

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 29, NO 5 May 2005

STEP TALK

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

According to Father Martin, an alcoholic priest and respected expert on alcoholism when I was getting sober, the insanity of alcoholism is not the goofy behavior people exhibit when they are drunk. Anyone will act goofy if they ingest enough alcohol. He said the insanity of alcoholism is the alcoholic's persistent return to alcohol in the face of overwhelming evidence that it is destroying his or her life.

There are some in our fellowship who have serious mental problems, but most of us joke around about how "insane" or "crazy" we are when we are really talking about our emotional immaturity, our impulsiveness or our lack of self-discipline – our character defects. Still, I would have a hard time describing many of my thoughts and actions as being sane. There is something about the way I perceive the world around me that has always caused me a great deal of discomfort in simply living life. I have come to believe from what I have read in the Big Book and heard in A.A. meetings that my general discomfort with living has much to do with the way I have so enjoyed the effects of alcohol. I believe my falling short of what we call "well adjusted" is definitely a part of my makeup as an alcoholic, but that alone does not separate me much from the general population. It is my physical as well as my mental response to the chemical alcohol that is insane, and that is really what separates the alcoholic from the nonalcoholic.

There are two problems we alcoholics have with alcohol: the obsession of the mind and the compulsion of the body. Somewhere along the way, we develop an obsession with the idea that alcohol eases our minds and solves our problems. Then, our physical response to alcohol manifests itself in what the Big Book calls an allergy. Our alcoholic bodies digest the chemical alcohol in a way that causes us to crave more. So, our minds tell us it is a good idea to drink, and once we start, our bodies tell us we must drink more. As we all know, that is where the unfortunate cycle begins. What Dr. Silkworth calls the "phenomenon of craving" is so overpowering that all else comes in second place to our primary concern of getting the next drink.

Coming to understand that my mind and my body were both out to destroy me convinced me that I had no choice but to reach out to a Higher Power if I ever hoped to be free of the hold alcohol had on me.

I was taught to ask my Higher Power for sobriety each morning and to thank Him at night for each day sober. That has remained the fundamental focus of my prayer life. I believe it is my Higher Power that has kept me away from the first drink, and I believe it is the Twelve Steps that have enabled me to cope with my peculiar way of thinking, which causes the discomfort that for so long made alcohol such an attractive solution to my problems.

Allen L, Visalia Central News. Tulare CO.

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

21st Tri-State Roundup

May 20-22, 2005
Laughlin, NV
Box 2850, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86405.
E-mail: dodgers1@ctaz.com
Website: www.tristate-roundup.com

A.A. DESERT POW WOW

Esmeralda Resort
Indian Wells, CA
May 26 - 29, 2005
Info: SherAli @ 760-321-6568
http://www.desertpowwow.com

21st ANNUAL, SOUTH BAY ROUNDUP

Torrance, California
May 27 - 30, 2005
TORRANCE MARRIOTT
http://www.southbayroundup.org

15th JUNE LAKE KAMPVENTION

June 17-19, 2005
June Lake, CA
Info: 13951 Wyandotte St., Van Nuys, CA 91405-2540.
Website: www.junelakekampvention.org

2005 INTERNATIONAL A.A. CONVENTION

June 30 - July 3, 2005
Toronto, Ont
Registration forms are now available
http://www.aa.org

Registration forms for the events above
can be obtained at the Intergroup Meeting
or at Central Office

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- May 16, 2005 **SFVH&I
THIRDMONDAY**
8pm Business Meeting
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,
5657 Lindley Ave.

