

# Recovery

# Times

VOL 28, NO 2 - February 2004

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

## The Love/Tolerance "Code"

Most will associate Page 84 of the Big Book with the Promises, but in the next paragraph it says, "Love and tolerance of others is our code....".

One night I found myself focused on this and realized that during most times of personal growth I had been practicing love and tolerance of others to the best of my ability.

And when I am having difficulties, it usually boils down to a lack of love and tolerance of others or my self.

Today, I can see the tremendous value of having this "code" in my life.

I find it interesting that this "code" has not gained popularity in A.A., like "one day at a time" or "first things first" or "keep it simple" have.

Even the popular "don't drink, go to meetings, and ask for help" replaced the Big Book's "trust In God, clean house, and help others." But I have never heard the "code" used as a slogan or seen it used as a bumper sticker.

Occasionally I hear "patience and tolerance." Is this what has evolved from the "code"? Was the "code" ever popular in the past? On page 268 of Language of the Heart, *Bill W. writes that during the period of developing the Steps they coined the most potent and meaningful expression — "let us always love the best in others and never fear the worst."*

Recently, someone reprinted the "code" on page 88 of Daily Reflections. Otherwise, its simple principle seems lost.

The repetition of popular slogans and phrases appears to be helpful to most alcoholics in times of distress. Given this new awareness of the "code", I will try to carry (and live) its message to those around me.

By John B. Portland, Me.

*The Sobriety Gazette, San Gabriel Valley Intergroup Assn.*

In This Issue...

\*Upcoming Events

\*Service Committee Schedule

\*Intergroup Minutes Synopsis

\*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

Feb. 6-8, 2004      29th Annual SFV Convention  
 Burbank, CA  
 Info: (818) 734-0383  
<http://www.sfvaaconvention.org>

\*\*\*\*\*

March 5-7,2004      Pacific Region AA Service Assy  
 PRAASA 2004  
 Hyatt Regency Irvine  
 Irvine, CA  
 Info: (714) 839-7742  
<http://www.praasa2004.org>

\*\*\*\*\*

June 17-20, 2004      Desert Pow Wow  
 Esmeralda Resort  
 Indian Wells, CA  
 Info: (760) 360-5529  
<http://www.desertpowwow.com>

\*\*\*\*\*

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

## SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Feb. 16, 2004 **SFVH&I**  
**THIRDMONDAY**  
 8pm Business Meeting  
 Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,  
 5657 Lindley Ave.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 1, 2004 **G.S. Districts #11, 16**  
**FIRSTMONDAY**  
 6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 1, 2004 **G.S. Districts #17**  
**FIRSTMONDAY**  
 6pm, orientation, 6:30pm meeting  
 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 2, 2004 **G.S. Districts #2**  
**FIRSTTUESDAY**  
 6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore,  
 La Crescenta  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 3, 2004 **G.S. District #1**  
**FIRSTWEDNESDAY**  
 6:30pm, 7552 Remmet,  
 Canoga Park  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 3 2004 **SFV Board of Directors**  
 6pm, Central Office  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 13, 2004 **G.S. District #7**  
**SECONDSATURDAY**  
 Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
 Sharon G. (661) 951-0372  
 \*\*\*\*\*

March 8, 2004 **SFV Intergroup**  
**SECONDMONDAY**  
 6:30 pm Orientation  
 7pm Business Meeting  
 St. Innocents Church  
 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana

## 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.

### 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, St. Innocents Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana CA. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

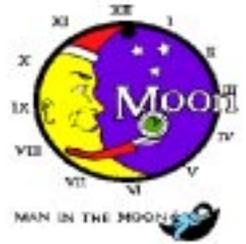
### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2005 Convention. The Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except February and March); 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Convention planning meetings will begin in April, 2004.



# 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.

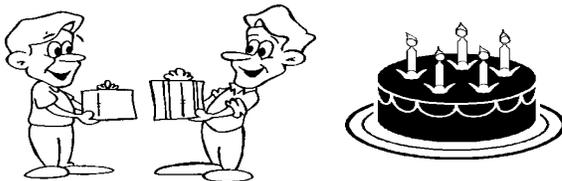
As stated in each issue of the Recovery Times: "RECOVERY TIMES presents the experience and opinions of members of A.A. (and occasionally others) on the subjects bearing on the disease of alcoholism. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication 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 2004

Michael P.	2years
Renita	3years
Dane Paul S.	17years
Lee Y.	27years

Learning to live	
Men's Stag	48years



## *We Have Recovered*

I have a friend in A.A. who, despite several years of sobriety, refers to herself as not quite well yet. I have other friends who refer to themselves as “sick alcoholics,” many of them with several years of sobriety. I question that thought. In fact, more than question it—I refuse to believe it of myself. The very first sentence of the Forward to the First Edition of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous* reads: “*We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.*” It does not say, “*We are sick people trying to get well.*” It says—“*We Have Recovered.*”

### There was Hope

This very first sentence jumped out at me when I first read the Big Book. There was hope. I had thought that I was doomed to a life of depression, disaster, and drunkenness. Yet here was a group of people who had been suffering in the same way that I was suffering. They however, had recovered and were living normal, happy and useful lives. During my first year of sobriety, I did not really work the steps and I began to refer to myself as a sick alcoholic. I was sick during that first year.

