

# Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 30, NO. 4 April 2006

## We Set Them On Paper

### Step Four: 'Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves'

"In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper." That simple sentence in chapter five of the Big Book slowed my reading one evening as I sat with a blank pad in front of me, making no progress on my Fourth Step.

At that time I had been coming to meetings for two years and had not had a drink during that time. My introduction to the Steps was at my first meeting where the Twelve Steps were printed on a yellowed old shade that hung behind the speaker. I thought that if this was all there was to Alcoholics Anonymous, I'd have it down pat in four or five weeks, because everything that was on the wall had been included in my religious education. The Fourth Step was nothing more than an examination of conscience while the Fifth Step was the sacrament of confession. With that settled, I sat back to drink my coffee and the days passed.

I found hope in the Fellowship and moved forward like a horse with blinders on, never looking back. But the sharing, especially at Step meetings, brought reality to me as my head cleared. Like all who had gone before me in the Fellowship, I could not escape the past.

For the first year, the first three Steps held my attention. Every time that I got to the Fourth Step, I proceeded to lose myself in the text of the "Twelve and Twelve." Why did I get lost there? Easy—just the mention of the seven deadly sins—pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth—and guilt raises its head. Guilt did help me not pick up the first drink though it kept me from understanding the rest of the text in the "Twelve and Twelve." Privately I wanted to finish all the Steps so fast I'd make the Guinness Book of World Records, but publicly I nodded my assent when people said, "You should do a Step a year." I found myself writing in circles every time I tried to list all my sins.

One day, anger became my companion. It stayed day and night. My sponsor said that his sponsor claimed the Fourth Step was the Step for anger. Why didn't I take another look at what the Big Book had to say about it?

That night I discovered the sentence. "In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper." Nothing about guilt or sin here. No examination of conscience or sacrament of confession, just resentments. The Big Book says "resentment destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease. . . ."

I began at my earliest memory and came forward through my life. My list was thorough. No one I knew well was left off, nor were institutions with which I had had contact. I was a walking resentment.

As I got to the middle of my list, my need to justify my resentment with a short postscript disappeared and I attempted simply to discover whether my anger was based on threatened self-esteem, money, ambition, or personal relationships.

When my list was complete I began to discover a startling truth—I had really been dependent on everyone. In this context the words "selfish," "dishonest," "self-seeking," and "frightened" took on new meaning. I appeared to be as powerless over the things I feared as I was over alcohol.

But I had only to turn the page of the Big Book for the instruction to make a list of my fears, ask my Higher Power to remove my fear and direct my attention "to what He would have us be." The Big Book says that after completing the Fourth Step, "you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself." This was true. Yet these truths were not accompanied by guilt. Instead I felt a deep sadness at the desperation with which I had acted. It was the beginning of an acceptance of myself, shortcomings, wrongs, and all.

The Fifth Step stood ahead—the road to "perfect peace and ease." I was ready to call my sponsor and set the time for it. We made the date two weeks from then—I wanted to stay on the old, familiar road a little longer before sharing my inventory with him.

Bernie B., New York, New York

# Calendar Events

## Upcoming Events

### 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>

### 33rd ANNUAL ANTELOPE VALLEY ROUNDUP

June 23 - 25, 2006

Lancaster, CA

Info: (661) 273-5575

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

- Apr. 17, 2006 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop  
5657 Lindley Ave.  
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- May 1, 2006 **G.S. District #11  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
315 W. Vine St., Glendale  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 1, 2006 **G.S. District #16  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6:15PM meeting  
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 1, 2006 **G.S. District #17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 2, 2006 **G.S. District #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta  
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- May 3, 2006 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 3, 2006 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6PM, Central Office  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 13, 2005 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 8, 2005 **SFV Intergroup  
SECOND MONDAY**  
6:30PM Orientation  
7PM Business Meeting  
St. Innocents Church  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

