

# Recovery

# Times

VOL 27, NO 8 - August 2003

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

## Letter to a Newcomer

I think a lot about you from time to time. I think about the battle you are facing every day in your mind. Not wanting to feel that way, maybe not wanting to drink today, but then the pain of living an alcoholic's hell wins. You pick up your bottle and you get some relief ...and then it starts all over again.

I feel for you because I used to drink just like you. I used to fight a battle in my head every waking hour. I never had any peace of mind. I was always in conflict with something or somebody. I never thought I could straighten my life out. Then I came to A.A. and they told me I was right ... I could not straighten my life out. Not by myself, anyway. I was going to need help. Help that a sponsor, I was told, could offer. Help that meetings could offer. Help that seeking a Higher Power of my understanding could offer.

"Okay," I said. I'll take it. What do I have to do?"

The Book said I needed three things: honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. I said, "I do not understand these things. Now what?" I was told it is a simple program so keep it that way in my head.

### Honesty

Your sponsor is someone you can practice being honest with. Tell him the truth, no matter what. It will not hurt you to do that. He knows all about that kind of stuff anyway. Remember, he has been where you are and only wishes recovery for you. He will not hurt you.

### Open-mindedness

Do not fight any of this in your mind. "You must give up all your old ideas or the results will be nil. If you are not open-minded, you cannot dump your old ideas and replace them with new ideas; which as you can see when you look around, are keeping others sober.

We want to keep a lot of our old ideas because we have spent our whole life honing our survival skills and would feel naked and vulnerable if cast aside. We learn to cast aside old ideas with a replacement - faith. Faith that everything will be okay if we do what is suggested of us without question.

### Willingness

Become willing to do this thing, which will probably save your life. Be willing to take actions that you do not yet believe in; actions that will begin to change your reaction a little at a time. Actions that will eventually have you living a new sober life beyond your wildest drunken dreams.

My prayer for you is that you reach a surrender and find what I have found in this program ...someday.

Reprinted with gratitude from *Lifeline*, May 2001

**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

- August 28-31      The Great Outdoor Beaver Meeting  
Beaver, Utah  
Info: Call Dot or Gerry, 818-341-7107  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 5-7            25th Annual Ventura Co. AA Conv.  
Hyatt Westlake Plaza, Westlake Village  
Info: Paula B., (805) 247-0337  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 26-28        17th Annual Gold Country Round-up  
Amador County Fairground  
Plymouth, CA  
Info: Call Damon B., 209-296-8017  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 10-12         11th Annual Spirit of San Francisco  
Ramada Plaza Hotel  
San Francisco, CA  
Info: Call 415-566-3845  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 10-12         52nd So. Cal. AA Convention  
Riverside, CA  
Info: Hotline - (818) 356-1041

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

## SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- \*\*\*\*\*
- Aug. 18, 2003 **SFVH&I**  
**THIRDMONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,  
5657 Lindley Ave.  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 1, 2003 **G.S. Districts #11, 16, 17**  
**FIRSTMONDAY**  
6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 2, 2003 **G.S. Districts #2**  
**FIRSTTUESDAY**  
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore,  
La Crescenta  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 3, 2003 **G.S. District #1**  
**FIRSTWEDNESDAY**  
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet,  
Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 3, 2003 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6 pm, Central Office  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 13, 2003 **G.S. District #7**  
**SECONDSATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Sept. 18, 2003 **SFV Intergroup**  
**SECONDMONDAY**  
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.

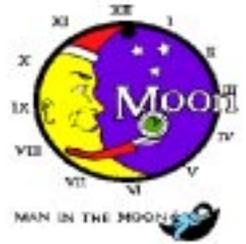
### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

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**



**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!**

JULY 2003

Frank B.	10years
Doug R.	16years
Lana T.	16years
Anna W.	17years
Linda S.	18years
Susan S.	22years
<i>Learning to Live Mens Stag</i>	



## Spiritual Terrorism

### Excerpts from "As Bill Sees It"

My Mind began wandering into places it should not go for someone in recovery. I knew I had to get back on the right positive path. I looked for answers on how to handle the disasters that occurred on September 11th. I was able to use "As Bill Sees It" as a guide on where to look for answers on anger, fear, and faith.

