

Oldtimers Remember: "His Name Was Jack D."

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On a Sunday afternoon in January 1960, following a Saturday night drunk which caused the wife to receive emergency treatment at a local hospital, I received a phone call from a close relative suggesting I do something about my drinking. He informed me that he knew for quite a while that I had a problem with alcohol but as long as it seemed only to affect me he would not mention it, but now it was evident that it was affecting other people, especially my wife, therefore, he felt obligated to call with the suggestion which I feel saved my life.

Later that evening, I called the clubhouse, located at 4201 Walnut Street, where-upon it was suggested that I come on down. Met by two men, total strangers, who's face are but shadows to me now, they shook my hand, offered me some coffee and asked if I thought I had a problem with alcohol. As confused as I was, I could not give a definite answer, but was assured that if I thought I had a problem, I was in the right place.

However, due to the lateness of the hour, they suggested that I not drink and the next day, Monday, go down to the Intergroup office, which at that time, was located at 2202 St. James Street, and speak to the secretary for further guidance and direction.

That's when I met Jack, a middle-aged little man, wrinkled and not too well pressed. He did not look like the secretary type, was not very polite but when he talked you could not deny his honesty. Being a man of few words he shared a little about himself, about A.A. and suggested I attend a meeting that evening at the newly formed Northwest A.A. Group, located at that time at 43rd & Wallace Streets in West Philadelphia, which I did willingly, having exhausted all of my means.

During the next four years I was able to see Jack on occasions, mainly official business, when I would go down to Intergroup. The last time we talked he informed me that he was leaving Intergroup to take a position at Eagleville Hospital in Eagleville, Pa. which had been transformed from a Tuberculosis treatment center to a alcoholic treatment center. I believe he was the first director at Eagleville. He even offered to take me with him, but having job security after fourteen years with the Federal Government, I had to decline.

That was the last time I saw Jack, but I shall never forget the initial experience, nor the last, as this very plain and simple person had such an impact, even upon this damaged memory, that it seems like only yesterday, when in reality it was thirty years ago. God bless him, wherever he may be. Intergroup is still here and Eagleville is still here which tell us something about this man called Jack. His spirit is forever with us and especially with me.

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