**It's FREE !!**

**(Now that I have your attention...)**

**The almost free, almost Memorial Day Picnic will not be held this year.**

**Instead we will hold the**

**All Services - Almost Free Fall Festival.**

**This event is scheduled for Sunday, October 1, 2006.**

**More information to follow.**

# 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 6:30 PM, Meeting at 7:00 PM. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

### **SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -**

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2007 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:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting March 13, 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: Motion to sell  
    *A New Pair of Glasses* passed.  
New Business: None  
*Birthdays: None this month, but keep coming back!*  
*Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM*  
*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for March is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.*  
*These minutes are pending approval on April 10, 2006*  
*Next Meeting - April 10, 2006*  
*Prepared and submitted by:*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

**March 2006**

<b>Belinda T.</b>	<b>1 years</b>
<b>Rick A.</b>	<b>10 years</b>
<b>Kay G.</b>	<b>13 years</b>
<b>Bob R.</b>	<b>15 years</b>
<b>Sandra F.</b>	<b>17 years</b>
<b>Tony M.</b>	<b>19 years</b>
<b>Reseda Speaker</b>	
<b>Birthdays</b>	<b>a lot of years</b>

*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.*

# Family Week

In my first days with the Fellowship, I heard a lot about alcoholism being a family disease, and my sponsor suggested Al-Anon for my wife. That didn't work out, and about eight months later we divorced. I had a lot of anger and resentment at that time; in fact, I was furious. I raged around the house. It was at this point that a teenager (not my own) gave me some really excellent advice: "Why don't you just treat this matter like a gentleman?" After the shock wore off, I heeded the advice and it made a lot of hard things bearable. I also figured I had some amends to consider.

A number of years went by, and my daughter graduated from high school. As a graduation present, she received a trip to Europe. She had friends there and stayed for five months. When she returned, I picked her up at the airport. During the ride home, she confided, "Dad, I have a problem. I think I'm an alcoholic. I need your help." I hadn't noticed any indication of a drinking problem, so this was a surprise. In her case, the geographical change had clarified the issue. No legal restraints or parental supervision, plus easy availability of alcohol had helped things to become more obvious. I told her what my sponsor told me when I was trying to decide if I had a drinking problem: "If you can take two drinks a day for thirty days, no more, no less, you don't have a drinking problem." This was useful to me. I didn't have to take the test to know I couldn't pass it. On a given day, maybe I could do it, but for thirty days—no way. My daughter later told me this helped clarify her own thinking about alcohol. She also didn't have to take the test to know what the result would be.

My daughter lived with her mother about twenty-five miles away. I chose a meeting near her and we went. Greeters aren't common in the Detroit area, but this group had one and she was an attractive young woman my daughter's age, so the first impression was perfect. Some months later, we attended an AA picnic at my daughter's suggestion. I had a better time than I would have predicted, and my daughter met her current steady. He's a young man with a solid AA program and a lot of shared interests. I keep running into them both at meetings, sometimes together, sometimes alone, always a welcome sight. A few Sundays ago I heard his open talk.

My eldest son, now nineteen, started to become clean and sober two years ago at, of all places, the New Year's Eve concert of the Grateful Dead. He did it without help, white-knuckling it for about a year. At least that's what I thought he was doing. He later confided that during this period he was working on his spirituality in a serious way, and his Higher Power was the help I did not see. Then while touring with the Dead he discovered the "Wharf Rats." This is a group of Grateful Dead fans who follow the band and conduct twelve-step meetings at the concerts, during the intermissions. Since they are in a different place each time they mark their meeting place with bright yellow balloons. My son tells me you can see the balloons across a stadium. He says there are lots of newcomers at each stop and the meetings are wellattended. Now home, he attends AA, NA, and Al-Anon, needing no further encouragement. He is happier and more fun to be around than ever in his life.

