

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 29, NO 7 July 2005

THE GOD OF MY UNDERSTANDING

My name is Flint and I am an alcoholic. I like to hear about God. Anyone's God is O.K. I learn a lot from ya'll about the God of my understanding. I also learn a lot from the miracles in my life, before and after AA.

My folks did not express a need for me to go to church as a child and they did not teach me much about a God of anyone's understanding. I went to church with friends a few times. The last service I attended was at about age 11. I was in a Baptist church in Corpus Christi, Texas, with my two younger sisters along with some friends. I experienced a frightening thing. This fella was going on about Jesus jumping into our bodies and stuff. Before the service was over, both my sisters were freaking out and crying. I didn't know what the heck was going on and I was scared out of my wits. My folks later called the parents of these other kids and gave them the riot act. After that, I don't remember being asked to go anywhere like that again. I figured "they" all thought we were heathens. My dad spoke of the Great Spirit once in a while. I wasn't sure what to make of that. Most any time someone brought up any kind of religious or supernatural kind of topic I just avoided it. I spent a lot of time on the beach camping and fishing along the Gulf of Mexico and up the east coast to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. I rode a Coast Guard cutter for two years back and forth between Hawaii and Alaska. I would stand out on the helicopter pad and be amazed at the stars and northern lights. I kind of followed the earth, moon, sun and stars train of thought for a while. There were other times that I lay out under the tropical stars and wondered what this is all about.

Alcohol was what I thought it was about and it was fun in the beginning. I drank regularly from about 9/72 until 12/23/89. I don't think it became my HP until about 1979. Maybe it was sooner. Then there was the supernatural of pot, mushrooms, etc. That was fun, too – for a while. Toward the end that stuff brought more paranoia and fear than anything else. The only time I made any contact with God was during times of desperation; jail, mean hangovers, wives leaving, etc. It was just words with absolutely no understanding of God.

I struggled with doing anything other than meetings the first 13 months of my A.A. life. I, too, used a Group Of Drunks and Good Orderly Direction as a means of God for a while. I figured ya'll had better luck with living than I did. Might as well listen. After I got to know some of you, I found out you were also human and subject to defects. That kind of God could not continue to keep me on track.

I was put out of my "happy" home on 12/23/89. My son was still in diapers; my daughter was four. One day, while waiting to go into my home group, I was whining

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

13th ANNUAL FOOTHILL ROUNDUP

July 29 - 31, 2005
La Canada - Flintridge, CA
Website: www.foothillroundup.org

31st ANNUAL MAADDOG DAZE

August 5 - August 7, 2005
Cathedral City, CA
Info: Chris M. (760) 200-1114
email: maaddog411@aainthedesert.org

54th SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA A.A. CONVENTION

September 30 - October 2, 2005
Riverside, CA
Info: SCAAC Hotline (949) 929-7007
Website: www.aasocal.com

44th ANNUAL HAWAII CONVENTION

October 18 - 25, 2005
Honolulu, HI
Info: (209) 536-1404

2nd ANNUAL SANTA CLARITA VALLEY CONVENTION

October 21 - 23, 2005
Santa Clarita, CA
Website: www.scvaaconvention.com

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

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- July 18, 2005 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8pm Business Meeting
7pm Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- August 1, 2005 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- August 1, 2005 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15pm meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- August 1, 2005 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- August 2, 2005 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- August 3, 2005 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- August 3, 2005 **SFV Board of Directors**
6pm, Central Office

- August 13, 2005 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- August 8, 2005 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30pm Orientation

Valley Events

**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

**Price Increase
for most A.A. books
effective
July 1, 2005.**

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 third Monday of each month 8:00 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. For more information, contact Central Office at 988-3001.

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 7:00pm. 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

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting June 13, 2005

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: None

New Business: Price Increase for most A.A. books effective July 1, 2005.

Birthdays John - 4 yrs, George - 10 yrs, Josh - 14 yrs, Lana - 18 yrs, Don - 36 yrs, A.A. - 70 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for June is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting. These minutes are pending approval on July 11, 2005

Next Meeting - July 11, 2005

Prepared and submitted by: Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

June 2005

George R.	10 years
Paul D.	12 years
Roger P.	16 years
Lana T.	18 years
Tony R.	18 years
Anna W.	19 years
Jeannine T.	23 years
Linda K.	23 years
Learning to Live Men's Stag	350 years
Reseda Speaker Mtg.	

