



# The Gateway

## Jerry S., A Powerful Voice For Recovery

Of all the things in life that are predictable, somewhere behind death and taxes, high and low tides, sunrises and sunsets, comes Jerry S.

When this year's Voice of the Conference takes the podium to welcome the crowd to the 2008 Fellowship Hall Annual Conference, after introducing himself, he is going to say, "It's good to be here," and follow that with, "It's good to be anywhere sober."

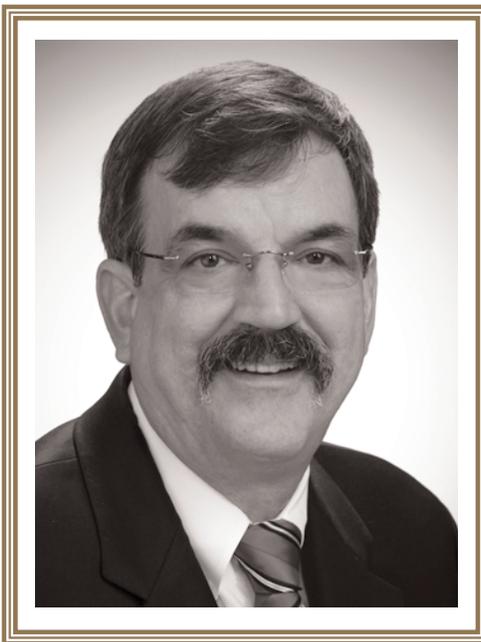
Count on it. Mark it down. Take it to the bank. Jerry's standard intro is but one aspect of the predictability that comes with being a trusted member of Alcoholics Anonymous. To him, predictability means more than mouthing rote clichés; it means when you say you're going to do something, you do it. It means showing up for meetings, calling your sponsor, and being present for your sponsees. It means doing service work when asked, and even when not. It means understanding that service work is its own reward and passing along that work ethic. And it means doing it all with a smile on your face and a kind word for all your fellows.

Jerry S. is a leader, pure and simple. Humble and personable with an easy-going charm that draws people into his orbit, he is the perfect choice to be this year's Voice of the Conference.

Still, he is a bit mystified to be in this position. "I'm just a worker," he smiles. "All I've done since being on the Council is work the registration tables. I don't need to be out front. When (Council Chairman) Robin L. approached me about it, I tried to duck out of it, but he was persistent; he wouldn't let me go."

Aside from his homespun humor, self-deprecating wit, and rock-solid dependability, Jerry is known as the man who brings the message of recovery to the prisons. For over 16 years he has been taking two meetings a week to two different correctional facilities in central North Carolina.

"Gordon R. took me to my first prison meeting in October, 1991," he recalls, "and it was like a spiritual moment, that getting out of self. I've been in the trenches ever since, but recently I got Steve R. to take over Fridays for me. I tell everybody, 'If I sponsor you, you're going to prison. That's the way to get involved, that's where you need to be, that's where sobriety is.'" Jerry, 56, has been sober continuously since May 1, 1990, the day he stumbled in the doors of Fellowship Hall.



*Voice of the Conference, Jerry S.*

"I avoided AA at every turn, any way I could avoid it," he admitted. "I went to my first meeting when I was 16 and was afforded another opportunity when I got my first drunk driving ticket. They were talking about the solution in that room, but I had a six-pack of Budweiser in the back of my pickup truck, and I knew that was my solution."

But after his second offense, he began to realize that it was not, in fact, the solution. Still, AA or anything that involved quitting drinking, was not yet an alternative. "Suicide was a viable option," he said. "I considered it often."

Finally, he made the decision that saved his life. And among the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of folks who are glad he did, is the former Martha

"Marty" V, another longstanding member of AA. The two were married last September 22.

Jerry, a man of many hats, is a mail carrier, real estate agent, residential contractor and, most recently, officer in a proposed bank.

"Going into the banking business is just one of the many blessings and opportunities afforded me in sobriety," he smiled. "We ought to call this thing the Serenity Bank." And then he adds another bit of down-home advice. "My sponsors have always said to suit up and show up, but the hardest thing for a drunk to do is grow up."



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## 2008 E. Raymond Alexander, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament

This year, the tournament, also known as the “The Judges Jug,” enters its seventh year, honoring Judge Alexander and supporting the work of Fellowship Hall. It will be held again at Crooked Tree Golf Course.

The golf tournament planning committee has been meeting each month to ensure a fun and successful event. The committee, made up of volunteers, does everything from securing corporate sponsorships to determining who’s going to bring the ham and sausage biscuits to the golf course!