My second son is one of a set of fraternal twins who were adopted. His problems with alcohol and drug use became painfully obvious during his fifteenth and sixteenth year. Hospitalization was the unanimous recommendation of the several doctors we consulted. We ended up sending our son to a treatment center in Cleveland, three hours drive. This center required that everyone in the household participate in "Family Week," a one-week residency, and in addition agree to abstain from any mood-altering substances during the course of treatment. In our case, this meant two homes, six family members plus two tenants. My ex-wife talked to a lot of people and we talked a lot to each other. Finally it was arranged. My son ran away the day we were to leave for Cleveland; the police returned him home and persuaded him that he might do well to get some help. He hated the first week, but he is now in aftercare. He is

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## Family Week (cont'd)

really in recovery. He is working the Steps, and last week he said, "When I feel the urge to use, I turn it over to my Higher Power." That gave me a great sense of hope. This son has been able to get very honest with his family and himself. I heard a lot of stuff I would rather not have heard, but his pain and honesty has been a catalyst for all the rest of us to change, and for this I'm especially grateful.

Family Week was intense and powerful. During this time, the second twin was able to admit his own drug and alcohol problems. This was another surprise, since his problems were very hidden. We have an appointment for a full assessment for him. He is attending AA, NA, and AI-Anon, and hasn't had a drink for more than 120 days. After an AA meeting the other night, we were driving home and he said very thoughtfully, "I'm beginning to see where I could save myself a lot of pain by staying with this program." He is sixteen. I wanted to cheer. His happiness level is up so much that the other night I saw him skip out the front door—not at all typical. His mom says, "He's bubbly." At school, his teachers are reporting an upswing in grades. Both twins now have B averages, and this is a first.

One of the tenants couldn't keep the abstinence agreement and is no longer living with us. The other went through treatment and just gained a year's sobriety. He is twenty-one and is active in AA and NA and has a close bond with our family.

My ex-wife has joined AI-Anon and AA and has as sponsor a woman she met at Family Week. She is enthusiastic and enjoys her meetings.

One of my sons recently said, "I feel sad when I think my whole family is alcoholic and addicted." I guess I agree with that, but I also feel happy and grateful in a big way too. There is a diagnosis. There is a treatment. There is honesty, openness, and perhaps most important of all, willingness. One day at a time, with our Higher Power guiding us and the Fellowship as a support, our family should be okay.

Patrick M.  
Dearborn, Michigan



### Co-founder Quotes

#### **Blind Trust?**

*"Most surely, there can be no trust where there is no love, nor can there be real love where distrust holds its malign sway.*

*"But does trust require that we be blind to other people's motives or, indeed, to our own? Not at all; this would be folly. Most certainly,*

*we should assess the capacity for harm as well as the capability for good in every person that we would trust. Such a private inventory can reveal the degree of confidence we should extend in any given situation.*

*"However, this inventory needs to be taken in a spirit of understanding and love. Nothing can so much bias our judgment as the negative emotions of suspicion, jealousy, or anger.*

*"Having vested our confidence in another person, we ought to let him know of our full support. Because of this, more often than not he will respond magnificently, and far beyond our first expectations."*

# How Do You Spell Relief?

I have been sober half my life. I came into AA shortly after my twenty-ninth birthday. I recently celebrated my fifty-eighth birthday. That's more than 10,600 days of sobriety. I've attended thousands of meetings.

Charlie D., an old-timer in our group when I was new, always concluded his comments by exhorting: "Meetings, meetings, meetings!" That was the best counsel a newcomer could hear. The importance of attending meetings—especially those at which the Twelve Steps, our guiding spiritual principles, are discussed—can't be overstated. Regular meeting-goers rarely pick up a drink.

My longevity in AA is a source of satisfaction to me, even though I know that only on a daily basis can I stay away from the first drink and practice the principles of the program in all my affairs. I make a point of emphasizing the one-day-at-a-time concept in comments at meetings and in conversations with fellow AAs, especially newcomers and those experiencing difficulty. I need to constantly remind myself to live in the present moment and not project.

Alas, despite longtime sobriety I still haven't mastered the AA program—or myself—but my character defects are down to a manageable seven: pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. Thanks to the Twelve Steps and a merciful God, these sins or short-comings are greatly alleviated.

Miraculously, the obsession with alcohol that ruled me when I was a drunk was lifted almost as soon as I came into AA and admitted I was powerless over alcohol. And the obsession has never returned.

