

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 28, NO 5 May 2004

Gratitude: The Language of the Heart

Gratitude is a must for us - not only feeling grateful, but showing we are grateful. But how does one ever show true gratitude for AA? As grateful alcoholics learning to live with a subtle, progressive and lethal disease, we have a fighting chance on a day-to-day, hour-by-hour basis to be of some use to ourselves, our families, and our communities. We may even achieve magnificent and beneficial things.

The grateful AA member learns bit by bit what life is all about. We learn to live without lies, without conning people, and especially without trying to be somebody we're not. In essence, we unlearn all the "skills" we had developed in order to justify our behavior.

Then too, grateful alcoholics attend several meetings a week: to let other know we care, to welcome the newcomer with friendship and understanding, and to pass on the message of how to live without taking a drink.

Grateful AAs know we must give away the priceless gift of sobriety if we are to keep it. The experience of the paradox of giving to receive occurs whenever we involve ourselves at any level in AA service. Some of us have special talents to offer as expressions of our gratitude, but we can all lovingly give away our sobriety in the simple act of sharing. We can also give our attention to others who would - and sometimes desperately need - to share with us.

And finally, grateful alcoholics thank their Higher Power. Many AA members develop a systematic daily spiritual program. They discipline themselves to seek God through prayer and meditation, to achieve an understanding of God. But, if adequate thanks sometimes seem beyond our capabilities, one can simply say, "Thank you for what You have given, for what You have taken away, and for what You have left me."

Reprint from North County Intergroup *Viewpoint*

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

20th Annual Tri-State Round Up

May 14, 15 & 16, 2004

Riverside Resort Hotel & Casino

Laughlin, Nevada

Info: Debbie A. (928) 681-2217, or

www.tristate-roundup.com

Maui-Fest International A.A. Convention

June 2 - 6, 2004

Outrigger Wailea Resort, Wailea, Maui, Hawaii

Info: www.mauifest.org

A.A. Desert Pow Wow

June 17 - 20, 2005

Renaissance Esmerelda Resort, Indian Wells, CA

Info: SherAli J., 760-360-5529, or

www.desertpowwow.com

20th Annual South Bay Roundup

July 1-5, 2004

Torrance Marriott, Torrance, CA

Info: 310-354-7660, or

www.southbayroundup.org

2005 International A.A. Convention

June 30 - July 4, 2005

Toronto, Ont

Registration forms available in August 2004

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

Registration forms for the events above are at the
[Intergroup Meeting](#) or at [Central Office](#)

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- May 17, 2004 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8pm Business Meeting
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,
5657 Lindley Ave.

- June 7, 2004 **G.S. Districts #11, 16
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood

- June 7, 2004 **G.S. Districts #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm, orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- June 1, 2004 **G.S. Districts #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore
La Crescenta

- June 2, 2004 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet
Canoga Park

- June 9, 2004 **SFV Board of Directors**
6pm, Central Office

- June 12, 2004 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- June 14, 2004 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30 pm Orientation
7pm Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Valley Clubhouse Events

Bike N For Books - June 12, 2004, Woodley

Park

Info: Central Office or your InterGroup Rep or

any member of H&I

Stepping Stones 1st Alcathon - June 11, 12

& 13, 2004

Info: Call 661-298-0371

Burbank Group - May 22, June 12, 2004

Saturday Nite 8PM

Guest Panel Speaker Meeting followed by a

dance. Info: Call 818-565-5691

Special Events

CENTRAL OFFICE

2nd Annual

Almost Memorial Day

Almost Free Picnic

Sunday, May 23, 2004

10AM - 3PM

Woodland Park Picnic Area #2

Japanese Gardens Entrance

6350 Woodley Avenue

Tickets - \$1

At Central Office

or

See your Intergroup Rep

Service Opportunities & News

Service Opportunities 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. Innocent's 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.

Central Office News

San Fernando Valley Central Office is On the Web

The SFV Central Office website is now available for Internet browsers. On the website, you can find a map to our office in Van Nuys, a listing of upcoming events in the Valley, service organization information and links to other cool A.A. websites. Our meeting schedule is also accessible on the website. Meetings are listed by day, Sunday through Saturday. Special thanks to Michael F. for his creativity and hard work to make it happen! Check it out: <http://www.sfvaa.com>

Second Annual Almost Memorial Day Almost Free Picnic

Join us for a day of fun and fellowship in the park. See the details on the preceding page, [Special Events](#).

Do you have an article for the Recovery Times?

Email it to us at: sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting March 9, 2004

Sarah G> Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm
Treasurer's Report; See Insert
Service Committee information - see page 2 and 3 of the Recovery Times for more information
Old Business: None
New Business: First vote to change the By-laws was unanimous!

Birthdays Charlie - 12 years, Lisa - 17 years..

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.

