

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 29, NO 9 Sept. 2005

ESKIMO IN THE CARIBBEAN

During a visit to Aruba in 1996, I decided to forgo the typical tourist AA meetings at the resort hotels and seek out a "local" AA meeting. Using the International Directory, I made a few calls and found a meeting at a schoolhouse on the outskirts of Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba.

It was a small meeting, four Arubans and myself. The leader of the meeting, "Humberto," explained that although they normally conduct their meetings in Papiamentu (the native language), tonight's meeting would be in English to accommodate their visitor from the United States. After the customary readings from the Big Book, we went around the room and each person gave a quick summary of "what it was like, what happened and what it's like now." Three of the four Arubans were very new to the program and struggling with sobriety.

Humberto was the last to speak and he related the following story of his introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous:

Several years earlier, a man named "Maarten" traveled from Curacao (a sister island in the Netherlands Antilles) to Aruba and walked the neighborhood streets, going door-to-door asking if any residents had a friend or loved one with alcohol problems. Maarten added that he had a "solution" for the problem that would be discussed at a meeting at the local church on Sunday afternoon. One of the people that Maarten spoke to was Humberto's wife and she decided that Humberto should attend. Humberto told his wife that he saw no need to attend the Sunday meeting but he agreed to go to avoid "the consequences."

At the Sunday meeting, Maarten told the attendees that there was an organization called Alcoholics Anonymous that had developed a "solution" for alcoholism, and that the answer was in the book he had with him. The book was the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous in the English language format. Maarten said that the "solution" could be found in Chapter 5 and he asked if someone would read the first few pages of that chapter. The only person at the meeting who could read English was Humberto and he volunteered to do so.

After the reading, Maarten shared some of his story and closed the meeting with a reminder that the group would meet again the following Sunday. As he was leaving, Humberto thanked Maarten for sharing his story and wished him good luck, noting that he would not be returning the following week since he was not an alcoholic. Maarten suggested otherwise and Humberto stood his ground on the issue. Finally, Maarten said to Humberto: "You don't understand. You have to come back next week. You are the only person who can read the book."

Humberto agreed to return the following Sunday to read Chapter 5 to the group and he continued to do so for another 3 years before admitting that he was an alcoholic.

When I met Humberto in 1995, he had been sober for over 20 years. And it proves that there are Eskimos all over the world, including the Caribbean.

Bob R., Woodland Hills

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

54th SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA A.A. CONVENTION

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

WOMAN TO WOMAN SAN DIEGO

September 30 - October 2, 2005
San Diego, CA
Info: Aileen H. (562) 866-1888
Website: www.womantowomansandiego.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

18th ANNUAL INLAND EMPIRE CONVENTION

October 21 - 23, 2005
San Bernadino, CA
Info: (909) 973-4254
Email: gotorose@adelphia.net

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

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- Sept. 19, 2005 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8pm Business Meeting
7pm Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- Oct. 3, 2005 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- Oct. 3, 2005 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15pm meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- Oct. 3, 2005 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- Oct. 4, 2005 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- Oct. 5, 2005 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- Oct. 5, 2005 **SFV Board of Directors**
6pm, Central Office

- Oct. 8, 2005 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- Oct. 10, 2005 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30 pm Orientation
7pm Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

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>**

Public Information Event

Great Opportunity to be of Service!!!
Join us every 2nd or 3rd Thursday
Afternoon from 1:30pm - 3:30pm for a
Public Information Panel for Parolees
Panel meets in North Hollywood and
needs members of A.A. to help carry the
message to the suffering alcoholic
Call 818-988-3001
For More Information

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 August 8, 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: Need to elect a 2nd alternate

Birthdays Brian - 5 yrs, Julie - 18 yrs

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for
August is available at Central Office or at the Inter-
group Meeting. These minutes are pending approval on
September 12, 2005*

Next Meeting - September 12, 2005

*Prepared and submitted by: Dawn H., Recording
Secretary*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

August 2005

Laurie T.	4 years
Randy H.	8 years
James Francis D.	9 years
Jay B.	10 years
Iris N.	28 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.