- June 6, 2005 **G.S. Districts #11, 16
FIRSTMONDAY**
6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood

- June 6, 2005 **G.S. Districts #17
FIRSTMONDAY**
6pm, orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- June 7, 2005 **G.S. Districts #2
FIRSTTUESDAY**
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore
La Crescenta

- June 1, 2005 **G.S. District #1
FIRSTWEDNESDAY**
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet
Canoga Park

- June 1, 2005 **SFV Board of Directors**
6pm, Central Office

- June 11, 2005 **G.S. District #7
SECONDSATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- June 13, 2005 **SFV Intergroup
SECONDMONDAY**
6:30 pm Orientation
7pm Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Valley Events

15th ANNUAL BIKE-N-FOR-BOOKS
Woodley Park, Van Nuys
Sat. June 25, 2005

**TO FIND OUT WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON
YOU CAN:**

**COME TO CENTRAL OFFICE
CALL US AT 818-988-3001
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
http://www.sfvaa.org**

Special Events

CENTRAL OFFICE

The almost Memorial Day, almost Free

Central Office Picnic

is scheduled for
Sunday, May 22, 2005 – 11am to 3pm
Woodley Park
(Japanese Garden Entrance)

Tickets are \$2
Speaker at 1:30pm

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. Orientation 6:30pm, Meeting at 7:30pm. 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>

Do you have an article for the Recovery Times?

Email it to us at: [sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sfvaaews@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting April 11, 2004

Richard W. 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: Picnic scheduled for May 22, 2005

New Business: None

Birthdays Suzy - 17 yrs, Tony - 18 yrs, Regina - 13 yrs, Doug - 17 yrs.

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. These minutes are pending approval on May 9, 2005

Next Meeting - May 9, 2005

Prepared and submitted by: Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

May 2005

Chris W.	5 years
Karen A.	6 years
Garey G.	7 years
Bonnie H.	14 years
Frank C.	15 years
Sandra F.	16 years
Greer	17 years
Bob F.	24 years
Jack L.	24 years
Mike E.	24 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.

MENDED

As I sit here recalling my childhood days before I was seven, I remember my parents being happy. We were an Indian family and there was always a lot of laughter in our home, wherever it happened to be. We used to travel all summer by canoe along Lake Winnipegosis. I was never afraid, even when we were in the middle of the lake with a big storm going on. The canoe would rock like crazy but I was never scared because my mom and dad were there.

My parents did not booze. They were hard-working people but they loved music and laughter and jokes. We had an accordion, a guitar and a violin in our home. I remember my dad doing pushups on the floor with my mom sitting on him. My dad was about 180 pounds and my mom must have been at least 250! My dad would beg her to get off but she would just sit there and laugh. My mom was a good cook and she could can anything – berries, meat, fish – and make maple sugar in the spring. We always had lots to eat. We never knew what hunger was.

Then my world came crashing down when I was seven and a half years old. That's when the priest put my brother and me in a boarding school where they broke my spirit and I discovered what hunger was. Stealing and lying became a way to survive. The way I understood their way was to be bad in order to be good. I could never figure that out. It was very confusing. I also picked up that you had to be white to go to heaven. So I used to pray to be white so I could go to heaven too.

Eventually I came home, a broken girl. By then even my mom and dad were not the same. Mom was cranky, always yelling at someone, mostly my dad. She was crippled with arthritis and only now can I understand the kind of pain she was in. Yet there still was no booze in their home, and never was till their dying day.

At the age of seventeen I was raped. Booze came into my life in a big way, bringing with it the seeds of a wrecked marriage and the pain of having to give my sons and daughter away. I ended up on skid row trying to drink myself to death. Then I got pregnant for the fifth time. I decided against abortion, thought of adoption, and in the end kept her. Five years later this child was also taken away from me.

That's when I decided to quit drinking for three months – just to get her back. Besides, I was broken in spirit, body, mind, and soul. AA put me back together and that three months is now fourteen years. I no longer pray to be white. I like me just the way I am. I am proud of my heritage. AA has helped me be the kind of person I always wanted to be.

I have that peace back that I once possessed as a child on Lake Winnipegosis. I feel the Great Spirit's presence and I'm not scared anymore.

