

# Recovery

# Times

VOL 27, NO 2 - February 2003

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

## Planting the Seeds of Sobriety

I have discovered yet another example of "I can't keep it if I don't give it away".

I know that I am much happier when the people around me are feeling good, and I enjoy their company much more. One more time, it proves to be a selfish program.

I also feel much better when I can share the program, especially with a newcomer.

Step 12 states that we need to share with the alcoholic who still suffers. It doesn't say one who is drunk, just suffering. I know that I have suffered in sobriety, and I have watched many of our fellows suffer. I know that I need to extend my hand to them every bit as much as to the newcomer. Some of our group are grieving loss, and others are going through serious illness, chemotherapy, and broken bones.

When I can share program with them I know that it helps me at least as much (if not more) than it helps them.

I liked the following story and wanted to share it. It comes from a friend in Palm Desert, and I always respect what he says.

I don't know if this fellow Bender is program or not, but he has the right idea. James Bender, in his book "How to Talk Well" (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1994) relates the story of a farmer who grew award-winning corn.

Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it.

The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors. "How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.

"Why sir," said the farmer, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn."

He is very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbor's corn also improves. So it is in other dimensions.

Those who choose to be at peace must help their neighbors to also be at peace. Those who choose to live well must help others to live well, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others to find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all.

The lesson for each of us is this: if we are to grow good corn, we must help our neighbors grow good corn.

Leon R., Ojai, CA

**In This Issue...**

**\*Upcoming Events**

**\*Service Committee Schedule**

**\*Intergroup Minutes**

**\*Happy Birthdays**

**NOTICE TO OUR READERS**

In this month's issue of the Recovery Times, the Contributions Summary is provided as a page insert within the newsletter. The editors are revamping the newsletter layout. Look for more "new looks" in the upcoming months.

## Upcoming Events

April 25-27                    22nd Annual Southern California  
Hospitals & Institutions Convention  
Marriott Hotel, Irvine, CA  
Info: 562-402-6487 or 562-577-6476  
www.geocities.com/sereneboy21/  
discoverthehighinhandi

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May 16-18                    Tri State - 19th Annual Roundup  
Laughlin, NV  
Info: Call Debbie A. - 928-681-2217  
www.tristate-roundup.com

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June 19-22                    Desert Pow Wow  
Renaissance Esmeralda Resort  
Indian Wells, CA  
Info: Kathy O. - 909-674-3032  
www.desertpowwow.com

Registration forms for the events above are at the  
Intergroup Meeting OR at Central Office

## SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

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Feb 17, 2003 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,  
5657 Lindley Ave.

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Mar 3, 2003 **G.S. Districts #11, 16, 17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6pm, 637 S. Victory Blvd  
Burbank

\*\*\*\*\*

Mar 4, 2003 **G.S. Districts #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore,  
La Crescenta

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Mar 5, 2003 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet,  
Canoga Park

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Mar 5, 2003 **SFV Board of Directors**  
7pm, Central Office

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Mar 8, 2003 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

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Mar 10, 2003 **SFV Intergroup  
SECOND MONDAY**  
6:30 pm Orientation  
7pm Business Meeting  
Knights of Columbus Hall  
14450 Valerio Street, Van Nuys

## Service Opportunities Alcoholics Anonymous in the San Fernando Valley

### PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE -

Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does and does not do. Needs young people and Spanish speaking A.A.'s for health fairs at shopping malls and to speak at various schools and businesses. Contact Central Office (818) 988-3001.

### HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE - NOTE NEW LOCATION!!!

Carries the message of Alcoholics Anonymous into hospitals, prisons & treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Meets the 3rd Monday of the month 8:00 PM @ St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Info: Sarah G. (818) 894-9921.

### TREATMENT FACILITIES / CPC COMMITTEE -

Meets the last Sunday of the month 4-5:00 PM 6531 Laurel Cyn, North Hollywood. Contact: Jeri B. (818) 846 9115

### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY INTERGROUP -

Elected Intergroup representatives maintain and develop policies for Central Office, and inform other IG Reps about Alkathons & fund raisers, etc. Meets second Monday, monthly, Knights of Columbus Hall, 14450 Valerio St., Van Nuys, CA. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

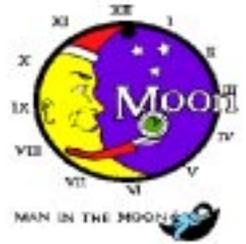
### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Planning and executing all phases of our annual convention, at the Burbank Hilton, Feb, 2003. Committee meets every 3rd Tuesday of each month; 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. First planning meeting April 12, 2003.



