

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 30, NO. 2 FEB. 2006

Honor Not Me - Honor AA and My Anonymity

Part II - Continued From Last Month

Bill tried hard to maintain a delicate balance between the spiritual need to preserve the vital Tradition of anonymity in AA and the practical impulse to bring AA to the attention of struggling alcoholics. In that respect, Bill sent a thoughtful letter to AA members of the Southwest in 1960 in which he reviewed the policy that had evolved in respect of honors and anonymity. The letter was prompted by an honor for AA from Vermont University. In that regard, this is what he wrote:

“It seems only right to say that my record respecting public honors is so far very much on the conservative side. . . . I had turned down five honorary degrees, one of them a doctorate of law at Yale University, on the ground that such degrees violate the spirit of the Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous. In each and every one of these cases, it was promised that my full name and picture would never appear in the newspapers. In each of these cases I could have been technically within the Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous. Yet, as example for the future, and in concern lest I violate the spirit of the AA Tradition, I have declined honors that temporarily might have helped Alcoholics Anonymous. . . .

“Now the Vermont event does have this difference—a difference in degree. In this case it happens that Dr. Bob and I were born and spent our early youth in Vermont. Therefore there is a little bit of favorite-son flavor in this situation. But please be assured that every precaution against pictures or full names has been taken—that the citation, which I have seen, bears heavily on the merits of Alcoholics Anonymous and does not dilate on the merits of its founders, that the publicity in the newspapers will stress the point that I, as a co-founder, am not taking the citation in order to protect the spirit of anonymity—and the like. Excepting therefore for this slight tinge of the favorite son idea in the proceedings, this affair should be on all fours with the Lasker situation, for which we have experience and precedent and no objections in AA at all. Therefore I can say that I have taken this thing on as a help to Alcoholics Anonymous—and I surely trust it will turn out that way. . . .”

In 1960, the Governor of the State of Vermont officially proclaimed the period of October 16—22 of that year, as a week to be dedicated to the observance of the 25th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous. The proclamation noted that the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous were native Vermonters and recognized “the tremendous contributions made by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous towards the rehabilitation of countless thousands of alcoholics throughout the world.” Bill and Dr. Bob, though recognized as co-founders of AA, were not identified by their full names.

Though AA continued to be honored over the years, Bill consistently refused recognition for himself. In 1951, Bill received a letter from the publishers of Who's Who in America explaining why he should be listed in Who's Who.

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

PRAASA 2006

(Pacific Region AA Service Assembly)
March 3 - 5, 2006
Woodland Hills, CA
Website: <http://www.praasa.org>

22nd ANNUAL HIGH DESERT CONVENTION

March 10 - 12, 2006
Victorville, CA
Info: (760) 961-1491
Website: www.highdesertconvention.org

29th ANNUAL SAN DIEGO SPRING ROUNDUP CONVENTION

April 13 - 16, 2006
San Diego, CA
Info: (619) 992-6333
Email: SDSRUregistration@hotmail.com
Website: www.sandiegospringroundup.com

A.A. DESERT POWWOW

June 15 - 18, 2006
Indian Wells, CA
Info: SherAli J. (760) 321-6568
Website: <http://www.desertpowwow.com>

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

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>**

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- Feb. 20, 2006 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7pm Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- Mar. 6, 2006 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- Mar. 6, 2006 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15pm meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- Mar. 6, 2006 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6pm new GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- Mar. 7, 2006 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- Mar. 1, 2006 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- Mar. 8, 2006 **SFV Board of Directors**
6pm, Central Office

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

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

Opportunities for Service:

**Your Central Office needs telephone volunteers for the Late Evening
(9 PM - 12 Midnight) shift and the Overnight (12 midnight - 9 AM) shift.
If you have one year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up to do
a shift (from your home!) once per month and help your fellow alcoholics.**

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 January 9, 2006

Michael F. 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: None

*Birthdays: Laura - 6 yrs, Erica - 1 yr, Michelle - 1yr,
Michael - 17 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for
January is available at Central Office or at the
Intergroup Meeting.*

*These minutes are pending approval on
February 13, 2006*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! December 2005

Laura B. 6 years

Brian M. 15 years

Reseda Spkr Group

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.

Honor Not Me - Honor AA and My Anonymity (cont'd)

Bill wrote back:

“. . .Alcoholics Anonymous does not publicize its leadership by name, picture or extensive personal description. This tradition, strictly binding on me, enjoins us to place principles before personalities. Such is the scope and reach of our anonymity. To us it has immense spiritual significance, it is probably the greatest protective device against exploitation and big-shotism that AA will ever have.”