Violet G., Edmonton, Alberta (Reprinted with permission of the Grapevine)

Recovery – Step One

If I had been asked to do this 2 or 3 years ago, my experience around Step 1 would have revolved around 3 words: alcohol, alcohol, alcohol. My admission of this step went about as far as the realization that I could not drink safely. No amount of willpower or discipline will make me a safe drinker.

This is a terrific start. However, it is only a start. I have since begun to realize that the scope of my powerlessness includes virtually everything that goes on around me.

What does that mean? It means that what other people say, think and do is completely out of my control. What does THAT mean? That means that even if the people in my life do things that I don't approve of, I can't change their behavior. I can express my opinion, but it isn't up to me what they do.

Additionally, practicing Step 1 means accepting that I have no control over what other people think of me. Whether or not people like me is simply none of my business. As someone once told me, "We aren't in the people-pleasing business anymore; we are in the God-pleasing business."

I'm embarrassed to admit how vexing I find this to be sometimes. There are times when I truly believe that if I look or act a certain way I can guarantee unanimous popularity. I realize, even during my worst moments, that this is about ego and fear. Fortunately, moments like these are now few and far between.

The relief from this insanity starts when I take Step 2.

Mary for The Lifeline

DO YOU KNOW WHAT A D.C.M. IS?

The General Service Office (G.S.O.) in New York hosts a General Service Conference once a year to make decisions that affect A.A. as a whole. This year's theme is "Basics of Our Home Group – Recovery, Unity and Service." Ninety-three general service area delegates will represent you at this conference. They will pass on an "informed group conscience" to the assembly floor, guiding actions that range from producing an informational video introducing A.A. to training academies for correctional personnel to adding to the front matter of the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* as recommended by the 2003 conference.

Your Area 93 delegate, Vicki B., is assigned to the literature committee and has her hands full with this year's workload. Among other things, she will be involved in changes to the third edition of the Spanish language book *Alcohólicos Anónimos* and the English language pamphlets "Too Young" and "The AA Group."

Still don't know what a D.C.M. is? A District Committee Member (D.C.M.), as described in the handbook "The AA Service Manual," is an essential link between the group G.S.R. and the area delegate to the General Service Conference. As leader of the district committee, made up of all G.S.R.s in the district, the D.C.M. is exposed to the group conscience of that district. As a member of the area committee, your D.C.M. is able to pass on the district's thinking to the area delegate and the area committee. (The pamphlet "Your D.C.M.," available from the General Service Office, provides basic information on this service job.)

If you want your voice to be heard in Alcoholics Anonymous you need to talk to your G.S.R. If your group is registered with the New York G.S.O. you should already have a G.S.R. Your group's G.S.R. should already know who I am and how I serve the fellowship. If you don't have a G.S.R., elect one!

If your group meets in North Hollywood, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Sun Valley, Toluca Lake, Universal City or Van Nuys allow me to invite you to one of our district meetings. We meet at 6:30 pm on the first Monday of every month at 5000 Colfax in North Hollywood (corner of Addison); new G.S.R. orientation begins one-half hour earlier at 6:00 pm.

I am committed to bringing your informed group conscience to New York this year via your area delegate. I am your District 17 D.C.M. My Name is Jeff J. and I am an alcoholic!

Regards, Jeff J. dcm17@aaarea93.org



Co-founder Quotes

It was discovered that when one alcoholic had planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person could never be the same again. Following every spree, he would say to himself, "Maybe those A.A.'s were right." After a few such experiences, often before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced.

In the first years, those of us who sobered up in A.A. had been grim and utterly hopeless cases. But then we began to have success with milder alcoholics and even some potential alcoholics. Younger folks appeared. Lots of people turned up who still had jobs, homes, health and even social standing. Of course, it was necessary for these newcomers to hit bottom emotionally. But they did not have to hit every possible bottom in order to admit that they were licked.

STEP TWO

Dr. Bob's last words to Bill Wilson may turn out to be his greatest legacy. Speaking about the A.A. program he said, "Remember, Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple." Step Two is a wonderful place to begin heeding Dr. Bob's sage advice.