A QUIET HATRED

I got sober in the spring of 1999, after a fruitless battle with drugs and alcohol that almost destroyed my life, family, and career. I was blessed with the “kiss of sobriety” the first night in the rehab center, when I got on my knees and asked God to take over my life. After a short stint in detox and aftercare, I started going to AA meetings in my hometown, found a sponsor, and started working the Steps, just as I was directed to do.

My wife was a reluctant witness to my recovery at first, but over time our marriage started to come back together. I had done much damage to both her and our son, including the lying, cheating, stealing, and begging that married alcoholics can relate to. Of course, she had to see action before she began to believe in me again, and I am happy to say that, for the most part, our twelve-year-old marriage is better than it was when we said “I do.”

When I started working my Fourth Step, one of the people I wrote about was my father-in-law. He was a man who was adored by my wife when I met her. He and I seemed to get along fine, but when I asked him for his daughter’s hand in marriage, he surprised us both by saying no. Not because I was a drunk—my alcoholism was well-hidden back then—but because I was black and they were white. He said that he just couldn’t see telling his friends that his daughter was married to a black man, and he did not attend our wedding. This devastated my wife. Everyone else from her side of the family attended our wedding, even my father-in-law’s mother, but he didn’t, and my wife could not forgive him for that.

All communication between the two of them ceased after we got married. I stayed out of it. We didn’t even talk about him. Even as my drinking got worse and when I left home for two years, they never communicated. So, by the time I began working the Steps, they had not spoken to each other for over ten years.

As I was working on my Eighth Step, my sponsor suggested that I write my father-in-law a letter. So I did. I had to think long and hard about what I had done that I had to make amends for, and I prayed to God to show me my part. As I wrote, I began by saying that I was sorry for encouraging my wife not to communicate with him and for harboring ill will toward him. I told him that even though I hadn’t specifically told my wife not to talk to him, I hadn’t specifically said that she could. I realized that she was trying to protect her marriage, and me, and that I was happy she didn’t have a relationship with him. While writing, I began to see how much I had secretly hated him for what he did to her, even though I had done much worse. I asked for his forgiveness and for us to move on from the past and re-start our relationship.

Two weeks later, I received a letter from him. He started by thanking me for sending the nice letter, but he said that he would not accept my apology. He said that I didn’t need to apologize—that he did. He wrote that he was so happy that I had written the letter, that he was wrong for what he had done, and that he would call soon. One week later, he called and talked to my wife for the first time in eleven years. They both cried so much that day, and so did I.

Since that time, my father-in-law has talked with us at least once a month and we are making plans for a visit soon. He even has established a great relationship with my nine-year-old son. He recently talked with my son for over an hour about baseball and has sent him some of his old baseball cards. This from a man my son has never met.

My wife says to me from time to time, “Thank you so much for what you did to bring back my father.” I tell her it’s one of the many gifts of sobriety, and then I call my sponsor and thank him again for telling me to write a letter.

Keith W., Oceanside, CA

WORDS OF WISDOM

Charlie W. hadn't achieved forty-six years of sobriety without developing a strong sense of the Steps and Traditions, and the intuitive thought described in our Promises.

Jack, the newspaper editor in Charlie's small hometown in Oklahoma, had proved himself an enthusiastic—if uninformed—friend and admirer of AA. He kept pressing Charlie to share his years of accumulated wisdom with readers through an interview—anonymously, of course.

Charlie continued to refuse the interview, contending he couldn't speak for AA, or even for his Laid Back Group. But the editor continued to plead until, one day, Charlie relented.

"Here," Charlie said, "is the wisdom I've gathered from forty-six years of active and sober participation in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous."

And he leaned forward with great confidentiality.

"Alcoholics Anonymous, Jack, is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. . . ."

Jack's pen scribbled furiously on his notepad.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking."

The pen flew.

"There are no dues or fees for AA membership, Jack; we are self-supporting through our own contributions."