Next Meeting -April 12,2004

Prepared and submitted by:Jennifer J. Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

April 2004

Craig M.	8years
Adam C.	13years
Sandra	15years
Tony B.	17years
Anonymous	20years
Jack L.	23years
Mike E.	23years
Bob F.	23years
Learning to Live	
Men's Stag	32years

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.

The Serenity Prayer: So Much AA in So Few Words

For A.A.s everywhere, the beloved Serenity Prayer is a mantra for every conceivable occasion—a cooling breeze on a face flushed with anger, a small song of gratitude for good news, a comforting guide for the bad — and reassurance that the world is unfolding as it is meant to.

A.A. co-founder Bill W. said of the Serenity Prayer, “Never had we seen so much A.A. in so few words.” In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (p. 196), Bill relates that early in 1942 A.A.’s first national secretary, nonalcoholic Ruth Hock, showed him and others in their crowded little New York office a routine New York Herald Tribune obituary that ended with these words:

*God grant us the serenity to accept
the things we cannot change,
courage to change the things we can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Someone suggested printing the quatrain on wallet-size cards for inclusion in office mailings, and thus the Serenity Prayer was on its way to becoming integral to A.A. life. It has since been translated into the many languages spoken by members around the world, aloud at their meetings and soundlessly in their hearts. For more than half a century now, the prayer has become so closely woven into the very fabric of A.A. philosophy that members have difficulty remembering it did not originate within the A.A. experience itself.

Yet despite years of delving by serious researchers and a lot of guesswork by Saturday scholars, the exact origin of the Serenity Prayer remains a mystery. What seems undisputed, though, is the claim of authorship by theologian Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, who told an interviewer that he had written the prayer as a “tag line” to a sermon of his on practical Christianity. But even Dr. Niebuhr admitted to some doubt when he added, “Of course, it may have been spooking around for years, even centuries, but I don’t think so. I honestly do believe that I wrote it myself.” With his permission, the prayer was printed on cards during World War II and distributed to the troops by the U.S.O. By then it had also been reprinted by the National Council of Churches as

well as by Alcoholics Anonymous.

In suggesting that the prayer may have been “spooking around” for centuries, Dr. Niebuhr appears to have been accurate. “No one can tell for sure who first wrote the Serenity Prayer,” Bill W. noted (*ibid.*). “Some say it came from the early Greeks; others think it was from the pen of an anonymous English poet; still others claim it was written by an American Naval officer. . . .” Other attributions have wandered as far afield as ancient Sanskrit texts and into the distinguished company of Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and Spinoza. One A.A. member came across the Roman philosopher Cicero’s *Six Mistakes of Man*, one of which reads: “The tendency to worry about things that cannot be changed or corrected.”

No one has actually found the prayer’s text among the writings of these allegedly original sources. What appears to be really ancient, like the above quote of Cicero’s, are the prayer’s themes of acceptance, courage to change what can be changed, and freely letting go of what is beyond one’s ability to change. Certainly the search for origins of the prayer has been like peeling an onion, sometimes having to start the process all over again. For example, in July 1964 the A.A. Grapevine received a clipping of an article from the Paris Herald Tribune in which the writer reported having seen a tablet in a Koblenz, (West) German, hotel that was inscribed: “God give me the detachment to accept those things I cannot alter; the courage to alter those things I can alter; and the wisdom to distinguish the one thing from the other.”

Here at last seemed concrete evidence—complete with quote, author, date—of the Serenity Prayer’s source. But, no, it failed to stand the test of time. Fifteen years later, in 1979, Peter T. of Berlin told Beth K., then a staff member of the General Service Office, that the first form of the prayer had originated with Boethius, a Roman philosopher (480-524 A.D.) and author of *Consolations of Philosophy*.

Continued on page 5

The Serenity Prayer (cont'd)

There are still more claims, and undoubtedly further "sightings" will continue to be reported for years to come. Meantime a thought expressed by many is that the Serenity Prayer, whatever its ancient or modern origin, seems to have been born out of an ancient perception and a wisdom born of suffering. Except for the Lord's Prayer and the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, no other quotation or concept, at once practical yet spiritual, has been felt in the minds and hearts of so many A.A. members on their journey in sobriety to a new way of living. Bill W. alluded to this phenomenon years ago. In thanking an A.A. friend for a plaque on which the prayer was inscribed, he said, "In creating A.A. the Serenity Prayer has been a most valuable building block—indeed, a cornerstone."

Speaking of mysteries, cornerstones and coincidences, the building that today houses G.S.O. borders on a stretch of Manhattan's 120th Street, between Riverside Drive and Broadway. It is called Reinhold Niebuhr Place.

From Box 4-5-9, December, 2003 ©
Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.,
2003

Progressive Gratitude *Gratitude should go forward,* *rather than backward*

I am very grateful that my Higher Power has given me a second chance to live a worthwhile life. Through Alcoholics Anonymous I have been restored to sanity. The promises are being fulfilled in my life. I am grateful to be free from the slavery of alcohol. I am grateful for peace of mind and the opportunity to grow, but my gratitude should go forward rather than backward. I cannot stay sober on yesterday's meetings or past Twelve Step calls; I need to put my gratitude into action today. Our co-founder said our gratitude can best be shown by carrying the message to others. Without action, my gratitude is just a pleasant emotion. I need to put it into action by working Step Twelve, by carrying the message and practicing the principles in all my affairs. I am grateful for the chance to carry the message today!



