

# Recovery

# Times

VOL 27, NO 4 - April 2003

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

## The Steps

*It is April 3, 1979. As I walk up the steps, I am scared, lonely, confused and not sure of what I am doing. Last night I made a decision, picked up the phone and asked for help. The night was no different than thousands of previous nights except I was forced to look at myself, by a friend, differently than I ever had before.*

*After about thirty days I was walking back down the steps. My head was a lot clearer but I was still somewhat scared, confused and afraid. Maybe a little less lonely. Now what? I had developed a little voice in my head that I would listen to from time to time. Now the voice was saying, "It will be alright." These people had suggested I go to AA and get a sponsor plus a lot of other suggestions. I didn't understand these things. All I knew was I didn't want to drink anymore. I had tried to stop drinking on my own and had even made it for nine months at one time and then came that first drink. I was off to the races one more time. I realized my way didn't work. I was ready to listen. I remembered what I previously heard a speaker say one night, "If you did such a great job of running your own life, how did you wind up in a cracker factory like this?" I was ready to have faith in and let other people run my life for awhile.*

*I walked up another set of steps that night and through the doors of the 12th St. Club. I saw a man who I had known, worked with and drank with on occasion over the years but had lost touch with for the past couple of years. Ken smiled at me, got up from his chair, came over and offered me his hand and said, "I wondered how long it was going to take you to get here." I had found home.*

*Today, with the help of my sponsor, other AA friends, another set of steps, and my Higher Power, "We" are doing what I couldn't do for myself.*

Steve K., Springdale, AR

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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April 21, 2003 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,  
5657 Lindley Ave.

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May 5, 2003 **G.S. Districts #11, 16, 17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
11455 Chandler Blvd.  
North Hollywood

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

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May 7, 2003 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet,  
Canoga Park

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May 7, 2003 **SFV Board of Directors**  
7pm, Central Office

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May 10, 2003 **G.S. District #7  
SECONDSATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

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May 12, 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.

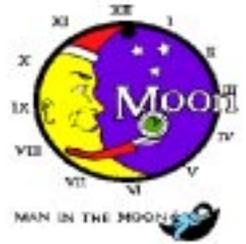
### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Planning and executing all phases of our annual convention, at the Burbank Hilton, Feb, 2004. Committee meets every 3rd Tuesday of each month; 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. First planning meeting April 15, 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!**

MARCH 2003

Mary M.	19 years
Craig M.	18 years
Bonnie H.	12 years
Trish K.	15 years
Greg I	2 years



## A STORY TO LIVE BY

by Ann Wells

My brother-in-law opened the bottom drawer of my sister's bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. "This," he said, "is not a slip. This is lingerie." He discarded the tissue and handed me the slip. It was exquisite; silk, hand-made and trimmed with a cobweb of lace. The price tag with an astronomical figure on it was still attached. "Jan bought this the first time we went to New York, at least 8 or 9 years ago. She never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is the occasion." He took the slip from me and put it on the bed with the other clothes we were taking to the mortician. His hands lingered on the soft material for a moment, then he slammed the drawer shut and turned to me. "Don't ever save anything for a special occasion. Every day you're alive is a special occasion."

I remembered those words through the funeral and the days that followed when I helped him and my niece attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane returning to California from the Midwestern town where my sister's family lives. I thought about all the things that she hadn't seen or heard or done. I thought about the things that she had done without realizing that they were special. I'm still thinking about his words, and they've changed my life.

I'm reading more and dusting less. I'm sitting on the deck and admiring the view without fussing about the weeds in the garden.

I'm spending more time with my family and friends and less time in committee meetings. Whenever possible, life should be a pattern of experience to savor, not endure. I'm trying to recognize these moments now and cherish them.

I'm not "saving" anything; we use our good china and crystal for every special event-such as losing a pound, getting the sink unstopped, the first camellia blossom. I wear my good blazer to

the market if I feel like it. My theory is if I look prosperous, I can shell out \$28.49 for one small bag of groceries without wincing.

I'm not saving my good perfume for special parties; clerks in hardware stores and tellers in banks have noses that function as well as my party-going friends.