#### **Acceptance: p. 148**

*"When I am feeling depressed, I repeat to myself statements such as these: "Pain is the touchstone of progress" ... "Fear no evil". "This too, shall pass" ... "This experience can be turned to benefit."*

*"These fragments of prayer bring far more than mere comfort. They keep me on the track of right acceptance; they break up my compulsive themes of guilt, depression, rebellion, and pride; and sometimes they endow me with the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Grapevine, March 1962*

#### **Acceptance p. 193**

*"A man who persists in prayer finds himself in possession of great gifts. When he has to deal with hard circumstances, he finds he can face them. He can accept himself and the world around him." Grapevine, June 1958*

#### **Anger p. 309**

*"It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong, too. But are there no exceptions to this rule? What about "justifiable anger"? If somebody cheats us, aren't we entitled to be mad? And shouldn't we be properly angry with self-righteous folks? For us of AA these are very dangerous. We have found that even justified anger ought to be left to those better qualified to handle it." Twelve and Twelve, p. 90*

#### **Fear p. 61**

*"The problem of resolving fear has two aspects. We shall have to try for all the freedom from fear that is possible for us to attain. Then we shall need to find both the courage and the peace to deal constructively with whatever fears remain. Grapevine, January 1962*

#### **Faith/Fear p. 263**

*"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up. Sometimes we had to search persistently, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep within us." Alcoholics Anonymous p. 55*

Dave C., Wilmington, De.

## The A. A. Home Group

"Traditionally, most A.A members through the years have found it important to belong to one group which they call "Home Group". This is the group where they accept responsibilities and try to sustain friendships. And although all A.A members are usually welcome at all groups and feel at home at any of these meetings, the concept of the "Home Group" has still remained the strongest bond between the A.A member and the Fellowship." (from The A.A Service Manual).

With membership comes the right to vote upon issues that might affect the group and might also affect AA as a whole - a process that forms the very corner stone of A.A. service structure. As with all group-conscience matters, each A.A. member has one vote; and this, ideally is voiced through the home group.

Over the years, the very essence of AA strength has remained with the home group, which for many members becomes their extended family. Once isolated by their drinking, they find in the home group a solid, continuing support and also learn first hand, through the group's workings how to place "principles before personalities" in the interest of carrying the AA message.

Talking about her own group, a member says: "Part of my commitment is to show up at my home-group meetings, greet newcomers at the door, and be available to them - not only for them but for me. My fellow group members are the people who know me, listen to me, and steer me straight when I am off in left field. They give me their experience, strength and AA love, enabling me to "pass it on" to the alcoholic who still suffers. From pamphlet, *The AA Group*

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## WE HAVE A CHOICE

I have got to remember that helping others is what keeps me sober may not keep them sober, but so far, up to right now, it works perfectly to keep me sober.

Since I've found sobriety I've been given permission by God to make choices. One of the choices is for me to decide what meetings I want to attend or start up. I hear, at a lot of meetings about how people (mostly newcomers) now have choices not to drink, not me! I used to have a choice not to drink and that's why I kept relapsing. I always made the wrong choices. When I came to realize that I am truly powerless and I have absolutely no choice about getting drunk, no choice whatsoever until my recovery started. It's one of those paradox things. Once I knew that I had no choice to drink, I was given a few choices about life.

It has been about turning my will (choice) over to the care and direction of God that keeps me from thinking that I have a choice to drink or not to drink.

Albert G.

