



First Women of AA

- Absecon
- Avalon
- Atlantic City
- Barnegat
- Barnegat Light
- Beach Haven
- Brant Beach
- Brigantine
- Cape May
- Cape May C. H.
- Cape May Point
- Dennisville
- Egg Harbor City
- Egg Harbor Twp.
- Galloway
- Linwood
- Manahawkin
- Margate
- Marmora
- Mays Landing
- New Gretna
- North Wildwood
- Northfield
- Ocean City
- Palermo
- Pleasantville
- Pomona
- Rio Grande
- Sea Isle City
- Ship Bottom
- Somers Point
- Stone Harbor
- Surf City
- Townbank
- Tuckerton
- Ventnor
- Villas
- Waretown
- West Cape May
- West Creek
- Wildwood
- Woodbine

Historians are often asked these questions to which we don't know the answer, questions which, moreover, we are often inclined against answering in the way the narrator expects and desires. In my case, I have been asked with some frequency, who was the first woman in Alcoholics Anonymous? I have spent a fair bit of time probing that question myself, and I have come to the conclusion that in some ways the best answer is to ask another question: Why should we care? Let me be clear – the initial question is fascinating and important, and I am not dismissing it. When Alcoholics Anonymous was established in the late 1930s, the position of alcoholic women within the fellowship was complicated by many factors, including fears about the alleged sexual behavior of drinking women, and a gendered structure that assumed the alcoholic to be a man, with any women who participated expected to be the non-alcoholic wives of male members. Given this context, alcoholic women who joined the fellowship demonstrated considerable courage, and their actions deserve attention for their own sake. But trying to identify the "first woman," in some ways a natural question, raises issues both practical and theoretical. As a research question, how do we even tell who was first? Various criteria could be invoked. One could emphasize the date of a woman's initial participation in the fellowship, but that raises the question of whether a "slip" or relapse requires the clock to be reset. We might also note the roles that early women played in the fellowship, with leadership functions or exemplary commitment to the program—especially those that seemed consistent with conventional gender roles—supporting the position of some women. Given these complex variables, as well as the instantaneous growth of the fellowship in different geographic locations and a lack of membership records, we will likely *never* know with certainty who was "the first woman" in Alcoholics Anonymous.

For some reason, we alcoholics seem to have the gift of picking out the world's finest women.

BB/pg.178

I HAVE ENOUGH

Of all the things I have ever been called over the years, the one title I never expected was "Alcoholic"—especially since I didn't even start drinking until I was around 37 years old.

I was not a drinker throughout my young adult life. Having children at a young age may have saved me this moniker if only for the fact I was too busy working and raising my children (mostly alone) and being drunk was not an option. My drinking started innocently enough; a glass of wine after work to help me get to sleep, two or three on my days off while cooking and enjoying the evening. The kids were grown, one in college the other 19 and still at home—I deserved to cut loose once in a while, right?

I work in health care and was always shocked by how many people in the medical community not only drank but relied on drinking to help them relax after a rough shift or gear up for the upcoming shift the following day. I took my first "relief" drink after a particularly difficult shift involving the death of a 19-year-old Coast Guard recruit. This young man was the same age as my kids, could have easily been one of them and for some reason, my mom gene kicked in and all I could think of was this kid laying on the slab in the morgue while his mom was putting away her dishes and settling down to watch the evening news having not one damn clue what awaited her the next morning. After 18 years (at that time) in my field, it was in that moment that I finally got it. I bought a bottle of wine on the way home and drank the whole thing. My tears dried up, the music played, my heart wasn't as raw and achy and I slept like a baby. I didn't come out of that bottle for another five years.

