person would be too disruptive to those trying to hear the message. So this group makes a hard and fast statement about preemptively quieting potential disruptors and then having them removed if they become a nuisance. To me this would be an attempt at control and trying to organize things by "rule making." It could be a recipe for internal division and strife. Maybe a more effective way could be to deal with each

*continued on p. 4*



## WHO'S IN CHARGE *continued from page 1*

Situation independently through the stream of consciousness by being shown the way through God's grace and guidance.

Let's look at another example. If a group did not implement rotating leadership, then the potential exists for those "in charge" to become bosses instead of fellow members. What alcoholic—newly sober or longtime member—wants to be told what to do? Not many, I think. The regular churn of office members in the group is insurance that the pipeline stays clear, fresh and inclusive.

Thus, I can blow up any preconceived notions I had about the AA organization. It doesn't follow a business model. It follows the spiritual model with God as the ultimate authority. The lack of authority doesn't mean that AA devolves into chaos. Rather, the opposite is true. Taking on responsibility becomes the key rather than exerting influence.

By creating an organizational structure, be it rigid or not, we can lose sight of our primary purpose. We are not here to make money, gain status in the world as a Fellowship, or become a well-oiled company efficient in processes. No, I'm here to put the sick and suffering alcoholic's hand into the hand of God. With that as the backdrop, the group can tailor its outlook toward that end with minimalism and a singular focus.

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### INTERGROUP OFFICE HOURS SEPTEMBER 2023

*Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday  
9:00 am to 5:00 pm*

**If an AA member or group has an immediate need for medallions or literature outside office hours, arrangements will be made, please call 352 867-0660.**



### **Matt Talbot Men's 12-Step Retreat at the**

**Franciscan Retreat Center**

**3010 N. Perry Ave, Tampa, FL 33603**

**September 15-17, 2023**

*(cost \$285 for the weekend)*

**Contact Rick R 352-817-0397 OR**

**Joe S 240-216-4198**

Registration form online:

**[matttalbot129.com](http://matttalbot129.com)**

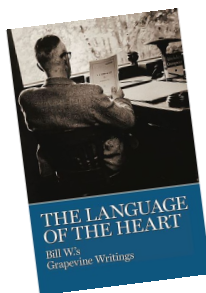
### REMINDER

On Awakening Group, 6:45am  
has moved as of  
September 1, 2023 to  
Lost & Found Club  
616 S. Pine Ave, Ocala, FL

**District 17 Gratitude Dinner COMMITTEE Meeting  
Wednesday, September 6, 2023, 7pm  
@ Ascension Lutheran, 5730 SE 28th Street, Ocala, FL**

## GRAPEVINE Daily Quote

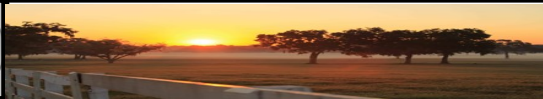
September 5, 2023



"William Duncan Silkworth ... supplied us with the tools with which to puncture the toughest alcoholic ego, those shattering phrases by which he described our illness: the obsession of the mind that compels us to drink and the allergy of the body that condemns us to go mad or die. Without these indispensable passwords, AA could never have worked."

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., August 1957,  
"The Physicians", The Language of the Heart





# Hitnic

The Heavy Hitters of Ocala wish to invite our family and friends to the Annual Celebration of Recovery

Saturday, October 7, 2023

1pm-5pm @ Unity Place

525 NE Sanchez Ave, Ocala, FL 34470

Hot Dogs, Hamburgers and Drinks ~ Games ~ Music ~

50/50 Raffle ~ and more

Speakers @ 4pm ~ Jason M ~ Chris R

**FREE EVENT FOR ALL**



3rd Annual

## Red Eye

Speaker Brunch

**OCTOBER 19TH @ 10AM**

LOST & FOUND CLUB, 616 S. PINE AVE, OCALA

*Speakers- Jackie & Jim*

*Finger Foods and Beverages*

Join Us

# Living Sober

Celebrate

## 30th Anniversary

Friday, October 27, 2023

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

5200 SW College Road

NO SMOKING ON

Church grounds

4:00pm

4:30pm Dinner

6:30pm Speaker, Tony E

50/50 Raffle

**Entree provided  
Please bring a  
dish to share**

Donations Welcome



## Birthdays

### September-

<b>Bellevue Group</b>	<b>On Awakening</b>
Dave W—1	Theo—4
Scott S—1	<b>We Give Up</b>
<b>Breakfast Club</b>	Rudy—7
Tom A—39	
<b>Head Start</b>	
Jeff R – 2	
Marvin W – 3	
Ross C—4	
Tom D—5	
Ed S—33	



**Congrats!!!**

**REMINDER** - To have Group Member's Birthdays acknowledged in The Voice information needs to be forwarded to Intergroup/Central Office **aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com** for respective month, i.e. end of September for October Birthdays.

## Contributions

### August

Anonymity	\$ 113.00
Bellevue Speaker	\$ 100.00
Happy, Joyous & Free	\$ 54.97
Headstart	\$ 172.47
Individual	\$ 212.88
Mano Abierta	\$ 15.00
One Day At A Time	\$ 200.72

From the GSO Pamphlet

**Self-support;**  
**Where Money and Spiritually Mix (F-3)**

**10% to District 17**  
**P.O. Box 3081, Ocala, FL 34478**

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**10% to Area 14**  
NFAC Treasurer  
P.O. Box 6301  
Jacksonville, FL 32205-9998  
*(Address changes every two years. Visit [www.aanorthflorida.org](http://www.aanorthflorida.org) for correct address)*

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**30% to General Service Office**  
**PO Box 459, Grand Central Station,**  
**New York, NY 10163**

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**50% to Central Office/Intergroup 17**  
**616 S Pine Avenue**  
**Ocala, FL 3447**