

Ernest M. (Mac)

New Jersey Pioneer

Ernest joined the fellowship shortly before the publication of the Big Book. According to the survey of the New Jersey Group conducted on January 1, 1940 Ernest (Mac) had nine months as a member placing his entry in A.A. as March of 1939. Ernest hailed from Westwood, New Jersey and was slipping quite a bit in his early days with the fellowship.

“Pass It On” mentions Ernest M. on page 162 as having attended the meetings in Brooklyn prior to Lois and Bill’s eviction on April 26th of that year.

An interesting story of Ernest is contained in a letter from Ruth Hock to Bill Wilson, written in 1955. This letter is quoted in “Pass It On” on pages 227 & 228.

“We learned early, too, not to make predictions about who would or would not stay sober. The most impossible looking cases so often made the grade to confound us with the miracle while our most promising so often fell by the wayside. Do you remember the two young hopefuls we practically made bets on? I think they were Mac and Shepherd. They contacted us about the same time and [we] were specially interested because they were younger than most at that time.

As I remember it Shepherd was a high betting favorite while "poor Mac was hopeless". To our surprise Sheperd at that time had trouble almost immediately while Mac seemed to make steady progress in sobriety. Of course the whole situation blew up in our faces when one day Mr. Chipman promised to visit us at Vesey Street so that you could show him what wonderful progress A.A. was making in every way and to top off the performance you invited Mac to appear to prove that even very young men could

achieve sobriety. The stage was all set and you met Mr. Chipman for lunch. Meanwhile Mac appeared at the office completely polluted for the first time in about six months. Unfortunately he was so far gone that he collapsed in a coma in the big chair in your private office. I couldn't budge him so all I could think of to do was shut the door and try to head you off. When you appeared with Mr. Chipman though you were talking a blue streak complete with gestures and I couldn't get a word in edgewise as you swept open the door to your office to reveal Mac in all his drunken glory. After the proverbial moment of stunned silence you broke into roars of laughter, and a minute later, bless his heart, Mr. Chipman joined you. Then I relaxed too and all three of us laughed until we literally wept. When Mac snapped out of this particular binge some days later he enjoyed it too.”

It appears as though Mac succeeded after all. He is listed as one of the founding members of the Bergen County Group on July 29, 1941 and was still plugging away, chairing business meetings in Manhattan in 1944.

“We go to press before a report can be given on the last business meeting held at the 24th Street clubhouse in late October. But at the previous turbulent meeting in September it was voted that three committees should be formed, participants to be chosen by Chairman Ernest M. (GV November 1944)

The Big Book Study Group
of
South Orange, New Jersey