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*Save the Date; November 20-21-22, 2015
 Cape Atlantic Roundup Waves of Sobriety*

Florence R., was the first woman to get sober in A.A.,. She came to A.A. in New York in March of 1937. She had several slips, but was sober over a year when she wrote her story for the Big Book, **A Feminine Victory**. It must have been difficult for Florence being the only woman. She prayed for inspiration to tell her story in a manner that would give other women courage to seek the help that she had been given. Florence having been sober more than a year, "100 Men" was rejected as the name for the Big Book. She moved to Washington, D.C. and tried to help start A.A. there. She married an alcoholic she met there, who unfortunately did not get sober. Eventually Florence started drinking again and disappeared. Despite her relapse and death from alcoholism, Florence helped pave the way for the many women who followed.

Marie B., Cleveland, 1st edition

An Alcoholic's Wife non-alcoholic, was a wife of an alcoholic who came into AA 1935. There is a clue in the Akron archives that Marie may have written the first draft of **"To Wives"**, which Bill then edited. She started her brief story by saying "I have the misfortune, or I should say the good fortune, of being an alcoholic's wife. She ended her story by saying. We have now started to live. When we live with God we want for nothing.

Sylvia K., **The Keys of the Kingdom**" 2nd, 3rd editions, and 4th edition

"This worldly lady helped to develop A.A. in Chicago and thus passed her keys to many. According to member list index cards kept by the Chicago group, Sylvia's date of sobriety was September 13, 1939. Sylvia may have been the first woman to achieve long term sobriety. She tried all sorts of things to control her drinking. Nothing worked. A doctor read the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* after reading he called on Sylvia. That visit marked the turning point of her life.



Ethel M., Akron, From Farm to City 2nd and 3rd editions *"She tells how A.A. works when the going is rough. A pioneer woman member of A.A.'s first Group.* "Ethel's date of sobriety was May 8, 1941. Perhaps the reason Ethel was accepted is that Russ ,her husband joined at the same time. Also Ethel weighed 300 pounds, and the wives probably did not consider her a threat. Ethel gave a lot of credit to Dr. Bob and Anne for their recovery. Ethel started what may have been the first women's A.A. group. A.A. became Ethel's whole life and she sponsored many women.

Annie C., New York City, **Annie the Cop Fighter** 2nd edition. Annie came to A.A. in April of 1947, at the age of sixty-seven. She was a "scrub lady," poor, and uneducated. She fought with police and was frequently arrested for being drunk and disorderly. At one point she was drinking with the boys on the Bowery .At her first meeting she met **Nancy F. ("The Independent Blonde")** who reports "She laughed and said 'You're jealous of me because I've had a few drinks and you can't have any.'" Nancy replied, "You're so right." She was a very simple, uninhibited woman. She cursed a lot when she spoke, but then would look at a priest in the audience say, "Excuse me, Father, but I'm trying to be careful." She is said to have had the time of her life in A.A. She had nothing, but she was sober, and she was having a ball. She was happy as a lark. Annie died when she was about 74.

Margaret ("Marty") Mann Margaret ("Marty") M., **Women Suffer Too**, 2nd, 3rd editions, and 4th edition. *Despite great opportunities, alcohol nearly ended her life. Early member, she spread the word among women in our pioneer period.* " Marty's date of sobriety is uncertain, but she attended her first A.A. meeting at Bill W.'s home in Brooklyn on April 11, 1939, and was an enthusiastic member of A.A. from that day until her death. Marty was one of Bill W.'s closest friends and allies. Marty made her last public appearance at the A.A. International Convention in New Orleans in July of 1980. She arrived in a wheelchair, but after she was introduced she rose and walked to the podium to thunderous applause and a prolonged ovation, she died later that year, July 22, 1980, at the age of 75.

Countess Felicia G., New York City. **"Stars Don't Fall"** 2nd & 3rd edition.

"A titled lady, she still saw her world darkening. When the overcast lifted, the stars were there as before." Felicia entered A.A. in 1943, and relapsed briefly during the first year. She was born in 1905, in the family castle in Poland, Felicia believed her alcoholic problem began long before she drank. She was always out of step with the world, her family, with people in general. She lived in a dream world. Felicia sank lower and lower, but eventually a new analyst, told her about A.A., gave her the Big Book, and finally persuaded her to meet with Bill W. Bill arranged for her to meet Marty M. her sponsor. (Marty told how Bill called and said "I have a dame down here whose name I can't pronounce. I don't know what to do with her.") She was a talented writer and - with Marty and Priscilla - helped start the A.A. Grapevine. Felicia celebrated her 55th anniversary of sobriety in 98.