As I sat trying to think of some clever way to write about this Step, the old physician's guidance came through once again. "Keep it simple." We know that Dr. Bob sponsored thousands of men and women through the Steps but what we may have forgotten is that he took folks through the Steps pretty darn quickly. By today's standards, we'd call it a crash course. Often within a week, certainly within a month, his new recruits would have been well on their way to completing all twelve Steps. Since he knew it was the all-important spiritual awakening of the Twelfth Step that was going to keep them sober, Dr. Bob wasted little time in guiding them through the other eleven.

If any of us had landed in the alcoholic ward of St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio, back when Dr. Bob was the physician in-charge, I can imagine how he might have introduced us to Step Two. Maybe halfway through our detox, when the fog was barely lifting and the pain of the last drunk still stung deep, he'd stop by the bed and ask, "Now are you ready to try the Steps?"

A quick review of my drinking history along with some honest sharing from the good doctor about his own battles with alcohol would help me understand I could do that! "You're halfway there," he'd say, "that's great! Now just one more question and we'll be done with this Second Step business. This God who you admit might exist, does he have the power to relieve your alcoholism? I'm not saying that he would, mind you, only that if he existed could he do that?"

"Yes, of course," you'd hear me say, "If there's a God, he could certainly do that."

He'd talk about my powerlessness as if it were an allergy. An allergy triggered by the first drink that made me crave more and more and more. "It's really pretty simple," he'd say.

Then he'd start in on the unmanageability part. "If the stuff is causing you all these problems, why haven't you been able to quit and stay quit?" He'd lead me through a short and painful review of my quitting history along with some more honest sharing about all the times he'd tried to quit but had never found a way to stay quit – until now. Out of the fog then, I'd begin to see the pattern of my own alcoholism emerge. When I drank, I got drunk. When I got drunk, I got into more and more trouble. When all the trouble got bad enough and I'd try to quit, then the unmanageability part kicked in. While I might go for a week, a month or even a year without a drink, in the end I'd always get pulled back to the bottle and start the cycle over again.

"Hopeless," is what he'd call it. "If you're anything like me," he'd say, "you're absolutely hopeless — short of a miracle that is; but miracles are what I see happen here every day." And that's when he'd start talking about Step Two.

"It's really very simple," he'd say. "Did I believe, or was I even willing to believe that there might be a God? You don't have to be sure there's a God, you don't have to know it, you just have to admit to the possibility. That's all that's necessary to begin the miracle, just tell me if you believe that God might exist."

"Congratulations," the old man would say, "That's all there is to it. You just took Step Two. There might be a God and he might help you. Really pretty simple, isn't it? I'll see you tomorrow and we'll take Step Three."

Thank you, Dr. Bob. What a simple and precious gift you've left us, and oh how we can complicate it!

WITNESSING MIRACLES

The miracles of the Program, I've witnessed them. New people coming to the Program, bent out of shape, with that washed out and hopeless look. Then see them slowly but surely grasp the A.A. Program and start working the suggested Steps.

I begin seeing a changed person that is very noticeable. First, the physical appearance changes for the better. They carry themselves more upright with a spring in their step. A gleam in the eyes replaces that empty and hopeless look. They care about their appearance and also look better.

Mentally, the foggy mind clears up, they start talking with more purpose and reason. Finding that they have much in common with others around them, they become more sociable.

Many in the beginning have difficulty with the God word. After a period of time, however, you hear them speaking of a God of their understanding. Then the continuing transformation from a compulsively-drinking alcoholic to a sober one with a new direction in life.

It's been said that each of us who is working the A.A. Program successfully is a miracle. By sharing our experience, strength, and hope with new people, we keep the miracle happening.

Just keep passing the principles of the Program on. As for me, I'm looking for the next miracle to take place.

Jerry W., a grateful recovering alcoholic, Chicago

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*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.*

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