Jack's jaw was going slack with the wisdom of this man.

"You see, Jack, Alcoholics Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution. It does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

"Our primary purpose, Jack, is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Wow! Away ran Jack with his interview, and, meticulously guarding the anonymity of the old-timer, he ran the interview in full.

AA members read the story in belly-laughing admiration of the adroitness of the old-timer. The general public got a straight-from-the-book definition of what AA is and is not.

And Charlie W. sat back with a quiet prayer of gratitude that his group recited the AA Preamble from memory at the beginning of every meeting.

Ralph M., OK



Co-founder Quotes

THE FOUNDERS

As we grow spiritually, we find that our old attitudes toward our instinctual drives need to undergo drastic revisions. Our demands for emotional security and wealth, for personal prestige and power all have to be

tempered and redirected.

We learn the full satisfaction of these demands cannot be the sole end and aim of our lives. We cannot place the cart before the horse, or we shall be pulled backward into disillusionment. But when we are willing to place spiritual growth first—then and only then do we have a real chance to grow in healthy awareness and mature love.

Bill W.

WRONG TURN

The first question I had about Step Ten was: How soon do I have to admit when I am wrong? “Promptly” seemed so vague. The answer from an AA old-timer was: “How long you been sober?” Annoyed, I asked back: “What has that got to do with it?” The answer was: “The longer you are sober, the shorter the ‘promptly’ gets!”

The next thing I had to learn about Step Ten is that it doesn’t say anything about being “sorry.” When I was drinking I had a constant stream of “Sorrlys.” Now that I have been free of the booze for a few thousand days, I rarely have to say I’m sorry, but I often have to say that I was wrong. There is a big difference.

I’ve been taught that if I say “I’m sorry” and then leave it like that, it means that I am leaving a lot unsaid that should be said. I am really asking for forgiveness or some sort of “general absolution.” But that’s not what this alcoholic usually needs.

What I need to say is how I was wrong and where I went wrong (thinking of the exact nature of my wrongs, Step Five). And, thinking of Step Nine, how I was going to make it up to the person or set things right. What are my amends here? No empty promises of “I’ll never do it again!” No begging for forgiveness. An amends makes me work to put things back to the way they were before my wrong was committed.

To say I was wrong is also part of that AA medicine of ego deflation at depth. I’m not sorry because you are hurt but rather I am admitting that I am wrong because I did something to harm you. Big difference in my book!

I have spent time figuring out what exactly I was wrong about, and I have spent time figuring out a proposal of how I am going to straighten things out, since that too is my responsibility and not yours. But I am going to confer with you about this and not impose my solution on you. I may offer several options for you to choose from. I am going to continue a radically honest (but calm and tactful) dialog with you in whatever way is appropriate.

Another thing I had to learn about this Step was that it means that I only take responsibility for when I was actually wrong. If I wasn’t wrong on one part but was wrong on another, I say so. I cop it sweet for the parts that I was wrong about but not for the rest of it.

For instance, I often have to say something like: “Son, I want to tell you that I was way out of line by raising my voice and yelling at you like that. It was wrong of me to do it in a public place and in front of your friends because that is not only embarrassing but also rude and insensitive. In the future I propose to take you aside or wait until we are away from your mates. I will work on getting my volume and impulsive anger under control. Can you help me by telling me that I am yelling or that I am embarrassing you if I forget? On the other hand, I believe that what I said was correct. What you were doing was risky and a bit dangerous. I stand by my statement but was wrong to yell and embarrass you. I’ll make it up to you by. . .”

Lastly, I’ve been taught that this Step contains the most important word out of the 200 (count ‘em) words in all of the Steps. That word is “continued.” Makes a nice word to meditate upon.

Chuck F., Canberra

CARTOONS FROM THE GRAPEVINE



"I told my sponsor the problem with instant gratification, is that it takes too long."



My sponsor says that sitting in a bar and asking myself not to drink is like sneaking sunup past a rooster.

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 _____