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.

ONE DRINK TOO MANY

It Did Happen To Me

About two years ago, I was in a very difficult situation. Of course, I chose the wrong route with some “friends”. I never thought it would turn out the way it did. But, I guess I definitely thought wrong. Here is what happened:

I was a sophomore in high school, an average “school girl” so to speak. Some people had referred to me as a “goody-goody”. I had met some new friends that year and started hanging out with one of the most popular girls in the school. I would’ve died to be just like her, everyone would’ve. She had blonde hair, bright blue eyes, tall and very thin.

Well, one night, she asked me to go to a party with her and some friends. I accepted the offer without even thinking. I thought, what could possibly go wrong? We made plans for her to pick me up around 8:00pm. That night I went home and okayed it with my parents. Naturally they said, “Yes”, because they trusted me. They had also told me no drugs or alcohol, like usual.

When we arrived at the party, there were a bunch of people there already, even college students. I had never been to a party like this before. There was one thing my friend Karen had failed to inform me about. Everyone there was drinking some type of alcohol and smoking the “herb” as they called it. It didn’t really bother me, just as long as I didn’t do any of it.

I got away with drinking just pop for about an hour or so, but then a bunch of hot college guys approached me. One of them asked, “So where is your beer Amanda?” When I told them I wasn’t going to drink anything they handed me a mixed drink. Now I was hooked on drinking. Now it is Saturday and I have to go home. The guy that I woke up with asked me if I was doing anything tonight, I answered that I had to be home by

midnight. He then invited me to a party for one of his friends. I said yes not thinking about what happened that past night.

I went to the party with Mike, it was just like the party the night before, the “herb” was there and the alcohol was there too. This time I started with just a beer and then I hit the herb a few too many times. I then realized what time it was and I only had three hours left. I went and found Mike and told him. He got me a few more mixed drinks. I then went back to my friends that I met when I first got there. We drank until about 11:30 because I only lived about 30 some miles south of where I was.

We left the party. We were about 15 minutes into our drive home and he passed out at the wheel of his 1998 Honda Civic GT. When I woke up all I saw were bright lights on the ceiling and tons of people in blue were all around me. I looked at one of them and said, “Who are you and where am I?” The lady answered, “I am your mother and you are in the ER in Canton”. I then asked what happened. She answered that Mike had wrecked his car and he is now perished from this earth. We still don’t know what caused the wreck. But we do know that you will not be able to walk again.

Later that month I got out of the hospital. I am still not fully recovered and now I am a senior in high school. As of right now I have to be in a wheel chair for the rest of my life. I get made fun of all the time and it is not easy trying to get a date.

My message to every person who reads this story is “do what is right and always think before you do something dumb.”

Amanda S.

IT'S MY BIRTHDAY

Ten years ago this morning I was sitting at my dining room table writing a letter to my ex-girlfriend, the ENT surgeon who had dumped me a couple of weeks earlier. I was explaining to her that I was going to change my life around, that I was tired of being me. Little did I know just how much this sick, weak, but brave little step was going to change me. I had been up since feeding time, about 3:30, but hadn't touched a drop of the wine.

At 9:00 AM (it was a Tuesday, I had been drunk for about ten days straight) my boss called wanting to know if I was going to be in. No, I said. I had to dry out. I knew when I said it that he would have to fire me, it was company policy. But he didn't, he just asked what I was going to do. I said I was going to A.A. He said to call him every day and let him know how I was doing.

At a little before noon I walked into the Richardson A.A. group in Dallas. Bob S. spotted my bright red face and confused look and offered me his hand to shake and then put a cup of coffee in my still shaking hands. I sat down for the noon meeting and listened. I kept coming back; for the noon, the six and the eight o'clock. After a little more than a week I was able to actually sleep. Miracle of miracles, after sleep my hands stopped shaking. I went back to work. I kept going to meetings.

This morning I'm driving to Seguin to have breakfast with my dad and his child bride. It's a Sunday morning ritual. He'll congratulate me on my ten years. He's been sober since age 61.

Last night I was in San Antonio to see my daughter. She wasn't racing, but was in the pits helping with her husband's racing teams other cars. She's a part of my life these days and it's still strange since she never met me until she was 23.

Tonight I chair the eight o'clock at the Old 24. It's Geff's old meeting, the one that used to be my favorite each week. Geff's strong AA is here, but he is even better in person. Terrible chili, but in spite of that he can carry the message.