# CENTRAL OFFICE

## GUIDELINES FOR PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES



All articles published in the Recovery Times will be reviewed by a committee of three (3) members. Articles must therefore be received by the 10th of the month for consideration of publication in the following month's issue. Guidelines for publication are as follows:

- 1) No use of profanity.
- 2) Primary content must pertain to alcoholism, the recovery from the disease of alcoholism, the 12 Steps or the 12 Traditions.
- 3) The committee reserves the right to edit all articles submitted.

As stated in each issue of the Recovery Times: "RECOVERY TIMES presents the experience and opinions of members of A.A. (and occasionally others) on the subjects bearing on the disease of alcoholism. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement of its content by the San Fernando Valley Central Office or Alcoholics Anonymous. Articles from A.A. World Services, Inc. (AAWS, Inc.) and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. (as well as other publications) appearing herein are reprinted with permission. The names ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS and BIG BOOK are registered trademarks of AAWS, Inc."

*Opposing views and rebuttals to articles published are also welcomed.*

Submit correspondence to:

**SFVCO Newsletter Committee**  
7417 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite E  
Van Nuys, CA 91405

### **Your Birthday Gift to Central Office**



**M**any A.A. members share their birthdays with those who need the same help and opportunity that A.A. gave to them.

By sending a donation to Central Office you share your birthday with Recovery Times readers. Send a dollar (\$1.00) a year - or \$1.00 for each year of your sobriety - or send as much as you wish to give to celebrate your birthday. The amount doesn't matter - it's the "counting" that counts.

May your special day be filled with joy from morning until night, and may the "24's" that lie ahead be especially glad and bright.

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

JANUARY 2003

Jan S.	8 years
Mike F.	14 years
Carolyn D.	19 years
Susan C.	13 years
Lee Y.	26 years
Gary P.	5 years
Liz B.	2 years



# Myths and Misconceptions About Alcoholics Anonymous

## An Alcoholism Counselor's View

*Alcoholics Anonymous' Sixth Tradition states: An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose. In the spirit of this Tradition of "cooperation but not affiliation," A.A. members often take A.A. meetings into alcoholism treatment facilities. There are no "A.A. treatment facilities"—but many hospitals and rehabilitation centers use A.A.'s Twelve Steps as the basis of their treatment plan, and welcome A.A. members who bring A.A.'s program of recovery to the patients. In 1984 we asked John Wallace, Ph.D., a psychologist and director of an alcoholism treatment and rehabilitation center in New England, to share his views on the Fellowship. That issue of About A.A. received such a wide response that we feel it bears reprinting. Many people know of A.A. and its record of recovery from alcoholism, yet there is still a shroud of mystery around how it works, if it is or is not a religious organization, what it costs and so forth. Dr. Wallace answers some of these questions, clears up many misconceptions, and sheds light on the A.A. program from the viewpoint of a professional working in the field of alcoholism.*

*It has been fifty-seven years since the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous had its quiet beginnings in Akron, Ohio. But despite its presence on the alcoholism scene for over a half-century, A.A. is still often misunderstood by many. Without careful and thorough reading of A.A. literature or direct experience in the Fellowship for lengthy periods, it is not easy to grasp the purposes, processes, concepts, and activities of this critically important social movement.*

*Myths about A.A. and misconceptions of its concepts and approaches abound. It is imperative that we identify these myths and misconceptions so that open, knowledgeable, and sensitive communication can take place.*

*First, despite opinion to the contrary, A.A. is not a prohibitionist organization. AA does not condemn the social use of alcoholic beverages by all persons. The Fellowship emphasizes abstinence for its members since alcoholics have proven time and time again that they cannot consistently manage either drinking and/or their behavior while drinking.*