## The Gift of Sobriety

A gift is something given freely by someone or a group to be used and enjoyed for one's benefit. AA offers a gift of sobriety to each of us alcoholics who want it. It needs to be used and taken care of to be of any use or benefit. My old friend, Jim McG. never liked sobriety being called a gift. He felt that people take a gift, say thank you, put it in a closet and never use it. I always disagreed with him. I feel we are lucky to receive a gift and that we should take care of it, appreciate it and use it as it was meant to be used. Take it, use it and thank God for a gift freely given and share it when you can.

I personally take care of my gift of sobriety. I protect it by going to meetings frequently, sharing with others, practicing the twelve steps and twelve traditions of AA, reading the Big book, Daily Reflections, As Bill Sees It, The Language of the Heart and other AA literature. I believe I must share this gift by taking meetings to Detox, to Prisons, Salvation Army, Meadowood, or any place where people cannot get out to hear the message of recovery. I also believe in supporting AA by volunteering for service as Intergroup Representative, General Service Representative and other positions available to help the organization of AA to function and to spread the experience strength and hope of recovery. I also believe in sponsoring newcomers. All these things keep me green and grateful so I will never go out and drink again.

This for me is a very serious program but I always remember Rule #62 on page 149 of the Twelve and Twelve book, (look it up). I always have fun because I'm happy and grateful that I'm not drinking. I "remember the puke", jails, loneliness and despair, and I don't want to go back to those days.

Through sacrifice, trials and inspirations the original old AA members figured out all the things that work. All I have to do to stay sober and happy is to practice them. That is the gift they have passed on to us. Grab it. Use it. Thank God for it. Pass it on!

*Dave K, sobriety date 04/05/82*

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## Freedom from the Bondage of Self

### Freedom From the Bondage of Self

If you want a spirited discussion about freedom, walk into any watering hole at two in the afternoon, pick out the guy like me, working on his fourth drink with lunch who just can't make another sales call today after dealing with that jerk sales manager this morning, pull up a barstool and ask what he thinks about turning your life over to anything or anyone.

Satisfying my needs and wants and subjugating you would bring freedom. It took forty-five years (some in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous) of single-minded pursuit of that freedom - just

trying to get what I thought I needed - before I could acknowledge that I knew nothing of freedom and that I was the problem. I was the slave master and slave. Not she, him, them, that, or even booze. I had to surrender my old ideas - what I thought was my path to freedom.

My sponsor led me through the steps in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. The counselors and therapists said that I needed to work on my self-esteem. My sponsor said that my problem is that all I think about is myself. That when that self-esteem is threatened, I get angry and resentful and those resentments shut me off from the "sunlight of the Spirit" and if I was to know freedom and happiness, it would be in the sunlight of the Spirit. The book said that God could, if sought, remove whatever self-will blocked me.

I've come to know that "new freedom and a new happiness", and the emphasis, now, is on the new. I had no idea on that barstool when I fought and argued to preserve my freedom and identity, that it could be like this. I thank God and you for the only easy life I've ever known.  
Dennis

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## TODAY

There are two days in every week about - which we should not worry, two days which should be kept free from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is Yesterday with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. All the money in the world cannot bring back Yesterday. We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said. Yesterday is gone.

The other day we should not worry about is Tomorrow with its possible adversities, its burdens, its large promise and poor performance. Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control. Tomorrow's sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds- but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in Tomorrow, for it is yet unborn.

This leaves only one day - Today. Any man can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities - Yesterday and Tomorrow - that we break down. It is not the experience of Today that drives men mad - it is remorse or bitterness for something which happened Yesterday and the dread of what Tomorrow may bring.

## It Says - We Made A Decision

We all know AA members who seem to have a devil of a time with the Third Step. The part that reads, “turn our will and our lives over to the care of God” is a bit intimidating, and leaves many of us cold. Some have been heard to say, “Lose control of my will and life? Are you crazy? I’ll end up as road kill, a parkway pizza! And what’s all this about God? I thought we had disposed of that inconvenient little morsel of childhood fable years ago.” I seem to remember hearing words a lot like this coming out of my mouth a time or two in years gone by.