"Someday" and "one of these days" are losing their grip on my vocabulary. If it's worth seeing or hearing or doing, I want to see and hear and do it now. I'm not sure what my sister would have done had she known that she wouldn't be here for the tomorrow we all take for granted. It's those little things left undone that would make me angry if I knew that my hours were limited. Angry because I put off seeing good friends whom I was going to get in touch with someday. Angry because I hadn't written certain letters that I intended to write-one of these days. Angry and sorry that I didn't tell my husband and daughter often enough how much I truly love them.

I'm trying very hard not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to our lives. And every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that it is special. Every day, every minute, every breath truly is...a gift from God.

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"Dream as if you'll live forever...  
live as if you'll die today."

*James Dean*

If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of the normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison.

*Alcoholics Anonymous, p 66*

"Yeah, what he said"

*Norbert*

## I Can't Isolate in the Middle of the Room

In this fellowship, I'm pretty sure that I'm not alone in wanting to be alone. I don't know about all alcoholics, but most of the ones I've talked to have, at some time or another, battled isolationism. And many of us drank alone. A lot. So it's odd that we're now in a program that more or less forces us to be with many other people several times a week (if we're lucky).

There are still times when I'd rather Just Be Alone. In little less than a year and a half, I've managed to change from a fall-down, limp-down-the-street, piss-my-pants, puke-in-the-sink drunk into someone who gets involved, who makes and keeps commitments -somebody who can honestly say he's happier than he's ever been. Yet I still need that precious time Alone. Sometimes, even when I could be doing something Program. Is this Old Behavior? To tell the truth, I'm not always sure. I leave my cell phone in the car on weekends while I go play. Does that mean that I don't care, or that I'm not "giving it back"? Shouldn't I want to answer the phone EVERY time it rings? Some of my brothers in the program even put new guys up at their house. And then there's my sponsor. I've never seen him turn down an opportunity to be of service or to be a good example of how this thing works. Damn them for being such a good examples.

It's not that I don't "work the phone" at all. Not only do I want to repay this program for saving my life, I honestly believe it keeps me sober when I help the next guy -whether he stays sober or not. But there are still plenty of times when my instincts are to shut the world out. An hour spent watching the lakers on TV seems more inviting than going to a meeting. And much more comfortable. Don't get me wrong -I still go to the meeting, because my sobriety depends on it. I just don't always like it. Sometimes it seems like I receive conflicting responses from the Big Book and from other members.

It's O.K., for example, to 'recharge my batteries' for a few hours at the beach. But not at the expense of spending time in the fellowship. I should be able to enjoy going to the movies alone. It means I'm comfortable with myself. But I shouldn't forget where too much isolation can take me. These things are all true, but the line between

'quiet meditation time' and 'isolating' gets awful, blurry sometimes.

I know this, though: I'm never truly alone. Even when I avoid humans, I never avoid God. I tried that, and it kept me drunk for a long, long time. And in the end, y'all ain't gonna keep me sober. But a solid relationship with Him will. Right?

The other day, I got the best of both worlds. I occasionally go in to our Central Office on Sunday to be free of distraction and traffic while I work on the newsletter. This Sunday I chose to answer the phones. An answering service usually does this on Sunday. But they're not alcoholics, and I am. And since I was already in the office . . . wouldn't it be Isolating if I didn't at least transfer over the phones and make myself available?

Luckily, God was in the office that day, as he sent me almost a dozen calls over a four-hour stretch, including two 12-step calls that I referred to members of the fellowship. One man, obviously at or near his 'bottom', said that he didn't expect to get to speak with a Real Alcoholic. "I think I would have hung up if it was an answering service," he said after I told him how Sundays usually were. I was able to be of service to several alcoholics while remaining physically alone. Was I actually reaching out? It didn't feel like it. I was just doing the next appropriate thing.

I know I must practice taking contrary action. I just don't always like it. Am I changing? There's no doubt. In the past, there'd be no meetings. Only TV. And darkness. No phones. Only booze. No people. No doubt. Now, there's lots of people, and lots of phones. Heck, I even enjoy the sunlight today. Both kinds.

Do I still isolate? Yes. Is it always bad for me? No, I'm pretty sure it's not. I've always got God with me, wherever I go. Even if I don't answer your call, I always answer His.

