

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 28, NO 6 June 2004

Back To Basics

All those self-help awareness books won't change the fact that we 're drunks.

Perhaps it is the nature of the beast, but it's a well-known fact that drunks tend to complicate the hell out of things. Recently, through a series of miracles and incredible strokes of good luck, and with a pile of help from some beautiful people and my Higher Power, I broke all the odds and celebrated my fourth A.A. birthday.

My wife made a cake, and at our small meeting that night, I was asked to chair. I did, and I'd no sooner started talking then I realized what I was saying had nothing to do with A.A. Period.

Recently, I'd gotten into one of those self-help awareness books, all about curing your tush or something, and the meeting I was chairing was straight out of the awareness book. Maybe that would have seemed all right, because perhaps we need to go a step beyond sometimes (although I've since changed my mind and lived straight out of the Big Book)- except for one vital fact.

Sitting down at the other end of the table was a guy named Dick. And Dick, bless him, had a plain, old-fashioned, gut-level, puke-in-the-morning-and-seeing-spiders-and-snakes, bust-up-your-marriage-and-lose-your-job, convulsions-and-screaming-fit drinking problem.

Really, Dick was an alcoholic brand-new to the program, and he obviously could care less whether or not I'd found peace and tranquility through this new method that involved harnessing the cosmic forces inside my central being.

As a matter of fact, Dick was trying to get a cup of coffee to his mouth, and most of it went down his front. But some got in the right place, and then he looked up and saw me staring at him. He smiled.

And I remembered just who the hell I was in the whole lash-up. I wasn't a guru, or some great philosopher looking for the answer to Great Questions.

I was and am a drunk.

Four years ago, I looked just Like Dick. Worse, because I had puked on my sleeve when I came to the first meeting and I didn't get any coffee in the right place.

I'm a drunk. And all the cosmic forces, all the awareness books or self-help gimmicks, all the super-duper-go-gettun-in-the-bushes new and whippy ideas brought out in shiny new packages and books every month can't change us.

I'm a drunk, and I would like to thank Dick for bringing me back to basics. I'd like to thank him for jerking me away from the insanity of thinking I'll be anything but a drunk; thank him for pulling me back to a program that works for me and keeps me alive and functioning. And sober.

But most of all, I'd like to thank Dick for the smile. That's where it's at.

September 1977 GRAPEVINE.

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

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

53rd Southern California Convention

September 24 - 26, 2004

Town & Country Hotel, San Diego, CA

www.aasocal.com

First Santa Clarita Valley A.A. Convention

October 22-24, 2004

College of the Canyons

www.scvaaconvention.com

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

June 21, 2004	SFV H&I THIRD MONDAY 8pm Business Meeting Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm, 5657 Lindley Ave. *****
July 5, 2004	G.S. Districts #11, 16 FIRST MONDAY 6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood *****
July 5, 2004	G.S. Districts #17 FIRST MONDAY 6pm, orientation, 6:30pm meeting 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood *****
July 6, 2004	G.S. Districts #2 FIRST TUESDAY 6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore La Crescenta *****
July 7, 2004	G.S. District #1 FIRST WEDNESDAY 6:30pm, 7552 Remmet Canoga Park *****
July 7, 2004	SFV Board of Directors 6pm, Central Office *****
July 10, 2004	G.S. District #7 SECOND SATURDAY Agua Dulce Woman's Club 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd Sharon G. (661) 951-0372 *****
July 12, 2004	SFV Intergroup SECOND MONDAY 6:30 pm Orientation 7pm Business Meeting St. Innocents Church 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Valley 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 - June 12, 2004

Saturday Nite 8PM

Guest Panel Speaker Meeting followed by a
dance. Info: Call 818-565-5691

Special Events CENTRAL OFFICE

The Central Office Literature
Room will be closed for book
sales on Sunday, July 4 and
Monday, July 5.

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. Check it out: <http://www.sfvaa.org>

Second Annual Almost Memorial Day Almost Free Picnic

Our second annual event was a huge success. Details will be provided in an upcoming newsletter.

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 April 12, 2004 & May 10, 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: Final vote unanimous for By Law changes.