Wynn C. L., Freedom From Bondage

story is in 2nd ,3rd edition, and 4th edition. *Young when she joined, this A.A. believes her serious drinking was the result of even deeper defects. She here tells how she was set free.* Wynn joined A.A. in California in 1947 at age thirty-three. She was described as "tall, and with a face that was astonishing in its beauty. She had "translucent skin with a tiny dusting of freckles, Katharine Hepburn cheekbones, bright red hair, and turquoise eyes." She was a "knockout." She believed that her alcoholism was a symptom of a deeper trouble, and that her mental and emotional difficulties began many years before she began to drink. But AA taught her that she was the result of the way she reacted to what happened to her as a child. Like Bill W. before her, her parents separated when she was a child, and she was sent to live with her grandparents in the Mid West. She reports feeling "lonely, and terrified and hurt." (This common childhood experience may have been one of the reasons for the reported *close friendship she had with Bill W.*)

There are so many others this is just a few of the women who paved the path for so many.

Women alcoholics had to overcome a double standard that was even more rigid in the 1930's than today—the notion that nice women didn't drink to excess.

This made it difficult for a woman to admit to the problem in the first place, to say nothing of being accepted into AA.

All inclusive never exclusive was not a part of our fellowship in 1935.

AA-related 'Alconym'

G R A C E = Gently Releasing All Conscious Expectations



Continue page 3

From page 1; I HAVE ENOUGH

For some, a five year drinking career seems like child's play. For me, it was the result of years and years of pain and frustration (both personal and professional) that seemed to have an instant cure with a drink. *That is, until the cure became the disease.*

I have heard it said that for alcoholics, while sober alcohol sits in the corner and does push-ups and waits for you. As a teenager when I drank, I drank for effect (was there any other reason to drink?) but after having kids I didn't drink at all. I never viewed any of it as a problem; it was just what teenagers do where I grew up. So for 20 years, alcohol had patiently waited for me to have a need for its return. What a shock it was to have to admit to myself about two years in, that I was most likely an alcoholic. It took me three more years to screw up the courage (or rather, desperation) to quit and to seek help.

I am not writing this as an alcoholic tale of woe or even to talk of the recovery part. I am writing because somewhere in the time since, I became willing to be open. In the emerging moments of clarity since entering recovery, I learned a few things that have kept me on an enlightening journey that has forever changed my life.

I have three dogs who love me, even when I smell bad or don't brush my hair. I have people who love me and people I love. I am grateful for the pain I have felt in my life, the hardships that I have faced because it made me strong and taught me so very much. I am grateful for the hardships I face today, they will bring me lessons I will use later.

I have more than enough to eat, I have *shoes*—more than one pair. Some people don't have shoes at all. I have breath in my lungs and life in my body.

I have today, and that is enough

Pamphlets are Free for the taking

Self-support:

Where money and spirituality mix
Pg. 10

Q. How can an individual member contribute to G.S.O.?

A. On your AA birthday: contribute \$1.00 for each year of sobriety-or as much as you wish to give (up to \$3,000). You may request that your group be credited.

Special Note:

The material in this newsletter does not necessarily represent CAIG. Much of it has been contributed by individual members with the intention of passing the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

The Women pictures on the cover left to right are:

Anne Smith

(Dr. Bob's wife, known as the Mother of AA)

Felicia G.

Jane S.

Sylvia K.

Marty Mann

Wynn C.

Lois Wilson

Bill's wife, founder of

Al- Anon

Let go of my ego!

If you are anything like I was when I first came into the AA program. I would share at a meeting and then constantly doubts and abuse myself. Did that make sense? Was it significant? Or even appropriate? These thoughts would race through my mind to the point that I would actually become ill. My spirit was broken beyond repair. Or so I thought!