This tournament is limited to 120 players, so it will fill quickly and will certainly sell out again. Please consider participating in this great event to support the vital work of Fellowship Hall, which has provided compassionate care and effective treatment for thousands of individuals suffering from the disease of addiction.

If you would like to reserve your spot as a Hole Sponsor (\$350), a “Friends of Ray” sponsor (\$100) or as an individual player (\$75), please complete the form below or contact Mike Whaley at [mikew@fellowshiphall.com](mailto:mikew@fellowshiphall.com) or 800.659.3381.



Deborah Andrews	17 years
Diane Batchelor	1 year
Rodney Battles	11 years
Jenny Belter	3 years
Dewayne Book	7 years
Ken Burgess	10 years
Paul Carter	7 years
Johnie Collins	23 years
Susan Cook	9 years
Esther Combo	13 years
Joanna Faw	2 years
Brenda French	4 years
Linda Goode	7 years
Sherry Grant	21 years
Susan Hardison	6 years
Cindy Harrill	5 years
Adele Harris	18 years
Ruby Johnson	27 years
Elizabeth Ladd	19 years
Harold Ledford	14 years
Velda Macomson	7 years
Diane McCraw	4 years
Rudy Murphy	1 year
Adrian Neely	5 years
Connie Post	25 years
Gordon Rayle	5 years
Mat Sandifer	4 years
Patricia Scott	15 years
Barbara Shuler	27 years
Deborah Stevens	7 years
Wendy Stringfellow	2 years
Mark Todt	11 years
Karen Tucker	5 years
Joni Whaley	20 years
Mike Whaley	17 years
Willie Williams	16 years

### Seventh Annual E. Raymond Alexander, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament Registration Form

• Cost per player is \$75, including golf shirt, green fees and cart, post-tournament picnic and awards ceremony at Fellowship Hall. Fill out the form and send to:

**Golf Tournament/Fellowship Hall**  
**P. O. Box 13890**  
**Greensboro, NC 27415**

• Or register online at [www.fellowshiphall.com](http://www.fellowshiphall.com) or by calling 800.659.3381



Registration Deadline: July 1, 2008 (limited to 120 Golfers)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of other golfers on your team\*: \_\_\_\_\_ Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

\*If the names of teammates are unavailable when you register, please contact Mike Whaley at 800.659.3381 or [mikew@fellowshiphall.com](mailto:mikew@fellowshiphall.com) when you have the names. Shirt sizes must be provided. If not, XL will be ordered.

## FACES OF THE HALL

### Receptionist - Sharon Kniskern Makes A Good First Impression

“You only get one chance to make a good first impression,” goes the old adage. And Sharon Kniskern takes it upon herself to make sure the first impression prospective guests and families get at Fellowship Hall is a positive one. As the Hall’s receptionist, her workspace is the front desk, which means hers is the first face anyone sees upon entering. In essence, for those first few moments, she becomes the face of the Hall. “That’s a scary thought,” she laughs, her self-deprecating humor becoming obvious.

Actually, the thought is anything but scary. Her warm smile and welcoming countenance are the perfect greeting for those embarking on a life-changing experience. Her calming manner and reassuring tone can turn the fearful, even the tearful, into the cheerful.

Since February 2, 2006, Sharon has been greeting guests, routing calls, signing in visitors, running the merchandise section (known as the “Hall Mall”) and, in general, turning multi-tasking into an art form.

“It really is a catch-all position,” she says. “The trick is to maintain your calm when someone’s standing there wanting something, the phone’s ringing off the hook, and someone’s coming in the door, all at the same time. You have to be the type of person who just rolls with it. I’m lucky in that I don’t let anything phase me — or at least I don’t now.”

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Sharon, a native of Queens, N.Y., gravitated south from upstate New York some 11 years ago. She and her two teenage daughters, Alexandra, 18, and Tyler, 14, make their home in the small Randolph County community of Trinity.

“This is home now,” she claims. “This is where I’ve raised my daughters, and they’re happy here, too. Actually, the lay of the land here is very similar to upstate



*Sharon Kniskern covers the front desk.*

New York, except that it’s much warmer here, thank goodness.”

Most of her background is in health insurance administration, with a four-year foray into sales. At her last employer, the employees were treated with so little respect that she began sending out resumes almost at random.