Birthdays Jennifer E. -4yrs, Linda S. -15yrs, Michael S. -16yrs, Heather -5yrs, Herb -2yrs, Richard -14yrs, Alan -14yrs, Anne -1yr, Bob -23yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for April and May are available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting. April minutes are approved, May pending approval

Next Meeting - June 14, 2004

Prepared and submitted by: Jennifer J. Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

May 2004

Katie S.	1 year
Jennifer E.	4 years
Regina S.	13 years
Gus D.	17 years
Michael P.	22 years
Michael L.	22 years
Diane D.	24 years
Stewart D.	24 years
Donna R.	25 years
Dulcie S.	26 years
John C.	31 years
Kathleen H.	35 years

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 Courage To Take The Steps

I've never had a DUI. I've never drunk on the job and I've never been arrested for drinking. I did not drink on a regular basis until I was twenty-three. For these, and many other reasons, I created—in my mind; I was able to convince myself that I was not an alcoholic. I had known that I drank too much, too often, for some time. I knew that someday I would have to cut back, or quite altogether. That 'someday' was always tomorrow, or next week, or next year.

Drinking was not my only source of relief. I preferred smoking marijuana over alcohol, at first, and I had my first drink of wine at Friday night dinner when I was thirteen. I enjoyed the wine, but I did not have an overwhelming urge to have more. I wasn't an alcoholic. I only had a single glass of wine at Friday dinner for several years. I drank heavily for the first time ten years later when my heart was aching over a troubled romantic relationship. I drank to numb my feelings. And I drank regularly for the next twenty-seven years. During that time I had only a couple of black outs, that I know of. Although I drank until I passed out many a night; I always managed to get to my bed. And I would never drink and drive; that would be alcoholic. So, I never lost my car, or wrecked my car. But, I realize now that, that was only because I was an isolated drunk, staying at home and never getting drunk in public.

Towards the last, I used both marijuana and alcohol, daily. For ten years I had remained sober during the month of January, this break was just to prove I was not an alcoholic. One year I abstained from alcohol for eleven and a half months, again looking for proof that I was in control and not an alcoholic. It was a horrible time for me and for the people around me. At the end drinking and drugging, I failed to stay sober for that special month of January. It was then that I admitted to myself that I could no longer control my drinking, nor could I stop drinking on my own. Somewhere, I had crossed the invisible line of self-control, and my life now revolved around my substance abuse. My life was unmanageable, meaningless, and without hope.

I came to Alcoholics Anonymous with considerable reluctance. I had entered a residential recovery program and was required to go to AA meetings. I did not understand how a meeting with other troubled souls was going to help me, but I did as I was told. It took several weeks of daily meetings before I heard 'the message' for the first time. Many times I had listened to, and even read, 'How It Works' from Chapter Five of the Big Book (pg. 60), and never heard that one line that would make it all so clear to me. It was not until someone stood at the podium to share and asked, "Can anyone tell me what 'The Point Is?'" When I heard the answer, I literally fell back in my chair, and a strange sense of relaxation came over my body and mind.

'The Point' of this 'Program of Recovery' is not about not drinking. If it were just about not drinking, I know I would not survive. I was told that to realize 'The Point' in my life I had to get into action: I had to make prayer and meditation part of my life; I had to do The Steps. 'The Point' requires that I live life with certain principles: a (daily) moral inventory; confession of personality defects (to God and to another person), restitution to those harmed (whenever possible); helpfulness to others (by carrying this message to others); a belief in and dependence upon God (as I understand Him). I believe that these actions will make it possible for me to stay sober, and to live a full and meaningful life. And I do not have to be perfect. I need only be willing to grow along spiritual lines, and to live according to His will.

I have one year of sobriety. But, by the grace of God, by working this program of recovery, and with the love and support of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, I remained clean, sober, and relatively serene for the first Holiday Season in thirty-five years. Each day, through prayer and meditation, I renew my willingness to continue to grow along spiritual lines, and to live life as God wills it to be. I believe my happiness will grow as my spirituality grows and my spirituality will grow as I practice the principles of AA in all my affairs.

Monty B., San Diego AA Coordinator

Daily Reprieve

It's easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee - Thy will (not mine) be done." These are the thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will."

Big Book p. 85

The Question of Faith

When we became alcoholics, crushed by self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing... Arrived at this point, we were squarely confronted with the question of faith. We couldn't duck the issue... We were grateful that Reason has brought us so far. But somehow, we couldn't quite step ashore. Perhaps we had been leaning too heavily on Reason that last mile and we did not like to lose our support. That was natural, but let us think a little more closely. Without knowing it, had we not been brought to where we stood by a certain kind of faith?

Big Book p.53

Faces

As I spoke, I looked around the room. More importantly, I looked at the faces of the people in the room and I saw it. I saw the understanding, the empathy, the love. Today I believe I saw my Higher Power for the first time in those faces. While still up at the podium, it hit me - This is what I had been looking for all my life. This was the answer, right here in front of me. I knew the fight was over.

Anonymous



Co-founder Quotes

I see "humility for today" as a safe and secure stance between violent emotional extremes. It is a quiet place where I can keep enough perspective and enough balance to take my small step up the clearly marked road that points toward eternal values.