### A Precarious Position

The Big Book uses an analogy that compares us to survivors from a shipwreck who have found safety in a lifeboat. I found my self clinging to the side of the lifeboat during the first year. Several people tried to persuade me to make the effort required to climb into the boat. They kept suggesting that I do the Steps. But I refused to listen. After all, I was not drinking and I felt relatively happy. I was told that my position was very precarious, but I just could not or would not understand. When you are clinging to the outside of a lifeboat, all it takes is one good wave....or maybe you just get tired of hanging on.

### Old Depressions Returned

A week after my first AA birthday, I knew I was in terrible danger. The old depression had returned. The sense of worthlessness was back. My future looked bleak and hopeless. The breaking up of a relationship had caused all this. I had two alternatives. I could get drunk, or I could do the Steps. I knew that drinking was no good for me....so I chose to do the Steps, since I knew so many people in AA who had recovered that way. I was surprised how really easy doing the Steps was. Once I had made the decision by doing the Third Step, I was able to complete the others in about one month. That is, I completed them to the best of my ability. Many of the Steps, once taken, require daily work.

### I've Recovered

So, I'm in the lifeboat now. I've recovered. Now the real work begins. For, you see, the lifeboat is just the vehicle that conveys us to shore and we must all work together to reach that shore. But as long as we do and as long as we stay in the boat, we are safe—we have recovered. In the Third Step Prayer, we ask God to “*take away my difficulties, that victory over them might bear witness to those I would help of Thy power. Thy love, and Thy way of life.*” If we say, “*I'm not quite well yet,*” what kind of a witness are we being? If we feel that we are still sick, perhaps we need to re-evaluate our personal program. The program works if you let it. There are too many of us who have recovered through working the program for it to be any other way.

### Get Back to Basics

The next time you find yourself saying, or even thinking, “*I'm not quite well yet,*” get back to basics. Talk to your sponsor, attend more meetings and work the Steps. God and AA can't fail us, be we can fail God and AA by not working our program, by being complacent, and by accepting “half well” as good enough. When we do that, we cheat ourselves.

Reprint from H.A.L.T. Talk, Arkansas Central Office

## Is Service Work For Me?

In the A.A. Service Manual, Bill W. opens by writing, "Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the A.A. fellowship gives: this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society for alcoholics in action. We must carry the message; else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.... Hence, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer."

Strong words ...even for 1951. Yet more meaningful for me today than the first day I put a chair away or made a pot of coffee. There were no thoughts then of "service work," only a desire to be accepted by my group; but the seed had been planted. As time went on, I was asked to set up the room or clean up after the meeting. It helped me to stay dry, one day at a time. I began to follow what the sober people were doing: taking the Steps with a sponsor, becoming secretary or treasurer or a group, sponsoring a newer member, learning about how A.A. works, and just showing up to listen. These actions more than anything else helped change me from dry to sober. It wasn't any good unless I could share and participate. It also scared me to see members with five, ten, even 20 years take their private form of recovery back to drinking or just disappear.

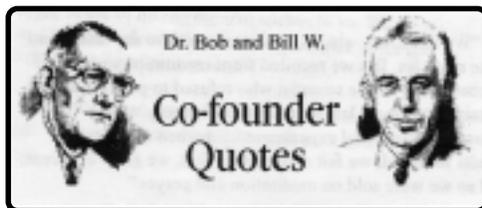
Getting involved at district and area levels was easy. It seemed all you had to do was show up regularly, and new responsibilities were put in front of you. It was a heady time: learning about the A.A. service structure, becoming enmeshed in district and area committee functions, being a part of making A.A. work in Chicago. It was exhilarating, but I was warned of the danger of becoming an ego-driven "A.A. Service Junkie." "What a dichotomy: Keep to yourself — yet drunk. Give it all away — get drunk!"

Thanks to all of your patience, tolerance and understanding, the simple tenets of the A.A. program have given me a solution to this dilemma that seemed so difficult to resolve.

I can't say "service work is not for me." I would get drunk. Neither can I get caught up in what area of service is right for me at any point in time. I have learned that if the motivation is to get something out of it for me, it's wrong. . period. If the motivation is, as Bill W. wrote, ". . . anything whatever that helps us reach a fellow sufferer," it's right. You have taught me that much.

It helps me get things into perspective to relate my service work to a grain of sand. In the greater scheme of things, you can't tell the largest grain of sand from the smallest, but without both, there is no beach. It also helps me to wear the circle and triangle with the point down, reminding me that the group conscience is the base of A.A., with trusted servants elected to serve their needs.