*While abstinence from alcoholic beverages is a critical first step for the newcomer to the Fellowship, AA's program of growth does not stop with the end of drinking. AA members distinguish between being merely "dry" and being "sober." To be dry and dry alone is not a very satisfactory condition. For the alcoholic, it is misery. At best, dryness is a traditional step, a "bridge" to the more complex state of sobriety. Whereas dryness refers only to not drinking alcohol, sobriety refers to major changes in the recovering person's approach to physical health, emotional well-being, mental clarity, social relations, family life, work, love and spirituality. Only the First Step of A.A.'s Twelve Step program of recovery deals with alcohol: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. The remaining eleven Steps deal with learning how to live comfortably (and with fulfillment) with oneself, with others and with one's Higher Power.*

*Because of the central role of spiritual development in A.A. many people confuse the Fellowship with organized religions. A.A. is not a religious organization,*

*but it is a spiritually centered organization. The Fellowship is not an organized religion since it does not require a single conception of a deity, has no religious ritual, and enforces no single body of religious beliefs. The Steps to recovery do suggest that belief in a higher power, as each member understands that concept, is of great value in the restoration of sanity and in finding a life of personal satisfaction and fulfillment without alcohol. But it is important to note that the AA higher power concept is an entirely open and free concept. The member may believe exactly what he or she chooses to believe and nobody in A.A. can tell them to believe otherwise.*

*A further misconception of Alcoholics Anonymous is that it endorses a simple and naive concept of the illness of alcoholism. This is a difficult misconception to understand since A.A., from its beginning, embraced a subtle, complex and multidimensional concept of the illness. By attending to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of alcoholism, A.A. anticipated very recent developments in modern medicine, psychiatry, and psychology—not only for the illness of alcoholism but for many other illnesses as well. The emerging discipline of behavioral medicine is one notable attempt to wed psychology and medicine in efforts to deal with many illnesses; A.A., in 1935, was already embracing a psychosomatic view in which body (allergy to alcohol) and mind (obsession with alcohol) were joined to explain the origins and maintenance of the illness. Over the years, several disciplines have brought to bear many of the magnificent achievements of modern 20<sup>th</sup>-century biological sciences on the problem of alcoholism. These scientific advances in neurochemistry, neuro-pharmacology, neuro-anatomy and behavior are welcome since they are entirely consistent with A.A.'s early emphasis upon psychosomatic relationships. Moreover, these scientific achievements promise to shed new light on alcoholism as they have on many other illnesses from which humankind suffers.*

*The belief that A.A. is hostile to psychological and psychiatric knowledge is unfortunate. Some A.A. members may have received inadequate treatment in*

the hands of poorly trained and inadequately educated professionals in the past. However, this unhappy situation is changing rapidly as the curricula of professional and graduate schools reflect the realities of the illness of alcoholism and more and more professionals achieving accurate and sensitive understanding. A.A., despite strong opinion to the contrary, is a psychologically very sophisticated Fellowship. Many of its concepts and procedures are psychology in action at its very best.

In A.A., members recognize the importance of psychological matters such as resentments, self-pity, egotism, unrealistically high expectations, frustration, stress, sexual and love relationships, self esteem, fear, anxiety, guilt, grandiosity, self will, melancholy, depression, security needs, envy, power over others, control and domination of others, and fear of financial failure. For an organization that presumably does not feel that psychological factors are important, the list is long indeed! Not only does A.A. involve itself with psychological matters its activities are clearly and intelligently planned psychological processes. The A.A. group meeting for example, could be a textbook example of the social psychological processes that characterize healthy, strong, and positive human relationships: open, honest, and trusting communication; caring, respect, and consideration for others; commitment to the growth and well-being of self and others; and empathy for and identification with others. Many of A.A.'s other processes and Steps either implicitly or explicitly recognize the importance of both individual and inter-personal psychological processes in the recovery from alcoholism.

Some people hold the misconception that A.A. forces people to admit that they are alcoholics and public confession of one's alcoholism must be made. Aside from the fact that A.A. does not require anybody to do anything, this misconception is off the mark because A.A. does not diagnose anything. Professionals diagnose illnesses. A.A. members help each other to stay sober. The A.A. Preamble states: "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." Many A.A. members, perhaps most, eventually choose to call themselves alcoholics, but this is not a condition for belonging. The very first Step of the A.A. program of recovery is to admit to being powerless over alcohol. Even here, however, this is a suggested step to recovery and not an order. Moreover, the Step does not say that one must diagnose oneself as an alcoholic, nor does it require one to accept such a diagnosis from somebody else.