Much to my amazement, the big book referred to this as a spiritual malady or a "soul sickness". There was my first glimpse of hope! With the careful aid of my sponsor, we began a painstaking journey through the steps of AA. I have gained an understanding that alcohol is just a symptom. Low self-esteem is the chief activator of my character defects. It is apparent that I suffer from self-centered fear! I need to ask God to transform my way of thinking. I suddenly realized that this psychic change is the heart of the program. In reality my character defects are the opposites of the principals of the program. With that said, I am entirely ready and willing to have God remove all these character defects without reservations.

Now, to best prepare for each day, I must humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings. Please make me spiritually equipped to face whatever situations life presents to me one day at a time. I must focus on the clear picture of how it works. I simply have to follow the guidelines in the big book, continue to improve my conscious contact with God, take heed and honestly act on the suggestions of my sponsor. And in time, I will gain the wisdom to gratefully recognize the blessings from God and the eternal difference AA has made in my life.

Now when I have an opportunity to share at a meeting, I pray that my experience can benefit others and always be a blessing to the hearts of my fellows.

For now, I will keep up the good fight! I will never be there, but I am will on my way, with God's Grace and the steady endurance of the fellowship. I will celebrate 1 year of sobriety on Independence Day ...

Happy 4th!

Let Go & Let God

Sherri R/West Creek

Life is lived in Moments...

As Bill Sees It

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Seeking Fool's Gold

Pride is the basic breeder of most human difficulties, the chief block to true progress. Pride lures us into making demands upon ourselves or upon others which cannot met without perverting or misusing our God-given instincts. When the satisfaction of our instincts for sex, security, and a place in society becomes the primary object of our lives, then pride steps in to justify our excesses.

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TWELVE AND TWELVE, PP. 48-49



DID YOU KNOW?

In 1975, A.A. published *Living Sober*, a book of member experiences that describes methods of living without drinking. The material for the book was gathered in the early 1970s from group and individual correspondence of shared experience, then writers compiled it into a book.

A popular addition to A.A. literature.

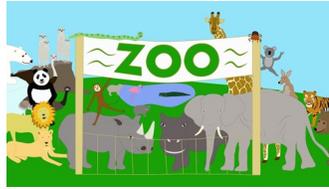


Upcoming Events



GROUP ANNIVERSARY
NORTHFIELD TUESDAY
JULY 7TH/ 7PM

METHODIST CHURCH
ZION RD. & NORTHFIELD AVE



STAGECOACH GROUP
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATES
AUGUST 22, 2015
AT THE ZOO

CAPE MAY ZOO
707 ROUTE 9 NORTH,
CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, NJ
08210



Ice Cream Social

ONLY REQUIREMENT GROUP
10YRS CARRYING THE MESSAGE
ICE CREAM SOCIAL SPEAKER MTG
7PM/AUGUST 24,2015

GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH
MATHISTOWN RD. & RTE. 9
TUCKERTON, NJ



THE 9TH ANNUAL
WAVES OF SOBRIETY ROUNDUP
NOVEMBER 20TH-22ND, 2015

THE GRAND HOTEL
1045 BEACH AVE.,
CAPE MAY, NJ

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Cape Atlantic AA. ORG

Help Wanted @ The CAIG

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Cape Atlantic Intergroup Business Meeting

The CAIG Business meeting takes place on the third Wednesday of every month at the:

Epiphany Lutheran Church
Franklin & Tunis Ave.
Pleasantville

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

UNITY COMMITTEE needs help!!! Contact Jerusha at unitychair@caigrp.org
Available Phone Slots, contact our Phone Coordinator at: Phonechair@caigrp.org

The following Chair positions are open:

Bookers Committee
Website Chair

For Committee Descriptions:

Interested? Contact CAIG Chair John H. at 609-377-2410

OUR OFFICE IS VOLUNTEER- STAFFED

PLEASE CALL FIRST

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