

Recovery

Times

VOL 27, NO 5 - May 2003

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

An Oldtimer Reflects On a Perpetual Gift

When I came into A.A. in the early 70s, I was 31 years old. As a pup, I was very impressed with the people I met who had many years in the program. My sponsor had three years of sobriety and I thought that was forever. As I went to more meetings and met more people I saw there were some people with 16, 18, 22 years in the program. Wow! I knew they made it through tough times and good times and they were still making it. How did I know this? Because they were still going to meetings and sharing - so that we new pigeons could be helped by their experience, strength and hope.

I was even more impressed when I heard of people who were in the program as many years as they drank. I wondered what it would be like to be in the program half my life. I was young enough to be able to see this dream come true if I stuck with the program by following the Steps and Traditions, practicing these principles in all of my affairs, continuing to attend meetings and helping others. I just might make it. Last December I turned 59 and next April I will have 28 years in the program! I know we are not to look ahead and count our sobriety, and I know we take it a day at a time, but I also know I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Why do I share this with you? Because I am very grateful and feel very blessed. I am grateful to all those who went before me, from Bill W. and Dr. Bob onward. I am grateful for all those who shared a part of their lives at meetings so I could learn from them. I hold these people as precious jewels in my life, and I'm grateful I listened to them. You people have taught me how to live comfortably in my own skin and to trust in a Higher Power who loves me and wants the best for me. You have taught me that I fearlessly live this program and keep doing the next right thing, miracles will happen in my life.

Why do I believe in miracles—in this day and age? Because I've witnessed them in the fellowship of A.A. By being a regular at meetings, I've watched growth and change and miracles in the lives of men and women as they came through the door for the first time and kept coming back. I listen to each and every one because I believe God speaks to all of us through all of us. I try to sit where I can see their faces and look into their eyes and watch the process unfold. When I first came in, I just wanted to slow down my drinking and was told A.A. could help. Now I believe this is a God-given program for God's special people. We are all miracles and we are all blessed.

Have I reached a peace beyond all understanding? Have I found joy that equals bliss? Am I at a place where no matter what happens in my life, I feel serenity? When challenges come up, do I have the wisdom to know the difference all the time? No! Not by a long shot! But I do have some of these things most of the time; a far cry from the way it was when I came to A.A.

Today I'm okay with me. When I'm okay with me I realize that people are doing things for me. I've been taught to see what I can change – my attitude towards people, places, things and situations. I watch for the miracles as they happen to me and you. I often tell new people when they come in, "This is a new way of life." It's that simple.

I share this with you because I know our disease is cunning, baffling, powerful and very patient. We are all one drink away from a drunk. I share because I feel responsible. The old-timers were there for me and they helped me by sharing their hurts and joys, their strengths and weaknesses. They helped me know this thing worked for them and could work for me. Now that I'm an old-timer, I pray that I can do the same for others. I don't feel my time in the program is a credit to me but rather a credit to you. And I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Jane M., New Buffalo, MI

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

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

- May 26 1st Annual Central Office Memorial Day
Free Picnic

- June 6-8 Serenity by the Sea
18th Annual Ventura Co. Roundup
Oxnard, CA
Info: Call Tony F., 805-339-0357

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

- June 27-29 Living in the Steps
30th Annual AA Roundup
Lancaster, CA
Info: Peggy O 661-940-0606

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

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- *****
- May 19, 2003 **SFV H&I**
THIRD MONDAY
8PM Business Meeting
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,
5657 Lindley Ave.

- June 2, 2003 **G.S. Districts #11, 16, 17**
FIRST MONDAY
6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood

- June 3, 2003 **G.S. Districts #2**
FIRST TUESDAY
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore,
La Crescenta

- June 4, 2003 **G.S. District #1**
FIRST WEDNESDAY
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet,
Canoga Park

- June 4, 2003 **SFV Board of Directors**
7pm, Central Office

- June 14, 2003 **G.S. District #7**
SECOND SATURDAY
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- June 9, 2003 **SFV Intergroup**
SECOND MONDAY
6:30pm 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. Could always use volunteers, especially young people and Spanish speaking A.A.'s for health fairs and to speak at various schools and businesses. Contact Central Office (818) 988-3001.

HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE -

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.

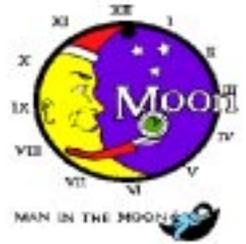
SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

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.



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



Many 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!

APRIL 2003

Alan P.	11 years
Jack L.	22 years
Mike E.	22 years
Bob F.	22 years
Francis C.	25 years
Dulcie S.	25 years
Kerri P.	22 years
Diane S.	21 years
Steve M.	21 years



BILL W. - 1969 U. S. SENATE TESTIMONY

The impact of alcoholism hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Narcotics of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Ninety-first Congress, first session, on Examination of the Impact of Alcoholism, Thursday July 24, 1969. The subcommittee met at 9:30 a.m., pursuant to call in room 4232, New Senate Office Building, Senator Harold E Hughes (chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding. Present: Senators Hughes, Yarborough, Williams, Javits, Dominick, and Bellmon.