From "As Bill Sees It", pg. 199

Look Before You Leap

"Wise men and women rightly give a top rating to the virtue of prudence. They know that without this all-important attribute little wisdom is to be had.

"Mere 'looking before we leap' is not enough. If our looking is charged with fear, suspicion, or anger, we had better not have looked or acted at all."

*"We lose the fear of making decisions, great and small, as we realize that should our choice prove wrong we can, if we will, learn from the experience. Should our decision be the right one, we can thank God for giving us the courage and the grace that caused us so to act."
Letters, 1966, "As Bill Sees It", p253*

On Making Your Group Smaller & Smaller

Are you upset because your group is getting so big you don't know anyone any more??? Are you upset because the people who come around these days aren't like the ones you once knew?? Here are a few suggested steps that might prove helpful in arresting a disruptive influence (RAPID GROWTH) in your group.....

1- Never talk to strangers at meetings.

2- Call all newcomers "babies" especially to their face.

3- If a newcomer is getting any help for his drinking problem - whatever it is - knock it! Be firm on this, allow no room for indecision. Tell him all doctors are quacks, that no headshrinker ever sobered anybody up, that all clergymen are thinly disguised prohibitionists. And be sure to tell him that for an alcoholic, all pills except aspirin - regardless of their ingredients - are goof balls and will lead to suicide or maybe something worse.

4- Rely entirely on the slogans. Properly used, they can be a dandy way to shorten discussions. (If a newcomer begins to wonder how, in practice, he can find God, Tell him in a loud voice to "keep it simple).

5- Remember to insist that the honeymoon will soon be over. (Nothing can raise the noise level at coffee time like a couple of starry-eyed newcomers who talk as if they were just hauled back from the gates of hell. Tell them that they had better be ready for things to get tough again. Tell them that even though you're five years sober, you've got lots of troubles).

6- Insist that whatever worked for you will work for anybody. (The fact that it worked for you is all the proof a newcomer really needs. After all, he has no experience at getting sober. If you took the fifth step with a priest in Minnesota, offer to call up long distance and make an appointment for next Monday. And if a newcomer begins to alibi that Minnesota is a thousand miles away, remind him that to get this program, you've got to be willing to go to any lengths).

7- Question all newcomers very closely to make sure they're ready. (Beware of the false bottom. If they haven't been to jail as often as you, or as many hospitals, don't hesitate to suggest that they may not be ready to quit drinking. This is clearly the best way to avoid a lot of wasted Twelfth Step work).

If you apply these seven steps conscientiously, soon your group will become so small and comfortable that you will quite probably be the only member left.

LAST DROP December 1980

Twenty Questions

- 1.) Do you occasionally feel grateful that you are alive and not drinking?
- 2.) Have you awakened in the morning recently and looked forward to getting up and going to work?
- 3.) Have you gone a complete day without drinking or thinking about it?
- 4.) Have you paused in the middle of a busy day and thanked your Higher Power for removing the compulsion to drink?
- 5.) Are you experiencing periods of unexplained serenity?
- 6.) Have you had warm feelings toward another person and wondered if it could be love?
- 7.) Do you sometimes feel good about yourself and wonder if life would be as good if you were not an alcoholic?
- 8.) Do you feel happy for no specific reason?
- 9.) Have you stopped feeling sorry for yourself and decided that recovery in A.A. has made you a better person?
- 10.) Are you able to admit that you may have been wrong and apologize when appropriate?
- 11.) Can you play golf, poker or bridge or pool, bowl, or do a paint job around the house without remembering or wanting a beer?
- 12.) Have you recently - with no ulterior motive - told your spouse or kids that you love them?
- 13.) When you have a problem, have you asked your Higher Power for help and been able to turn it over and go to sleep?
- 14.) Do you have more good days than bad days?
- 15.) Are you able to talk about your feelings in A.A. meetings and not just relate events?
- 16.) Do you like yourself?
- 17.) Do you socialize with other A.A. people?
- 18.) Do you look forward to and enjoy A.A. meetings?
- 19.) Have you had a dream in which you turned down a drink or did not drink because an A.A. friend helped you?
- 20.) Do you thank your Higher Power at the end of each day for helping you stay sober?

If you have answered 'yes' to five or more of these questions, chances are you are a grateful recovering alcoholic. You should keep going to A.A. meetings and trying to practice these principles in all your affairs. If you answered with ten 'yeses', you are showing definite signs of sobriety. Giving fifteen or more 'yes' answers suggests that you may be getting complacent and you should try some beginner's meetings and re-do step one.

Taken from The Grapevine

Newsletter 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 _____