I cannot speak for anybody else, but I know when my words or thoughts ran along these lines, my dance card was filled with what we called the AA Waltz. The dance steps go “one two three, one two three, one two three,” usually with the punctuation, “one two three slip, one two three slide.” Some continue to come to meetings, rent a new sponsor every week, and share the gift of Step None from the podium. You know the type; everything they let go of has claw marks on it, there’s a vein pumping on their forehead like a pinched garden hose, and they leave a radioactive glow when they bolt from the room after a meeting. It made me cringe to remember what it was like to have a head full of AA and a belly full of booze. I can think of no greater misery.

When I got serious about my disease of alcoholism, it was because my back was against the wall; I had no place to turn. And getting serious about my disease, I got serious about my recovery and that means the Steps. That was when, on consulting with other members of the group, my attention was directed to the first three words of the Third Step, “Made a decision.” Heck, I could do that! I’d been making decisions all my life. Scotch or Brandy? Take a trip, or not take a trip? Fess up to my blunders or resign and move to Arizona? Decisions were my forte. That’s all the step was asking for, a simple decision. I’d been trying to surrender completely, when all the step was asking was that I made a decision to do so.

As for this God stuff, Ebby made it clear many years ago when carrying the message to Bill W. We get to choose our own conception of what that word means. If you brought a god along when first you started to walk our path, fine, go ahead and keep Him, if it works for you. If accepting the power of the spirit of the fellowship of AA, or just trusting in the process of the Twelve Steps, work for you, well then stick with that. Whatever you can work as a concept of a Higher Power (some call it God) is a good place to start. Experience has shown that our understanding of this grows as we develop spiritually over time.

Fortunately for me, there are very clear and specific directions on how to do Step Three. They are couched in terms that make them seem to be suggestions, but they are directions, so that’s what I call them. Page 63 in the chapter “How It Works” directs us to think about making sure we are ready before we took this step. Then we said a short prayer, offering up our will and our lives, and asking for increased usefulness to others. Clear, simple directions, but I still need the help of an understanding person or spiritual advisor. In today’s world, such help is readily available for the asking.

Please note: there is not one selfish request in all of Step Three. Even the part where we ask that our difficulties be taken away makes clear the purpose of this is not to make our lives more comfortable or manageable, but that we bear witness to others of God’s power and love in our lives. We are asking to be a good example to those we care about, and if we don’t care about anybody else, we can be a good example to ourselves. It’s a good place to start.

The struggle many people (including me) have had with this step seems a little silly in retrospect: We are not giving to God anything He doesn’t already have. Alcoholism aside, just how much control do we truly have in our jobs, in our homes, on the streets, in the store, or anyplace else? So just what exactly are we deciding to give over to the care of God in this step? Nothing He doesn’t already have. It’s like giving your money over to the care of a trusted banker. You know he will take better care of it in his vaults than you will in your pockets. And you know you can take it back anytime you want, to squander, as you will.

How do we know we’ve decided to let the God of our understanding run the show, that we have completed Step Three? Easy. We find ourselves with pencil and paper in hand, pressing on with Step Four.

*Ed V.*

**San Fernando Valley Central Office  
Intergroup Representatives Meeting – June 9, 2003**

Paul D Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm

Treasurer's Report; See Insert

Old Business:

Birthdays Kieth C 1 year, Julie E 1 years, Dave B 5 years, Bernadette 10 years, Regina 12 years, Jose S 12 years, Doug R. 16 years, Don B 24 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 May is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.

Prepared and submitted by: Marie B Recording Secretary

**Advertisement**

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- Why save your ass at the cost of losing your face?
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San Fernando Valley Central Office  
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard  
Van Nuys, CA 91405

**Current Information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

New                       Renewal  
 Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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