In reply, Who's Who persisted with the following suggestion: “. . . would you object to supplying the data . . . from which a sketch about Bill Wilson, investment banker, could be written, which sketch would contain no mention whatsoever of AA?” Bill put the matter to rest with this response: “While I appreciate the alternatives your editors suggested, I doubt it would be practical. . . . Pre-AA, my career was anything but distinguished. . . . I doubt Who's Who would care to publish such an ordinary and melancholy tale as this.”

Time magazine informed Bill in 1959, through an intermediary, that it was considering a lead article about him and AA in its medical section. Bill replied with much gratitude for Time's interest in AA and then wrote:

“Because of AA's principle of anonymity at the public level—the most important tradition we have—I could not, as a co-founder, be the subject of very much biographical writing. The article would therefore need to be mainly a view of Alcoholics Anonymous, rather than a profile of me—something that I hope may be achieved as an interesting exception to the usual custom. . . . To act fully in the spirit of anonymity, I would surely have to reject the creation of any marked image of myself, whatever the immediate benefits to AA might be. Let me try to make this a bit clearer:

“AA's anonymity has a three-fold purpose:

1. (1) It makes new people more willing to approach us.
2. (2) It prevents over-eager members from becoming AA public figures, with the object of them using the AA name to secure publicity and raise money for other enterprises.
3. (3) From a spiritual point of view, it manifests the complete willingness of each of us to abandon—in the vital interest of AA as a whole—the reckless pursuit of prestige and power which once wrecked so many of our lives and which so menacingly characterizes the world around us today. Nor do we dare meet the prestige temptation naked—hence, anonymity before the general public, in letter and spirit.

“Therefore it follows that anonymity requires that none of us accepts public honors or public acclaim for AA work, even though we stay technically within the minimum requirement of ‘no names, no pictures.’

“With some reluctance I have been obliged through the years to decline every offer of a biography or a motion picture in which I would be the principal figure. Likewise this has been true of several honorary degrees, one of them a doctor of laws generously offered to me by a great university.

“These acts were never for reasons of excess modesty. I have steadfastly taken this course to afford AAs of the future the best possible example, an example that can protect them against new generations of power-driving members, people who will assuredly be just like me in this respect. In our estimate, no principle can do more to insure the future unity and sensitivity of Alcoholics Anonymous than this one.”

In 1959, a friend of Bill and Lois asked whether she, the friend, might initiate an effort to confer the Nobel Prize on Bill. In response, Bill identified the following problems:

1. No money could be taken by the recipient of the prize.

While he, Bill, could accept the award on behalf of AA, the citation could not run to him personally.

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Honor Not Me - Honor AA and My Anonymity (cont'd)

2. Bill and Dr. Bob had agreed that neither of them ought to accept public honors for AA work—even though, technically speaking, the AA principle of anonymity at the public level was observed.
3. Bill concluded by saying that he had always hoped the Nobel trustees might see fit to cite AA, rather than him. But he thought they would likely take the same stand as Yale, i.e., that an honor couldn't be give to a whole society.

On January 26, 1971, the New York Times reported Bill's death in an obituary which provided a detailed account of Bill and AA together with a picture of Bill.

The Times wrote:

"William Griffith Wilson [who] died late Sunday night [January 24, 1971]. . .was revealed to have been the Bill W. who was a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous."

"Mr. Wilson gave permission to break his AA anonymity upon his death in a signed statement in 1966. The role of Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith as the other founder was disclosed publicly when the Akron, Ohio surgeon died. . .in 1950 after 15 years of uninterrupted sobriety."

"In fathering the doctrine that members should not reveal their AA affiliation at the public level, Bill W. had explained that 'anonymity isn't just something to save us from alcoholism shame and stigma; its deeper purpose is to keep those fool egos of ours from running hog wild after money and fame at AA's expense.'"

In 1999, Time magazine named the 100 most influential persons of the Twentieth century. Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, was one of them. Time called Bill W., "the healer" and said of him: . . . "He turned down many honors, including a degree from Yale. And he declined this magazine's offer to put him on the cover—even with his back turned."

Bill and Lois are buried next to each other under plain stone markers in a modest cemetery in the small village of East Dorset, Vermont. One reads "William G. Wilson, 1895—1971." The other, "Lois B. Wilson 1891—1988." No mention is made of Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon.

Mike Alexander



Co-founder Quotes

A Viewer-With-Alarm

"I went through several fruitless years in a state called "viewing with alarm for the good of the movement." I thought it was up to me to be always "correcting conditions." Seldom had anybody been able to tell me what I ought to do, and nobody had ever succeeded in effectively telling me what I must do. I had to learn the hard way out of my own experience.