My life is fuller and richer than ever before. I owe it to all the program of A.A. and a higher power that I don't understand at all, except that it seems to want me to be clean, sober, happy, joyous and free.

Thanks, everybody

Joe
8/13/85



Co-founder Quotes

Freedom Through Acceptance

We admitted we couldn't lick alcohol with our remaining resources, and so we accepted the further fact that dependence upon a Higher Power (if only our A. A. group) could do this hitherto impossible job. The moment we were able to accept these facts fully, our release from

the alcohol compulsion had begun.

For most of us, this pair of acceptances had required a lot of exertion to achieve. Our whole treasured philosophy of self-sufficiency had to be cast aside. This had not been done with sheer will power; it came instead as the result of developing the willingness to accept these new facts of living.

We neither ran nor fought. But accept we did. And then we began to be free.

Grapevine, 1962

MY "GOD ISSUES"

I started from a place of denying the existence of God in rejection of the stuff I had been taught about God as the child of a fundamentalist minister. I was very much a gotta-see-it-to-believe-it type, except that I had also fooled around with "occult" stuff and become really intrigued at one point with Tarot. In addition, my interest in psychology had led me to the works of Jung, with his ideas about the collective unconscious and archetypes. I remember reading *The Road Less Travelled* for the first time in 1984 and somehow feeling the importance of what Peck was saying, but having to lay the book aside when I came to the part about spirituality because I just couldn't hack it.

When I first saw the 12 steps I cringed every time the word God was used. I was angry and resentful, but I knew that I could not do things alone. I had tried over and over in my life to change myself and it never worked. I had read all kinds of self-help and pop-psychology, and just could never figure out how to put all these good ideas into practice. I guess my first higher power was just my group. With their love and support I could keep coming back, make a mistake, not get thrown out, but just try again.

But that kind of higher power didn't give me much guidance when I needed it. People could give me their input, but I had to know what the right course of action was. I sure would have loved some sort of higher power that chiseled stuff on stone but I didn't have one. I have always been an outdoor person, and the world of nature with its many cycles provided me with a pattern I could relate to: that I was just as much a part of nature as everything else on earth, and that if a

tree could have some sort of organic "knowledge" of what to do in its cells, then perhaps I had something of the sort too. So I began to trust a little that I could reach that source when I needed to, especially by meditation and just being open to it. It seemed to work, and the more it worked, the more I relied on it.

Somewhere along the line, I began to believe that "God" was just a label that people put on various beliefs... and that it was a situation similar to the blind men and the elephant... we all see from a different point of view, and only a part of a whole that is too big to encompass. Very different from the orthodox type of God with which I had been raised, with nothing really in common but the word. But that word was convenient because I got tired of explaining to everyone what my higher power was, and I decided it didn't matter. I know what I mean by God, and that it's probably not exactly the same as what anyone else means by the word, and it doesn't matter. If it works for me, it's right. If it doesn't work—and sometimes it doesn't—then it's time to go exploring again to see what will work. It's the feeling of being in contact that is important to me, more so than what it is that I am actually in contact with. If it is entirely within me, it is still not my ego "Me." It is at a much deeper level.

It may help to look with your heart rather than your mind.

Debi

THE GOD OF MY UNDERSTANDING (cont'd)

about how much I missed my kids and all and my grand sponsor nailed me. He said, "Do you believe in God?" I was stuck. The big question. I can't lie, he will know. I wanted to squirm out of the answer; he would not let me. "Well?..." Thoughts raced through my head. About a thousand a second. Finally I said, "Yes". He bounced right back at me and said, "Then put away the idols of your wife and children that you worship today and ask God to help you with your screwed up life!" Who does he think he is anyway? But the thought rode with me for a few days. I had to put away all the pictures I had around the apartment. Somewhere along here the sunlight of the Spirit started to shine in my face. There is a God, it is not me. That was about 2/91.

The whole process since then is much like I have heard from others in recovery. It is a growing process. I have strong faith during those times I am thinking on it. The fast track catches me and I forget. This heathen joined a Christian church two years ago. The Spirit flows through me today. It does not jump in or on me. I like it. It does not scare the crap out of me like I "thought" it would.

Page 55 in the Big Book has helped me so much:

Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself.

We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.

Thank God for God. And thank you for "listening".

Flint

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*San Fernando Valley Central Office
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard
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