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I Am Responsible

When anyone, anywhere, Reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. to always be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Sister Ignatia and Alcoholics Anonymous

Sister Ignatia was the first person to use medallions in Alcoholics Anonymous.



Sister Ignatia, 1889—1966
Sisters of Charity of St.
Augustine
The Drunk's "Angel of Hope."

You know, this could never have happened in today's world: religion coupled with Alcoholics Anonymous! But thank God for this saintly woman. She was the right person for the right time in A.A.'s history. God Bless you, Sister Ignatia!

*From a (former) atheist,
Kathy F.*

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People who know the history of Alcoholics Anonymous have heard of Dr. Bob Smith and Bill Wilson, credited with founding the organization, but few have heard of the woman who shaped the hospital concept used to this day. On August 16, 1935, Sister Ignatia Gavin, a frail but no-nonsense Catholic sister in charge of admissions at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio, with the help of Dr. Bob Smith, one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, admitted the first alcoholic patient under the diagnosis of acute gastritis, thus making St. Thomas Hospital the first hospital in the world to treat alcoholism as a medical condition. Dr. Bob provided the medical treatment, while a steady stream of "reformed" alcoholics helped the man with his "spiritual" needs.

Although the hospital did not want to admit alcoholics, Sis-

ter Ignatia had previously circumvented the system. Sister Ignatia's care for alcoholics started back in 1934, when she and emergency room intern, Thomas Scuderi, M.D., began secretly sobering alcoholics at the hospital, housing the alcoholism patient in the hospital's flower room.

Sister Ignatia increasingly began to believe that alcoholics should not be sneaked into the hospital but brought through the front door just like other sick people. This belief led to the first medical admission in 1935, soon, she provided a ward for men to sober up, and St Thomas Hospital became the first religious institution to recognize the rights of alcoholics to receive hospital treatment. Today, many of A.A.'s practices – including the use of tokens to mark milestones in sobriety – find their origins with Sister Ignatia.

Sister Ignatia was the first person to use medallions in Alcoholics Anonymous. She gave the drunks who were leaving St. Thomas after a five day dry out a Sacred Heart Medallion and instructed them that the acceptance of the medallion signified a commitment to God, to A.A., and to recovery. [And] that if they were going to drink, they had a responsibility to return the medallion to her before drinking. [Use this link to see the Sacred Heart Medallion: <http://www.barefootsworld.net/graphics/shbadge.jpg>] The custom is carried out to this day with tokens awarded for sobriety. The Sacred Heart Medallions had been used prior to A.A. by the Father Matthew Temperance Movement of the 1840's and the Pioneers, an Irish Temperance Movement of the 1890's.

Dr. Bob died in 1950, and in 1952, Sister Ignatia was transferred to Cleveland's St. Vincent Charity Hospital.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

She recalled: "We're just like people in the Army, you know. We go where we are sent . . . I was there [in Akron] for 24 years . . . and finally the obedience came that I was to go to Charity and work with A.A. there."

On August 7, 1952, at the age of 63, the "Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous" arrived in Cleveland for her new assignment. Planning began for an alcoholism wing at the hospital.

As part of the ward's setup, Sister Ignatia requested a coffee bar for the patients, similar to the one in Akron. However, a board member who reviewed the plan questioned the need for it. He returned the plan to Sister Ignatia and said, "A table will have to do." But, Ignatia would not compromise. She knew what she wanted for the A.A.s and she put the future of the ward on the line with her reply: "Let's forget about it if you're not going to give us the proper setup." The coffee bar remained in the drawings.

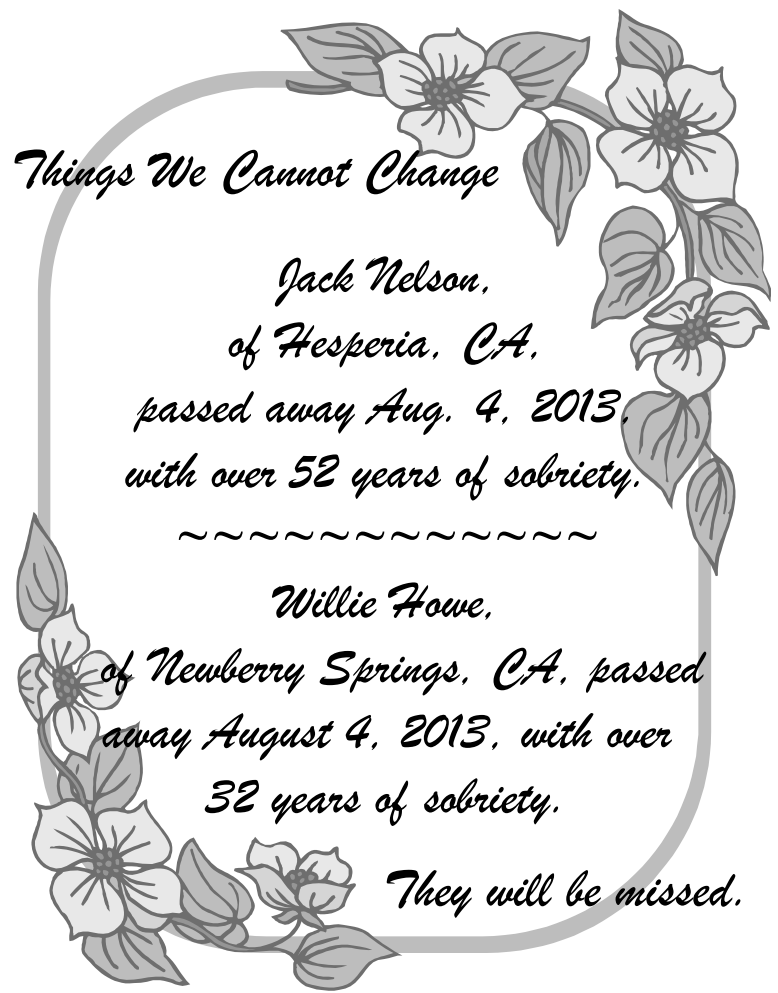
With the help and contributions of the many people Sister Ignatia had helped, Rosary Hall Solarium (its initials in the memory of Dr. Bob, Robert Holbrook Smith) accepted its first patient on December 15. It was a kind of recovery mecca where physical medicine, spiritual nourishment, and brotherly love regularly produced miracles of recovery. Sister Ignatia was Rosary Hall's breath and spirit.