Senator Hughes: For the next witness there will be no television. There will be no pictures taken. The next witness is Bill W., cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Audio is fine. You may photograph the Senators or you may photograph Bill W. from the back of the head, if you want to. Bill, you may proceed with your statement, as you desire.

Mr. Bill W: Mr. Chairman, Senators, we of AA, it is already apparent, are going to have reason for great gratitude on account of your invitation to put in an appearance here. For me this is an extremely moving and significant occasion. It may well mark the advent of the new era in this old business of alcoholism.

I think that the activities of this committee and what they may lead to may be a turning point historically. This is splashdown day for Apollo. The impossible is happening. Like my dear friend Marty [M], who has just spoken to you, I share with her the opinion that in this field of alcoholism we are now seeing the beginning of the achievement of the impossible. Because of my appearance here as an AA member, I have to limit myself pretty much to statements about AA. But you must remember that as time passes in these hearings a great many AAs will be testifying as citizens, and they will be far more free to express opinions on the general field and their activities in it than I am.

So I take it that my mission here today will be to acquaint you with the resources that AA may reveal for treatment, for education and so on. I shall start off by taking the dry part of my recital first:

Now, as a little more background for my presentation, let me present just a few figures. Our last census, that is to say, reports of our group sessions, shows that we have 15,000 AA groups throughout the world and an active membership of 285,000. Besides the 285,000, there are hundreds of thousands-maybe 200,000, for all we know, 300,000 recovered AAs on the sidelines, who do not get caught up in the active statistics, people who have remained for the greater part sober, who are carrying AA attitudes and practices and philosophies into the community life. So AA is much more in reality than a generator of mere sobriety, it is returning us to citizenship in the world. Now, then, that breaks down these figures into something like this: groups in the United States, 9,000, active members, 148,000; groups in Canada, 1,500; members in Canada, 21,000; groups overseas, 3,300, membership, 62,000; internationalists, 344. We mean by that, people on ships, largely, who travel from port to port spreading the AA message. We have 648 groups in hospitals, members in hospitals (and this means largely mental institutions), 18,500; and groups in prisons, 33,000. And lone members throughout the world, who correspond with the world headquarters, 522.

[Editor's Note: In the interest of space, we have deleted the portion of the testimony regarding Bill's story.]

Senator Hughes: Bill, I thank you for your bringing us up to date on the beginnings and where you are now. I would like to ask some pointed questions.

No.1: I have never been in a prison institution, I have never been in a mental hospital institution, where there was not an AA group in my years in public life, not only of the inmates, but of people coming in from the outside who were conducting meetings in an effort to help these people recover. This is also true in the case of halfway houses, private treatment centers, and every public treatment center that I know of dealing with the alcoholic where there are Government programs sponsored by State, community, or county divisions. I take from your testimony that as a co-founder of AA you certainly believe that in any program this committee and this Congress might develop, that there would be a place and a willingness for AA members to work in recovery, education, and counseling of the ailing alcoholics, and prevention also?

Continuation of BILL W. - 1969 U. S. SENATE TESTIMONY

Mr. Bill W: I should think so. Of course, this is the pleasure of our friends. But certainly this experience is of great value and in respect of this communication one alcoholic is certainly of unique value.

Senator Hughes: I think what you indicated is what I expected. No. 1, we have available through Alcoholics Anonymous a resource of willing people whom you have indicated have the capabilities of multiplying not 100 percent, but 1,000 percent if they can get to the people.

Mr. Bill W: If we can get to the people.

Senator Hughes: This is the essence of my question. Undoubtedly knowing the organization quite well myself, these people have dedicated themselves to doing the job of calling on alcoholics and assisting in any way they can in their recovery.

Mr. Bill W: Yes. Of course, it ought to be observed at this point that the virtues of AA are not really earned virtues. It is a matter of do or die. Nothing is too good for the next sufferer. So our dedication is first based on the fact that our lives and fortunes have been saved and we want to share this with the next fellow, knowing that it is a part of the maintenance of our own recovery and life or death. So this is the source of the great dedication that you see among the AA.

Senator Javits: I would like to just join the Chair in what he has said and assure you, sir, from what I see here, we will do our utmost to utilize to the fullest these resources which you have so eloquently testified to.

Senator Hughes: Thank you very much, Senator Javits. Senator Yarborough?

Senator Yarborough: Mr. Bill W; I am astonished to learn that AA had it's beginning in 1934 and 1935 and was very small until 1939. Because the escalation was so fast after that, so well known nationally now, that you have an idea this has gone on for generations.

Mr. Bill W: When you consider the enormous ramifications of this disease, we have just scratched the surface. I think we should humbly remember this.

Senator Yarborough: The experience you personally described when this burden fell away from you, I have thought back in my reading, I know of only two other men who have had such a dramatic experience. One was Saul of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus and the other was Sam Houston, the great national hero. Sam Houston, who once was called by the Indians, Big Drunk, became, while he was a U.S. Senator, a temperance lecturer all over the United States. Congratulations on what you have done for so many hundreds of thousands who are in your debt and the millions I believe who will be reached in the not distant future.