“I realized early on that I couldn’t work under those conditions,” she says. “It was a horrible situation. I sent out so many resumes that I actually had four job offers at the same time. I was ready to accept another position when the employment agency called and said, ‘Don’t take it yet; Fellowship Hall wants you to come in for another interview.’ And I’m so glad they did. I feel like I’ve found my niche here.”

Between the jokes and one-liners, Sharon clearly understands the serious nature of the Hall’s mission and her place in it. “Sometimes the guests will come up just to talk,” she remarks. “They just want to hear a different voice. I provide a supportive attitude and just listen.” But the thing that’s so rewarding is that you get to see them get better. I’ve never had a job like this, one that I get up in the morning and really look forward to getting to. I truly enjoy being here. They get me.”

## *Ogi & The Old-Timers*

### **The Antidote for the 10-Year Flu**

The next chip I pick up, with God's grace, will have the Roman numeral XX on it. Without God's grace, it will be aluminum (or white) and have no numerals on it. Or, even worse, there could be no next chip, in which case I would have rejected God's will entirely.

Naturally, I intend to continue doing the things I've been doing that have earned me a token with an XIX on it. Just as I've been saying since that spring day that I walked out of Fellowship Hall a free man, I don't intend to take a drink this day or any other day. Yet, for reasons that escape me as much now as then, sometimes folks do take a drink, regardless of the sequence of X's and V's and I's on the chip they hold. It's as perplexing as anything I've ever encountered, but the cold hard truth is that regardless of professed intent, sometimes people ignore the consequences and pick up that first drink. They cast aside everything they've come to believe, every bit of self-respect and standing in the community they've earned, every morsel of knowledge and wisdom they've gleaned, and get drunk. It's as if the preceding years, the meetings, the prayers, the friendships, the sense of accomplishment all went for naught.

I've heard it said that there are a thousand reasons one decides to resume his former way of life, or semblance thereof. And while I don't doubt that statement, I've also heard it said that there is only one reason that people go back out: They want to get drunk more than they want to get sober. And that, too, is no doubt true. Thought always precedes action; even though a thought enters our minds, we almost always don't act on it. A drink does not simply appear in our hands and force itself down our throats. At some level we choose. Some say we begin planning a drunk months before we actually pull it; I don't know.

All I know is that it happens all too frequently. The revolving door continues to swing both ways, in defiance of all reason or common sense. "Cunning and baffling" indeed. And, might we add, patient.

Lately I've been hearing the term "middle sobriety" used rather frequently. I take it to mean that nebulous time between newcomer and old-timer; for purposes of simplification, let's say roughly between five and twenty years of sobriety. The late, great Lou Huston (whom many of you who graced the Hall in the '80s and '90s would remember) used to call it the "10-Year Flu," to describe the odd phenomenon of relapse after reaching double-digit sobriety. Recently, two dear friends, both in that undefined period of middle sobriety, caught the 10-Year Flu and made bad decisions with dire consequences. If I were asked, off the top of my head, to name a dozen of the most solid members of AA

who had comparable lengths of sobriety as I, both would have been on it. And all of us who know and love them are left to shake our heads and wonder.

Moreover, if we are smart, we are also aware that it's not always the other guy. As the old cartoon character, Pogo, used to say, "We have met the enemy and it is us." There could come a day that I'm the other guy, that I'm the one who decides to pick up a drink, the one people are shaking their heads about and wondering, why him? If it happened to two guys who appeared to be fully invested in AA, then how can I be convinced it won't happen to me?

If ever there were a time to apply the "There but for the grace of God go I" adage, this would be it, eh? Rather

than condescendingly passing judgment on my friends, now would be the time to look inside myself and inventory my own spiritual condition. Now would be the time to turn to my favorite passage in the Big Book and reread it: "We are granted a daily reprieve, contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition." And while I'm saying a little prayer for my struggling comrades, it might be a good time to say one for myself, as well.

Because sometimes the other guy is you.



*It's as perplexing as anything I've ever encountered, but the cold hard truth is that regardless of professed intent, sometimes people ignore the consequences and pick up that first drink.*

## FACES OF THE HALL

### Journalist-Turned-Nurse Wendy Stringfellow Happy That Career Path Led To Hall

If the story of the proud history and evolution of the nursing staff at Fellowship Hall were ever to be written, the Board of Directors would not have far to go to find an author. They have a ready-made candidate from within the staff itself in Wendy Stringfellow. Wendy, who joined the Hall nursing staff in November 2005, has been in the profession for 12 years, but before getting her nursing degree, she earned a degree in journalism from the University of North Carolina, arguably the finest journalism department in the country. She became a reporter for both the *Greensboro News & Record* and the *High Point Enterprise*, covering ACC basketball and football for the *Enterprise*, before moving to the N&R as a feature writer for its Asheboro bureau.