Isolation is a big part of my story. I don't know many alcoholics who can't say that. But if I want to stay here and continue to enjoy the gifts sobriety and the fellowship have bestowed upon me, all I have to do is keep saying Yes.

I don't always like saying Yes. I just do it so I can stay. And grow. It sure beats the world I used to live in. You people tell me I won't always feel this way. And I feel so much better already that I'm even starting to believe it.

*Allen C., Ventura*

**San Fernando Valley Central Office  
Intergroup Representatives Meeting –March 10, 2003**

Paul D Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm  
Treasurer's Report; See Insert

Old Business: Memorial Day Free Picnic will be Monday, May 26, 2003 at Woodley Park- section 2

Birthdays Thor G. 12 years, Charlie Z. 11 years

Service Committee information see page 2 of the Recovery Times for more information

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for March is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.

Prepared and submitted by: Marie B Recording Secretary

## IN SPITE OF US

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship designed and administered by a bunch of ex-drunks whose only qualification for membership is that they can't hold their liquor and don't want to learn how. It has no rules, dues or fees, no anything else that any sensible organization seems to require.

At meetings the speaker starts on one subject and winds up talking about something entirely different and concludes by saying he doesn't know anything about the program, except that it works. The groups are always broke yet always seem to have money to carry on. They are always losing members, but seem to grow. They claim AA is a selfish program, but always seem to be doing something for others.

Every group passes laws, rules, edicts, and pronouncements that everyone blithely ignores. Members who disagree with anything are privileged to walk out in a huff, quitting forever, only to return as if nothing happened and greeted accordingly. Nothing is ever planned 24 hours ahead, yet great projects are born and survive magnificently. Nothing in AA is according to Hoyle.

How can it survive?

Perhaps it is because we have learned to live and laugh at ourselves. God made man and He made woman. He made laughter too. Perhaps He is pleased with our disorganized efforts and makes things right no matter who pushes the button. Maybe He is pleased, not with our perfection, but with our sincerity. Maybe He is pleased with our trying to be nobody but ourselves. We don't know how it works but it does and members keep receiving their dividend checks from their AA investments. It is smart to be sober, and it is much easier, my friends, to STAY sober than to GET sober.

**SOMEHOW IT WORKS FOLKS, IN SPITE OF US  
—KEEP COMING BACK!—**

## 2005 International Convention & Travel to Canada

### 70th Anniversary of AA

Most often asked question:

#### ***When and Where?***

Toronto, Ontario, Canada,  
June 30th-July 3rd, 2005.

#### ***What is the theme of Convention?***

The theme is "I Am Responsible."

#### ***Have AA International Conventions been held in Canada before?***

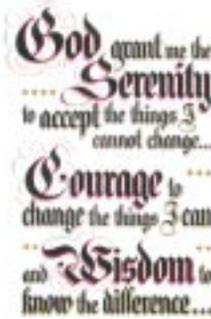
Yes, Toronto (1965), Montreal, (1985).

#### ***Is there information available now?***

Only frequently asked questions information is  
available at this time.

#### ***When will registration and hotel information be available?***

This information will be mailed to all groups in  
August & September of 2004.



*Living one day at a time  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I  
would have it.  
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to  
His will.  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.  
Amen.*

### **A Brief History of the Serenity Prayer**

There is no shortage of theories as to who wrote the Serenity Prayer. Records from Alcoholics Anonymous show that Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, of the Union Theological Seminary, NYC, composed it in 1932 as the ending to a longer prayer. In 1934, Dr. Howard Robbins, the doctor's friend & neighbor, requested permission to use that portion of the longer prayer in a compilation he was building at the time. It was published that year in Dr. Robbins' book of prayers.

In 1939, it came to the attention of an early A.A. member who liked it so much, he brought it to Bill W., the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill & the staff read the prayer & felt that it particularly suited the needs of AA. Cards were printed & passed around. Thus the simple little prayer became an integral part of the AA movement.

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<b>Newletter Subscription:</b> <i>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</i>	<b>Current Information</b>	
	Name _____	
	Address _____	
	City _____ St _____ ZIP _____	
	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution \$ _____	

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<b>Moving ???:</b> <i>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.</i>	<b>Former Address</b>	
	Name _____	
	Address _____	
	City _____ St _____ ZIP _____	