Reprint from: The Voice 2 Newsletter, Greater Atlanta Central Office



In 1950, when I finally sobered up, Dr. Bob told me, "Young man, keep that enthusiasm. That will carry you through." Then I told him, "After hearing you, Bill Wilson, Bill D. and Sister Ignatia, I went out and got drunk." Dr. Bob just laughed and said, "Well, Bill is my sponsor, and I went out and got drunk after he talked to me."

From *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, page 277

The moment Twelfth Step work forms a group, a discovery is made - that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. Realization dawns on each member that he is a small part of a great whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the Fellowship. He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him just be silenced whenever these could damage the group.

It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.

Bill W. from *As Bill Sees It*, page 9

## **13<sup>th</sup> Stepping – Our “Little Secret”**

Much is said but little is written about the practice commonly referred to as 13<sup>th</sup> stepping, which takes place when a more or less seasoned AA member acts out a sexual attraction to a newcomer, often under the guise of lending an AA helping hand. Last year, however, the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County/California Intergroup -Fellowship faced the problem head-on by reprinting an article entitled “A Woman’s Point of View on the 13th Step” from the May/June 1997 issue of “The Road Back,” published by the Dublin, Ireland, General Service Office.

“Throughout my years in AA,” the woman, who we’ll call Mary, says candidly, “I have from time to time heard occasional mention, of the problems of 13<sup>th</sup> stepping and have myself indulged to my own detriment. Unfortunately, the general attitude when this subject is mentioned swings between snickers and acute embarrassment, but the consequences have recently hit close to home in my own group. I believe a completely honest look at this matter is way overdue within the Fellowship.”

As a woman, Mary says, she is “particularly concerned with the effects of 13th stepping upon those of my own sex. The assumption that a woman who does not resist sexual advances, is a willing partner, and therefore no harm is done, is total fallacy. Many women when they first join AA feel a great trust toward the members and often are unable to distinguish between a man who is sincerely helping and one who is just looking for a good time.

“Sure, it takes two to tango and there are many successful marriages within AA, but these aren’t the situations that concern me. I am talking mainly about the newcomer who is reaching out for help and is in a very vulnerable state. I feel it is up to the members of the group to look out for and warn such a woman, who frequently is unaware of the emotional disaster such an encounter can cause and lacks the resources within herself to offer much resistance. This should definitely not be interpreted as her being keen to oblige. She is very sick, just as most of us are when

we first stop drinking.”

Mary points out that the Big Book, on pages 68-70, “deals with the subject of sex quite clearly.” She suggests that members read this carefully and then subject their conduct to this litmus test (page 69): “We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we justifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? Where we are at fault, what should we have done instead? In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life.”

Why does the problem of 13th stepping persist? Corine P. of New York City suggests that for some men, “the old habits of drinking and fancying themselves as Casanovas, rescuing maidens in distress, die hard. They might well benefit from meetings, meditations, sponsorship and Step Ten in particular.”

On a note of optimism, Corine points out that for every 13th stepper in AA, “there are a great many who do the right and sober thing. I remember one instance in which a young newcomer kept following a man in her home group around like a lovesick puppy. Finally he sat her down and gently told her: ‘When you’ve been sober a year or so, perhaps we can consider dating, but not now. The only thing that matters is your sobriety and to keep it, you need to immerse yourself in AA, to the exclusion of anything else that gives you the feeling of a high, but that, like all roller-coaster rides, goes down as well as up.’”

Mike H. of Ventura, CA added: “What people forget is that women, as well as men, engage in 13th stepping - it can be detrimental to the stepper as well as the steppee. When I came into AA, my group was full of newcomers who were very attractive but also very sick. I was lucky enough to have assistance from a fellow in the group who’d been sober for a while. “We stay away from the newcomer women”, he counseled, “not for them, but for our own sobriety.”

*Box 4-5-9, April 2001*

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

Paul D Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm. Sarah G., Incoming Chair presented Paul with a plaque.  
Treasurer's Report; See Insert  
*Service Committee information see page 2 of the Recovery Times for more information*  
Old Business: Reminder of move to new meeting location  
New Business: None

Birthdays Erica G. 8yrs, Dawn H. 8yrs, Rosanne L. 8yrs, Dennis 7 yrs, Jennifer J. 3yrs, Diana V. 10yrs, L. 15yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

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

Next Meeting - January 12, 2004

Prepared and submitted by: Jennifer J. Recording Secretary

### Boogie Through Life

Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.

Pain and suffering is inevitable, but Misery is optional.

A good exercise for the fear is to bend down and help another up.

Life is what you make of it . . . kinda like Play-Doh.

The bubbling brook would lose its song if you removed the rocks.

Happiness comes through doors you didn't even know you left open.

Everything is always okay in the end, if it's not, then it's not the end.

If all my friends jumped off a cliff, I wouldn't jump with them. I'd be at the bottom to catch them.

A girl on the street is pointing up at the sky. "Look, an Angel!" she yells. Passerby laughs, "You fool, that's only a cloud." How wonderful it would be to see Angels where there are only clouds. How sad it would be to see clouds where there are Angels.

Here is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't.

So be happy. Don't let anything burst your balloon! Boogie through life!

**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

#### 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 \_\_\_\_\_