“They closed down that bureau, and I got laid off as a result,” she says. “That’s when I decided I needed something with more job security, given the fact that newspapers across the board were cutting budgets and laying off people. My sister was a nurse, and that helped make my decision.”

So she returned to college, this time at North Carolina A&T, and got her B.S. degree in nursing. She worked for five years as a psychiatric nurse working with patients with both mental health and substance abuse issues. Then she spent another five years at Greensboro’s Moses Cone Hospital on the medical rehab unit, working with patients recovering from strokes, brain injuries, and spinal cord injuries.

It was while on maternity leave from Moses Cone that she began thinking another change might be in order, remembered hearing about Fellowship Hall and decided to apply.

Although not in recovery, the native of Kings Mountain, N.C. candidly admits that she struggled with her own issues in college and sees a correlation with substance abuse.

“I can relate to what the people here are going through,” she explains, “because I’ve had to work through issues myself. They are trying to get in touch with their emotions and acknowledge them. They’re learning that what they feel is valid and important. I see people here who are not in touch with their emotions at all when they get here, but then they start to understand that their feelings are important.”

Wendy adds that she tries to impress upon the guests what it will take to maintain their newfound sobriety. “I remind them to look at their role models, the counselors here, and watch what they’re doing,” she says. “I

mention that they still talk to their sponsors regularly and go to meetings constantly and still do the service work, even after all these years.”

The mother of two sons — Jonathon, 9, and Blake, 2 — feels that her personality is well suited for her dual careers.

“When I was in journalism, what I liked to do best was personality profiles on athletes who excel and who have a strong character,” she comments. “I didn’t like to exploit them by doing exposé-type articles or hard news stories. And I think I gravitated toward psychiatric nursing to try to help people develop their character and get better and improve themselves. Both have been rewarding.” As is her current career.

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“Oh yes,” she smiles, “this is tremendously rewarding and life-affirming. I especially like to work with new admissions because they’re so sick when they come in, and when they leave they look so much better physically. I find the good in people, and try to help them find the good in themselves.”



Wendy Stringfellow, RN

## This Date in AA History

### June 1

1949 - Anne Smith, Dr. Bob's wife, died.

### June 4

2002- Caroline Knapp, author of *Drinking: A Love Story* died sober of lung cancer.

### June 5

1940 - Ebby Thatcher took a job at the NY Worlds Fair.

### June 6

1940 - The first AA Group in Richmond, VA, was formed.  
1979 - AA gave the two-millionth copy of the Big Book to Joseph Califano, then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. It was presented by Lois Wilson, Bill's wife, in New York.

### June 10

1935 - The date that is celebrated as Dr. Bob's last drink and the official founding date of AA. There is some evidence that the founders, in trying to reconstruct the history, got the date wrong, and it was actually June 17.

### June 11

1945 - Twenty-five hundred attended AA's 10th Anniversary in Cleveland, Ohio.

### June 15

1940 - First AA Group in Baltimore, MD, was formed.

### June 16

1938 - Jim Burwell, author of "The Vicious Cycle" in the Big Book, had his last drink.

### June 17

1942 - New York AA groups sponsored the first annual NY area meeting. Four hundred and twenty-four heard Dr. Silkworth and AA speakers.

### June 21

1944 - The first Issue of the AA *Grapevine* was published.

### June 25

1939 - The *New York Times* reviewer wrote that the Big Book is "more soundly based psychologically than any other treatment I have ever come upon."

### June 26

1935 - Bill Dodson. (AA #3) entered Akron's City Hospital for his last detox and his first day of sobriety.

### June 28

1935 - Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson visited Bill Dodson at Akron's City Hospital.

### June 30

1941 - Ruth Hock showed Bill Wilson the Serenity Prayer, and it was adopted readily by AA.

2000 - More than 47,000 from 87 countries attended the opening meeting of the 65th AA Anniversary in Minneapolis, MN.

### July 1-3

1960 - 8700 attended the 25th Anniversary of AA in Long Beach, CA.

### July 2

1960 - Father Ed Dowling died.

### July 2-3

1955 - Bill W. turned "the fellowship over to the fellowship" at 4:00 p.m. 5000 attended the 20th Anniversary at St. Louis Convention.