Senator Hughes: Bill, I thank you kindly for your willingness to come forward as a cofounder of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and express the basis of its founding, willingness to cooperate, and the hope of people over the last few decades who have found their way through this. The subcommittee and the committee are indebted to you for your willingness to do this. I want to express also the Chair's appreciation to the press for their cooperation in honoring tenets of your institution to retain the anonymity of your members.

Mr. Bill W: I thank them, too, with you.

Senator Hughes: Thank you very much, Bill. The committee will recess until 1:30 p.m.

Credit and thanks goes to AA History Buffs and Nancy O., who was present at the hearing.

HOW DOES "HOW DOES IT WORKS?" WORK

For some of us, it takes quite a while to understand that "How It Works" means how it works. Half listening as it was read at the beginning of every meeting, I missed the meaning. The staccato beat of a nervous reader's effort to read it faster than had ever been done before or a would-be orator's measured delivery put me into a half-sleep. I missed the point completely.

At a Big Book study a month or so later, someone pointed out page 58 and I started reading each word quietly to myself. As time went on, I bought one of those tiny copies of "How It Works" and continued to read along at every meeting. (That handy little card includes the Third and Seventh Step prayers, and I still refer to it even after twenty-two years of sobriety! Back then, it cost ten cents.)

To get back to those early meetings: I noticed the word "rarely." I liked that word. Then there was "thoroughly," another good solid word coming just before "followed our path." I am a writer by profession and enjoy reading. I found the Big Book to be very good reading. After a time, I questioned myself about some of these rather commonplace words. Did I know the meanings as well as I thought I did? Out came the long neglected dictionary; words such as "rigorous," "capacity," "balked," "admitted," "honest" and "suddenly" had very exact definitions. I had been missing the point by just half-reading and, in time, realized this very bad habit of skim reading had become prevalent in almost everything I did in life. In many ways, I had been skimming life.

Continuing to read, listen and look up words, I began asking myself if I was willing to completely give myself to this simple program or was I one of those people constitutionally incapable of being honest? At that point, the answer was: "I don't know!" Was I willing to go to any length to get the peacefulness that some of these A.A. people seemed to have? Reading on, it became apparent that many "old ideas" were pretty firmly entrenched. After all, they had been around for a long time. Another of the many reasons for my landing in A.A. was the exhaustion caused by defending old ideas. They often caused confusion, anger, arguments and separation from people I loved. Would just letting go of those old ideas make life easier? It might be worth trying. I did not have a clue as to how to "let go."

Could the Steps help? Was it necessary to find God before I tried to take the Steps? Reading and listening carefully, day after day, I realized the first two Steps didn't mention God. The word "sanity" was definitely there. That got my attention; "sanity." What was sanity, anyway? "Be restored to sanity..." When had I been sane? I looked up "sanity" and "restore." I began to suspect that looking up words in the dictionary might be the beginning of help to restore me to sanity.

About then, for a better understanding of Step Two, someone mentioned reading the Fourth Chapter, "We Agnostics." It did seem to help. I presumed that everything prior to that chapter would help in understanding Step One. I went back to the Preface and started reading at the beginning. Again, I found exceptional writing. I kept on looking up words.

About that time, someone commented that it isn't required that we take the Steps. They are only suggestions for a program of recovery. Well, that's true, I thought. But, if I have a job and the boss suggests that I clean up the garbage and get rid of it, I had better get busy cleaning up the garbage and toting it out. That is, if I want to keep the job.

By doing the Steps over and over, I have toted a lot of garbage with, probably, a lot more to go. The thing is, I still have the job which is staying sober in A.A. The job is to take the Steps to the best of my ability and to trust that God can and will help me, if I ask. I follow the Steps as they are laid out in the Big Book. On page 60 for example, "Being convinced we were at Step Three ..." is followed by some of the best writing to be found anywhere.

I see the Steps as the work of a master carpenter who put them in perfect order to make it possible for all of us to take them to a higher and higher level of consciousness. I ask God for help. For more than twenty years, this is how "How It Works" has worked for me.

Dolly H., Chicago, IL

**San Fernando Valley Central Office
Intergroup Representatives Meeting –April 14, 2003**

Paul D Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:05 pm
Treasurer's Report; See Insert

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

Birthdays Richard P. 13 yrs. Bob F. 22 yrs. Herb J. 1 yr. Allen S. 13 yrs

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 April is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.

Prepared and submitted by: Marie B Recording Secretary

Believe more deeply. Hold your face up to the Light, even though for the moment you do not see.

As Bill Sees It, page 3

“As sobriety means long life and happiness for the individual, so does unity mean exactly the same thing to our society as a whole. Unified we live; disunited we shall perish.”

As Bill Sees It, page 229

Four Lessons On Life

1. **Never take down a fence until you know why it was put up.**
2. **If you get too far ahead of the army, your soldiers may mistake you for the enemy.**
3. **Don't complain about the bottom rungs of the ladder, they helped you get higher.**
4. **If you want to enjoy the rainbow, be prepared to endure the storms.**

Warren W.

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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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.

Former Address

Name _____

Address _____

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