Through the years, the program successfully treated thousands of alcoholics. Sister Ignatia was among the first to acknowledge alcoholism among priests and nuns. She was also instrumental in implementing the first Al-Anon program for families of alcoholics.

Even as her health declined, Sister Ignatia continued to care for alcoholics at Rosary Hall. Thousands of alcoholics knew first-hand Sister Ignatia's honesty and nonjudgmental love.

For more than 30 years, Sister Mary Ignatia Gavin, C.S.A., founding both Ignatia Hall at St. Thomas in Akron, and Rosary Hall Solarium at St. Vincent, was a messenger of hope for alcoholics and their families. Her courageous stand for medical treatment, and her caring devotion to the victims of alcoholism, helped Dr. Bob Smith and Bill Wilson, founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, and thousands who have come after them.

Sister Ignatia never accepted recognition for any of her



Memories of Jack N.

JACK NELSON, June 9, 1918 – August 4, 2013

It's an honor to be asked to share memories of Jack.

I first met Jack as a newcomer in 1966. He must have been sober then about 6 years. Even in his late 40s, he was quite dashing and handsome but most definitely married to his beloved Doris. He was a fixture at the Baldwin Park Monday Night Speakers Meeting in those days before he migrated up to the Hesperia area. (Back then, there was only one meeting each night in all of the East San Gabriel Valley. Mondays, it was a church in Baldwin Park; Fridays it was my home group – The Covina '502' Speakers.)

I didn't know Jack much at all until my George and I moved up here in 1996 and not really well until we started having weekly Wednesday noon meetings at his home about 3 years ago. Jack was by now housebound. I cannot imagine having the grace to accept this life situation of having a caregiver to see to my needs and have one meeting a week brought in to me. But Jack did. I never saw any bitterness or self-pity in him – ever. And make no mistake – Jack Nelson still had all his marbles; he was not senile.

(Continued on page 3)

Sister Ignatia

(Continued from page 2)

work with alcoholics. Even in 1961, when she was recognized for her work by President Kennedy, gracious humility prevailed, accepting the awards only in the name of her religious community and profession.

Sister Ignatia retired in May 1965. She died less than a year later on April 1, 1966.

Jack N.

(Continued from page 2)

I sometimes brought coffee cake or sandwiches for the guys. It was nearly always mostly men – and me, with a few ladies occasionally. I loved these meetings, because with them it's always about 'what it used to be like, what happened and what it's like now.' Not a lot about stopped-up plumbing, Johnny misbehaving, or burnt toast.

We always hung on to hearing Jack. And it became harder and harder to hear him – his voice becoming softer and softer. But we did. It was always about the disease and the recovery. And my very favorite thing about going to Jack's on Wednesday noon? I always walked into that meeting feeling like a 75-year-old widowed alcoholic woman, and left feeling like a kid after he'd share about going to jail in the Spring of '38 – when I was an infant!

I hated any time that I had to miss that meeting and am so grateful that last Wednesday I had a very hectic morning and went screeching in there with banana bread with about 3 minutes to meeting time. I must have had the Occasional Hunch that told me it would be my last opportunity to go . . .

Jack Nelson was an A.A. treasure – not just for the High Desert community – but for alcoholics everywhere. He really did 'walk like he talked.' And I'm grateful I knew him . . . May God richly bless you, Jack. Jack was 95-years-old and would have been 53 years sober [on August 24, 2013.]

Kathy F.,
Hesperia, CA

HELP WANTED/NEEDED

Your Central Office is in need of volunteers to fill office shifts and to do after hours call forwarding. If you would like to be of service or know someone who *needs* to be of service, call 760-242-9292 for all details!

Central Office Activities

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>JULY</u>	<u>Y.T.D.</u>
Visitors	107	745
Info. Calls	177	1,347
12 Step Calls	2	12
<u>Call Forwarding</u>		
Info. Calls	159	852
12 Step Calls	1	16
<u>Totals</u>		
Info Calls	336	2,331
12 Step Calls	3	32

Upcoming Events

August 24, 2013

A memorial service will be held for Jack N. at the Victor Valley Alano Club, 11085 Central Rd.

September 13—15, 2013

4th Annual Wrightwood Men's Sober Retreat at Teresita Pines near Wrightwood, CA. For registration information call 714-926-1080

And Finally . . .

Obsession

Submitted by, Ed L., Wrightwood, CA

I recently attended a Bluegrass festival where a classic song had been changed by a young musician named Scott Gates, to reflect the obsession that alcohol had for me for the middle twenty-eight years of my life. It follows the familiar tune from "The Sound of Music" as a way to remember the musical scale of do, re, me, fa, so, la, te, do. And, if you be like me, it will remind you of the complete obsession that dominated our thinking for so much of our lives.

Dough, the cash that buys my beer,
Ray, the guy who sells me beer,
Me, the one who drinks the beer,
Fa, well how far to the beer?
So, I think I'll have a beer,
La, la, la, la, la, la, beer,
Tea, no thanks I'm drinking beer,
This brings me back to beer, beer, beer, beer . . .

(Repeat over and over.)

Cheers!