### July 3-5

1970 - 10,900 attended the 35th Anniversary of AA in Miami. Bill W. gave his last talk to AA.

### July 3-6

1980 - Gay AA's had their own program at 40th AA Anniversary in New Orleans.

### July 7

1940 - Bill attended the 1st Summer Session at School of Alcohol Studies at Yale University.

### July 5-8

1990 - 48,000 attended the 55th Anniversary of AA in Seattle. 75 countries were represented as the former Soviet Union's members attended for the first time.

### July 14

1979 - Dr. Ernest Kurtz published *NOT GOD, History of AA*.

### July 22

1877 - Willian Duncan Silkworth born in Brooklyn, NY.

### August 3

1954 - Brinkley S. got sober at Towns Hospital after 50th detox.

### August 8

1879 - Dr. Bob S. was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

### August 11

1938 - Akron & New York members began writing stories for the Big Book.

### August 16

1939 - Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia admitted the first alcoholic to St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, Ohio.

### August 28

1954 - *24 Hours a Day* was published by Richmond Walker.

## Marketing Moment

In this column, we usually tell you about the Hall's marketing effort. In this issue, we want to talk to you about your marketing effort. Specifically, how you can help support the Hall's mission of helping suffering alcoholics and addicts. One of the easiest ways to help is with introductions. You may work for a large employer that could benefit from knowing more about Fellowship Hall's treatment programs. Perhaps you belong to a civic club or organization that regularly schedules informative presentations about issues (addiction and treatment) that affect the community.

Contact me, Mike Whaley, directly at 336-621-3381, 800-659-3381 or mikew@fellowshiphall.com with your suggestions or ideas. Together, let's help others by spreading the word about the quality addictions treatment available at the Hall.

Another column in this issue is related to the 2008 E. Raymond Alexander Memorial Golf Tournament. Many readers may not be aware of the tournament, the man it memorializes or what the proceeds from the event support.

E. Raymond Alexander, Jr. was a Guilford County Superior Court judge, a Fellowship Hall board member and a trusted and respected friend of the Greensboro recovering community. Friends of Raymond organized a golf tournament in his memory, the proceeds of which help endow a scholarship fund in his name to help guests in need complete treatment at Fellowship Hall.

One level of support needed for the tournament is that of "Hole Sponsor". The company or individual will have a huge golf ball-shaped sign on the tee box at one of the holes. The sign can read whatever the sponsor wishes. It may be a company name and slogan or could be an individual's personal greeting to the golfers. An example may be "Good Luck to All Golfers" from John Smith or "Thanks for Supporting Fellowship Hall" from Jane Doe. The cost for a "Hole Sponsor" is \$350.

Whether it's monetary support for the golf tournament or simply an employer introduction, there are many ways to support the mission of Fellowship Hall. As always, we are so appreciative of all that you do!



*Completed new program area extending from the Ladies' Lounge*



*FH subcontractors put finishing touches on the fountain located in the courtyard*



*Completed new program area is on right.*



*Close up of freshly landscaped courtyard.*

# Fellowship Hall Annual Conference

August 8, 9 & 10, 2008

Greensboro Marriott Downtown

For more information, call 1-800-659-3381 or register online at [www.fellowshiphall.com](http://www.fellowshiphall.com) or simply fill out the form below and mail it with your check to:

**Fellowship Hall Conference**  
**P. O. Box 13890**  
**Greensboro, NC 27415**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-registration cost for all sessions is \$15 per person or \$10 per person per day. Enclosed is my check or money order for \$\_\_\_\_\_. Make checks payable to Fellowship Hall, Inc.

Note: Registration at the Conference for all sessions will be \$20 per person or \$10 per person per day.

Name(s) to be printed on badge(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending Hall picnic (pay at the picnic, \$5 per person) \_\_\_\_\_

*Fellowship Hall, Inc.*  
*2008 Conference Speakers*

August 8, 9, 10, 2008

**George J., NA Speaker**

(Friday night)

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**Mary P., AA Speaker**

(Saturday morning)

Orlando, Florida

**Chuck L., AI-Anon Speaker**

(Saturday morning)

Superior, Wisconsin

**Trish W., AA Speaker**

(Saturday night)

Roanoke, Virginia

**Charlie Y., AA Speaker**

(Sunday morning)

Savannah, Georgia

*Email suggestions, submissions for The Gateway, and requests to be placed on our mailing list to [amanda@fellowshiphall.com](mailto:amanda@fellowshiphall.com)*

**Address Service Requested**



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*The Gateway*