I'm convinced that no human power could have accomplished such a transformation in my life. A sober friend of mine likes to say, "God is upstairs in church on Sunday morning, but at night he's downstairs in the AA meeting." I agree.

My attitude toward alcohol when I discovered it as a teenager was that if God had made anything better he must have kept it for himself. I loved everything about alcohol—the smell of it, the taste, the effect, the camaraderie of the man's world of saloons. Who was the best centerfielder in New York—Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle, or Duke Snider? That debate was always good for another round, with Frank Sinatra on the jukebox in the background.

Alcohol made me comfortable. A couple of beers or martinis could put me at ease in any situation. If I'd been told when I was nineteen or twenty that alcohol would turn on me and become my worst enemy, I'd have resented the warning and resisted the idea. I believed in alcohol. I relied on it to make life not only bearable but wonderful.

I grew up in a home where there was love but also mental illness. One grandparent was an alcoholic whose drinking had severe repercussions. I was an anxious, fearful child and adolescent. In my late teens, alcohol presented itself as a panacea, and I was completely receptive.

By my early twenties I was an alcoholic. Few knew this because I functioned. I held a job in a business where heavy drinking was prevalent. There was widespread denial of alcoholism as a fatal disease that destroyed families. We liked to believe that drinking was a solution, not a problem.

But how could I ignore what was happening to me? My integrity was lost to alcohol as I lied and stole in order to drink. I barely got to the hospital to visit my wife when she gave birth. I couldn't wait to run to the bar on the pretext of toasting myself as a proud father, but really it was to escape reality and responsibility by drinking myself into oblivion.

I tried to quit many times but always backslid. The mere thought of a drink—provoked, say, by a neon sign that said BAR—instantaneously became a demanding obsession. Willpower was no match for the craving.

One night I stumbled home drunk and crying and threatening suicide. My wife called a priest. He came directly to our apartment. "What you need is Alcoholics Anonymous," he told me. The seed was planted, and soon I was at a

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## How Do You Spell Relief? (cont'd)

meeting. To brace myself for the ordeal I stopped at a tavern along the way and swallowed several vodkas.

I heard three speakers at that meeting and identified with all of them. A solicitous member of the group approached me and asked if I thought I was an alcoholic. "Of course I'm an alcoholic. Why else would I be here?" I answered. Then, on my way home, I stopped for more vodka.

For several weeks I attended meetings with a few drinks in me. At one meeting, a good AA member gave me his name and number. During a lucid moment in the midst of my final bender, I pulled the crumpled piece of paper out of my wallet and called him for help. When I came off that drunk, he picked me up and took me to a meeting.

The grace of God touched me in that church basement that night. Somehow I intuitively knew that in AA I'd find the peace that had always eluded me.

Alcoholism is a humiliating disease, and Alcoholics Anonymous is a humbling program. Living sober isn't easy (although it sure is easier than drinking!), and while I've never had a bad day in sobriety, I've had many difficult days. By nature I'm too sensitive, self-centered, and emotional. For many years in AA I was plagued by anxiety that sometimes caused severe discomfort. Mild depression still gets me down occasionally.

But I've always gotten relief in meetings. Seeing others sober up gives me a lift. Even when I'm feeling low, I'm consoled by the thought that as an AA member I can be used by God to pass along sobriety to suffering alcoholics.

Because of my length of sobriety, I have to be wary of a self-important, know-it-all attitude. "Lord, to bless not to impress" is a prayer I must always remind myself to say silently before opening my mouth in meetings.

The many meetings I've attended have deepened my conviction that a merciful God reaches out to heal us. I'm a grateful alcoholic because without alcoholism, I might never have met that merciful God. The love of my wife and children, a satisfying job, good friends, a sense of purpose in life—these are among sobriety's gifts to me. I hope I'll always be able to quote Charlie D.: "Meetings, meetings, meetings!"

Bill R.

New York, New York

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**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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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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.*

### Former Address

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_