Finally, it is sometimes believed by certain people that A.A.'s position, on the necessity for abstinence if alcoholics are to recover from alcoholism, is purely an ideological position with no empirical basis. Moreover, these persons believe that modern science has proved A.A. wrong on this point and that alcoholics can be taught normal, controlled, or non-problem drinking. Of all myths and misconceptions, this one is potentially the most dangerous since sufferers from alcoholism will place themselves at risk for grave and even tragic consequences if they embrace this myth.

The A.A. belief in abstinence for alcoholics did

not just appear out of the blue in a burst of ideological inspiration. It grew out of empirical observation in the real world. It grew out of direct observation of suffering too painful to bear, of tragedy and shattered dreams, of broken bodies, alcohol-related diseases, ended careers, and destroyed families. A.A. recognized early that a relationship existed between the continued ingestion of alcohol by alcoholics and the eventual but inevitable negative consequences of an active alcoholic life. In effect, A.A.'s beliefs have come from literally hundreds of thousands of direct observations of men and women in the real worlds of small towns, cities, the suburbs, ghettos, and megalopolises. A.A.'s have had plenty of direct experience with drinking alcoholics and with sober alcoholics. They don't report seeing much controlled or non-problem drinking at all. What they do report is that life for countless alcoholics and their families improves beyond imagination when they get the message, stop drinking, and begin to work a Twelve Step program of recovery.

The scientific evidence against abstinence, when viewed objectively, is unimpressive. The numbers are simply too small for any responsible and ethical professional to announce to the world that a cure for alcoholism has been achieved.

It is time for the many myths and misconceptions of A.A. to be exposed and discarded. A.A. needs open, trusting and distortion-free channels to the professional communities that are, in some way or another, involved with the alcoholic. Moreover, these professional communities need the same kind of communication channels to Alcoholics Anonymous. Even though opening such channels may be painful to some, our mission is too critically important to fail to do so. In the final analysis, it is the suffering alcoholic and his or her family who will be helped ultimately from clear, sensitive, and accurate communication between A.A. and the professional communities.

It is important for members of the professional communities to try to understand A.A. more accurately, but it is equally important for members of A.A. to try to communicate concepts, approaches, and activities clearly and effectively. A professional who has very limited experience with A.A. doesn't know what "turn it over" means. Nor could such a professional possibly understand "First Things First" or concepts such as the "dry drunk." A.A.'s spend a lot of time talking to other A.A.s and rarely have to explain what they mean by the slogans and Steps. In talking to non-members, A.A.s need to keep in mind that it takes a lot of meetings before the ideas in the Fellowship really make sense.

In a nutshell, communication is everybody's business in reaching out to the still-suffering alcoholic. If we all strive to understand each other better, we will see each other more clearly and realistically. This cannot help but benefit alcoholics everywhere.

From: "About AA "; a Newsletter for Professionals, published by AA World Services. Spring 1992

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**San Fernando Valley Central Office  
Intergroup Representatives Meeting –January 13, 2003**

*Paul D. Chairperson, - Meeting opened at 7:00pm.*

*Treasurer's Report: see Insert*

*Old Business: Memorial Day Free Picnic will be Monday, May 26, 2003 at Woodley Park – Section 2*

**Birthday's: Myron J. 6 years, Rich F. 3 years, Don D. 8 years, Michael L 1 yr, Michel F. 2 yrs,**

**Susan S. 4 years and Michael F. 14 years.**

**Service Committee information see page 2 of Recovery Times for more information.**

*Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM.*

*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting for December is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.*

*Prepared and submitted by: Sarah Lee G., for Marie B. Recording Secretary*

## **A.A.'s SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE**

There's a lot of alarmed talk lately over the growing intrusion of drug-a-logs and drug-speak from Alcoholics Anonymous podiums, some of it printed in *Hello Central*. It is not unfounded. Many times lately I have been to meetings where the speaker mentioned everything except drinking. A good friend reported that he was stunned when a member of AA stepped up to speak at a recent meeting and apologized-with no note of sarcasm for not having much of a drug story. A while back I was at a meeting where a participant declared, "My drug of choice was marijuana, to which an old-timer barked, "What was your drug of NO choice?" The person speaking didn't understand. Most of us did.