When setting out to "check" others, I found myself often motivated by fear of what they were doing, self-rightousness, and even downright intolerance. Consequently, I seldom succeeded in correcting anything. I just raised barriers of resentment that cut off any suggestion, example, understanding or love.

A.A.'s often say, "Our leaders do not drive by mandate; they lead by example." If we would favorably affect others, we ourselves need to practice what we preach - and forget the "preaching" too. The quiet good example speaks for itself.

I OUGHT TO GO TO THAT MEETING

I sat at the kitchen table, idly thumbing through a mail-order catalog. This was the day I was supposed to have gone into the hospital for a brain scan, but my test had been postponed for two weeks. I had spent a lousy weekend trying to get in touch with my doctor to tell him how psychologically damaging this delay was to me. After all, alcoholics should be awarded special privileges for all they went through to get sober. I really deserved a medal of honor for my great accomplishment and most certainly deserved preferential treatment!

I glanced at the clock. It was 1:10 PM, and my favorite AA meeting began at 1:30. The weather was turning cold, and it was beginning to rain. As I sat there in my robe feeling sorry for myself, I thought, "I ought to go to that meeting! No, it's too nasty outside, and I won't get there on time." For ten more minutes, I sat there, letting "go, don't go" pass through my mind.

Finally, I couldn't stand my own company any longer. I dashed upstairs, jumped into my slacks and sweater, and drove across town, wondering why I wasn't staying at home being "good to myself." After all, I had every excuse to curl up in bed and contemplate my resentments at my doctor, the hospital, and the fact that I had one more crisis to face.

As I walked in the door and glanced around the table, I saw welcoming smiles on the faces of the people who had nursed me back to health over these past two years. I fixed my cup of coffee and sat down to listen. The topic was support systems. In turn, all the people around the table were expressing how the AA program, the love of the members, and the grace of God not only had supported them through their difficult times, but continually offered encouragement to them in their struggle for change in the midst of extremely trying circumstances.

As my turn approached, I began to be flooded by gratitude to these faithful people who had kept this wonderful program alive in their lives. I heard them praising God for the program and its support as they struggled through their daily battles. Tears began to well up in my eyes as I realized how lucky I was to be there. I could have been alone in a hospital; instead, I was surrounded by loving, concerned people who had genuinely missed me and were glad that I had come. I thought of the miracles God had wrought in my own life and in my husband's life, bringing us into a relationship we could never have experienced if we hadn't come to depend on Him and begun to learn to practice the principles of AA in all our affairs.

It was God that nudged me to this meeting, and it was God that spoke to me personally in the honest sharing of each person there. I left with a cleansed spirit and gratitude to be again among AAs. I realized God and these wonderful people wished above all things that I might prosper and be in health. Again, as I have done so many times before in the protective, loving surroundings of an AA meeting, I rededicated myself to my Higher Power and my commitment to live the program of Alcoholics Anonymous one day at a time.

J. S.
Dallas, Texas

BOOZE WAS MY HIGHER POWER

Many of us in AA think we've never been religious people. In fact, a lot of newcomers to AA seem to suffer from extreme fear of religion. The "God talk" in the meetings makes them uncomfortable, and only the calm assurance of older members that "AA is not a religion" sets their fears at rest. Many of us struggle with the notion of a higher power for a long time after we come in.

But I think that in reality none of us are strangers to religion or to a Higher Power. At least, that's how it was in my case, because active alcoholism was to all intents and purposes my religion for many years. Booze was my higher power; my drinking habits, with all the trappings of religious observance, were perverse parodies of healthy religious practice.

I served, loved, and trusted Booze with all my heart, soul, mind, and body. I adored Booze above family and friends. I claimed with my lips to honor the god of my fathers, but with my life I worshiped Booze. It was to Booze I turned in my hour of darkness and despair. Drinking was for me like some diabolical sacramental rite, communion with the spirits. The ads, signs, and labels associated with the merchandising of alcoholic beverages were like religious symbols: they made me ever mindful of my deity. I was even a missionary for Booze, and I was well on my way to becoming a martyr for the cause. I was a religious fanatic—nothing stood in the way of my devotion to Booze. If I'd claimed when I came into AA that I had no need for a Higher Power or a religion, I would have been a liar! I had long been a devotee of the cult of Booze.

AA isn't a religion, but AA is certainly not antireligious. AA helped me turn from my false god Booze to serve the loving God who is my Higher Power. Having had the doors of faith opened for me by continuing regularly in AA, I've been able to return to my childhood religion with a totally renewed approach: for me now, AA and my religion are like the two key parts in the puzzle of life: they fit together.

Ike R.
Clinton, New Jersey

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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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