Co-founder *Quotes*

A Vision Of The Whole

"Though many of us have had to struggle for sobriety, never yet has this Fellowship had to struggle for lost unity. Consequently, we sometimes take this one great gift for granted. We forget that, should we lose our unity, the millions of alcoholics

who still "do not know" might never get their chance."

Letter, 1949

"We used to be skeptical about large A.A. gatherings, like conventions, thinking they might prove too exhibitionistic. But, on balance, their benefit is huge. While each A.A.'s interest should center principally in those about him and upon his own group, it is both necessary and desirable that we all get a larger vision of the whole.

"The General Service Conference in New York also produces this effect upon those who attend. It is a vision-stretching process."

Letter, 1956

Why Do I Have To Pay?

We have a variety of AA conventions in the Southern California area, including the San Fernando Valley Convention held each February. Each year, we have a limited number of attendees who question why they have to pay a registration fee to attend the convention. The following is reprinted from the registration flyer for the South Bay Roundup.

There are many AA/Al-Anon conferences held around the world. One of the most common misconceptions of these gatherings is that they are AA/Al-Anon meetings, and since, There are no dues or fees for AA/Al-Anon membership..." there should be no fees to attend. Conferences are special events/ not regular meetings. They require months of planning, preparation and money to present. Since this event is held in a hotel, there is a charge for the use of the facilities. Along with the facility charge, the hotel will require that the group purchase coffee and food.

Other expenses include travel and lodging for Roundup speakers, printing of flyers, schedules and programs, postage and supplies. A large event requires a substantial amount of money.

This Roundup is self-supporting. No group monies are used to pay for the event. The cost of the event is paid through the registration. No baskets are passed. The ideal goal for any committee of such an event is to break even; therefore, the registration fee is nominal compared to a weekend's worth of entertainment anywhere else. Attendance is voluntary and as responsible AA/Al-Anon members, we "pay our own way".

A Professional Drunk

I didn't have any trouble admitting that I was as an alcoholic; I had said it for years, but with a sort of grin. I would say, 'I'm more of a professional drunk' because, I didn't go to those meetings. What I didn't want to admit was that, I was not in control of my life, nor any thing else for that matter. My life has always been unmanageable.

But, the time came when I could no longer put the blame on anyone else, nor on my circumstances. No more 'if, ands or buts' when admitting to my faults. I realized the world was not out to get me. The way others acted or thought did not necessarily have anything to do with me. In other words, I wasn't in control of other people, places, or things.

It still amazes me that I lived this way for the better part of my fifty-three years of life. In that time, I never thought that drinking was a problem. Today I can honestly say, without question, that I am an alcoholic. Now, I do go to 12-step meetings and, life has greatly improved.

After changing my attitude, my behavior began to change, then my actions. This affected the outcome of situations and, lessened my troubles. I have investigated my childhood to see how these behaviors got started in the first place. I wanted to understand them and, prevent them from reoccurring. Hearing others speak of similar experiences helps me to know that I am not alone. My hope is that by sharing my story, I can help someone else realize that they don't have to be alone and miserable like I was, and that it is okay not to drink or use today.

Richard L.

A "slipper" and a very sober old-timer were sitting together.

The "slipper" was obviously jumpy. The old-timer asked, "What's the matter?" "I'm in agony," the other replied, "I've been drinking."

"Could have been worse," the old-timer replied.

The "slippers" eyes bugged. "How could it possibly be worse?"

The old-timer replied, "It could have been me."

Every Defective Character

At work I had become increasingly frustrated and upset by people who were making unfair demands on my time and attention. But I couldn't find a way to deal with it. One morning I began my morning prayers and got to the line from the Seventh Step prayer which says "I pray that you remove every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows." Instead, out of my mouth came "I pray that you remove every single defective character who stands in my way."

Hearing my own true thoughts so bluntly announced in this way and in the middle of a prayer, no less! made me suddenly laugh out loud. It relieved all the tension I had allowed to build up inside. This slip of the tongue was a gift from my Higher Power, showing me gently and humorously that my real problem is me.

When I was drinking, I never imagined that it could feel so good to laugh at myself. Now, about two years after that first bungled prayer, I continue to use this as a tool, kind of an inside joke between me and my Higher Power. I like to think that we laugh together over my humanity. It also reminds me that all of those "defective characters" are His children too, and probably not as bad as I make them out to be.

I thank my Higher Power for AA which has given me so many of these moments of feeling "happy, joyous and free."

Reprinted from the *Grapevine*, March 1996

"My slip of the tongue was a gift from my Higher Power, showing me gently and humorously that my real problem is me."

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

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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 _____