Truly, I don't know many alcoholics under sixty who don't have some (or a lot of) drug experience, and many of them are drug addicts in addition to being alcoholic. I don't happen to be among them, but some of my best friends are. But drug addiction and alcoholism are two distinctly different conditions, the only thing in common being the need to find someone to whom we can relate and trust, who will guide us to forming a conscious, daily relationship with a power that is greater than we are.

There are, too, people who are solely drug addicted who attend our meetings because, as they tell us, AA is the only place they can find long-term recovery-a sobriety that works. They like our enthusiasm, they like our

willingness to change, and they like the results of the way alcoholics are held to working the Twelve Steps. I completely understand their motives for being here and wish them well, but I also believe that they should not participate in our meetings.

If that sounds like a lack of compassion, consider that drug addicts have some place else they can go, whether they like it or not. Alcoholics do not. We need our fellow alcoholics' experience, strength and hope in the recovery from alcoholism, because we understand completely what is at stake for all of us, and we understand completely the thinking that can allow us to rationalize our way into pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. If we are unsure if the person speaking to us gets their relief from bourbon or methamphetamines, then our own sobriety is threatened because our faith in the basic foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous-its primary purpose-will be in question. And I don't have to explain how simple it is for alcoholics to write off help where there is any suspicion of the helper's experience in the matter. Remember the efforts of your hard working but nonalcoholic coach, therapist, spouse or counselor. Remember how they were right to a point, but they just didn't understand.

This is not meant to be a judgment of drug addicts, either (and let's save for another day the discussion of whether or not alcohol is a drug - this is not a semantics issue, it's survival). It's hard to imagine a sober member of AA not

wishing addicts the opportunity to find the same recovery we have found for our disease.

And it is against the traditions of AA to take a stand against anything. We can't "circle the wagons" in our meetings because there are no wagons, and there is no enemy. And believe me, ten years down the line I don't want to be one of the remaining dozen or so "pure" alcoholics in a closed AA meeting. That's not the point here.

I have been invited to participate in Narcotics Anonymous meetings as a speaker but have had to decline, not because I don't want to help but because I think it would be an insult to narcotics addicts to speak to them but not as one of them. My recovery from alcoholism means little to a drug addict, although they may try to empathize. But it will never be the language of the heart as one addict talks to another.

What I suggest, though, is that some of our fellow alcoholics who are also narcotics addicts carry the message of AA-style sobriety into the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous, at least until those who are solely drug addicts can sustain an environment of recovery that is by their own account lacking in their own program. Show them how AA members do the steps. Show them how AA's value commitments. Show them the characteristics of the AA fellowship as carried out in their home groups. A fellow addict

who also happens to be alcoholic would deliver the message. They would be doing a great service to both AA and NA. And it would be a constructive way to resolve what is becoming a big "issue" in Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. It would give us a place to which we could refer narcotics addicts where we know they would get help for their disease. Should they decide that they are also alcoholics, they will know that AA members are not only helpful, but also single-minded in their desire to keep AA "one alcoholic talking to another" about alcoholism. Any other focus is an outside issue that dangerously diminishes our primary purpose.

This is not revolutionary thinking. It is, I think, a reasoned response to the "us-and-them" mentality that is creating an unnecessary atmosphere of paranoia and gossip in AA. I don't want to see anyone isolated or excluded within meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, but I certainly don't want to feel isolated myself by not hearing what I came to hear at a meeting; that is, a solution to living with alcoholism. And just alcoholism.

For the undiluted Alcoholics Anonymous message I was given clearly, directly, and without apology, I am grateful. And still sober. I hope it stays that way for others who come here looking for help with their alcoholism.

Charlie C., Burbank, Ca.

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**Newletter Subscription:** *If you wish to receive your copy of the Recovery Times at your home, please complete this form and return with a check (\$7 donation to cover delivery cost) to:*

*San Fernando Valley Central Office  
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard  
Van Nuys, CA 91405*

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**Current Information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

New

Renewal

Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Moving ???:** *We need your former address as well as your new address to correct our records. Fill out both forms and mail to the address above.*

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**Former Address**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_