

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 30, NO. 6 JUNE 2006

Wrong Side of the Bed

Recently, on a Saturday morning, I got up on the wrong side of the bed. For some reason I was in one really foul mood. I got dressed, had some coffee, did my morning readings and meditation, and then prayed, on my knees, that God would fill me with his love so that it would shine through me into others I might meet that day.

I proceeded to yell at the dog, throw things that were in my way in the dining room, and grudgingly make breakfast for my eighty-year-old mother while trying not to speak to her, lest I say something nasty. I was just ugly inside and God must have looked down on me and said, "That girl needs an attitude adjustment!"

The phone rang. The last thing I wanted to do was talk to someone on the phone and pretend I was fine. But when I checked the caller ID, I saw that it was an AA friend whom I had not seen in a while and who'd been on my mind lately. I picked up the phone and tried to sound grumpy when I said "hello" so that the person wouldn't talk long but, wouldn't you know, the first thing out of her mouth was "I've got a problem and I need to talk to someone—do you have a minute?" In a split second, I seemed to gain a new perspective on my day. Suddenly, it didn't matter that the dog had jumped all over me when I got up or that the dining room table was a mess or that I had a million unpleasant things to do that day. It seemed like a big weight had been taken off my shoulders. Sure, I had a lot to do, but here before me was a fellow AA member who was asking for help and that's all I needed to do at the moment. It felt good.

She explained her problem and I reminded her of the things we cannot change, of the importance of forgiveness, of how it talks in the Big Book about love and tolerance being our code; how ego can grab hold of us and twist us up if we aren't watchful of our thoughts and motives. The entire time I was talking, a little voice inside of me was jabbing me and saying, "Okay, walk like you talk," and there occurred in me a transformation. Suddenly, I was content and peaceful inside instead of irritable and discontent. I also had a new list of things to do, like asking God to grant me love and tolerance; it became real important that I check my motives before I went anywhere, to make certain that I was going to see people with good intent, instead of with the purpose of feeding or satisfying my ego. I needed to put some people on my prayer list and to make a gratitude list to carry around in my pocket. My entire "to do" list changed!

My friend and I talked for a while and when we were ready to say goodbye, she thanked me over and over for being there for her. I thanked her back, telling her that she helped me much more than I could have helped her. I felt such love and gratitude toward God for sending me someone who reached out for help and ended up helping me. And this is how it works: giving it away, we are ever reminded of the path we are to follow.

*Deborah W., Akron, Ohio
Reprint from The Grapevine*

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

5th ANNUAL BALI INTERNATIONAL ROUNDUP

Bali, Indonesia
June 9, 10, & 11, 2006
Info: www.aa-bali.org

A.A. DESERT POW WOW

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

33rd ANNUAL ANTELOPE VALLEY ROUND UP

June 23 - 25, 2006
Lancaster, CA
Info: (661) 273-5575

SOUTH BAY ROUNDUP

June 30 - July 4, 2006
Torrance (CA) Marriott
Info: 310-354-7660

39th Annual District 22 Convention

August 25 - 27, 2006
Veterans Memorial Building, San Luis Obispo, CA
Info: 805-801-0057
Email: tommykeo@gmail.com

The Great Beaver Meeting

August 31 - Sept. 3, 2006 (more details next month)

Registration forms for most events
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

- June 19, 2006 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- July 3, 2006 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- July 3, 2006 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- July 3, 2006 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- July 4, 2006 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- July 5, 2006 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- July 5 2006 **SFV Board of Directors**
6PM, Central Office

- June 10, 2005 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

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

The Valley Central Office will be

CLOSED

for literature sales on

Tuesday, July 4, 2006

for the Independence Day Holiday.

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 (Get Acquainted Workshop, 7:00 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

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting May 8, 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: Lauren - 2 yrs, Laura - 3 yrs, Lloyd - 3 yrs, Scott - 3 yrs, Marcia - 3 yrs, Linda - 17 yrs, Michael - 18 yrs, Megan - 19 yrs, Hank - 26 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

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

These minutes are pending approval on June 12, 2006

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

May 2006

Howard R.	13 years
Linda S.	17 years
Michael S.	18 years
Diane D.	26 years
Stewart D.	26 years
Harley	27 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 Big Splash

Tubing! When I was drinking, I thought this was the ultimate cooler for the dog days of summer. Lying on inner tubes, my friends and I would float for hours down the local river. The beer had its own tube, so we were never far from our liquid good times, though those good times often led to vomiting after the first stretch of white water. I couldn't wait to do it all over again.

After a few more years of this kind of drinking, I crawled into AA. A growth opportunity soon presented itself to me in the form of a tubing trip that friends from my home group were planning. I didn't want to go because I always had drunk while tubing. I thought I'd have to sneak beer just to be able to socialize.

But my sponsor told me, "Sobriety is progressive, too." I had learned that following directions allowed the best in me to surface, even if only for a short time, when I had the courage to face a fearful event (like my Fourth Step, for example). Deep down I felt I had no courage, yet I was sober and had made it to the other side of Step Four. A quiet gratitude to God began to take root in me.

I now had the opportunity to learn from past success. If I didn't drink while doing the Fourth Step, I wouldn't have to drink on this tubing trip either. My sponsor calmed my racing mind. She told me to go tubing and have a good time. Learning to socialize was just another fearful event for me. So with grim determination and the social skills of a clam, I decided to go tubing and have a good time—if it killed me.

I was uncomfortable until I saw the friendly faces of the people in my group. I grabbed my tube and plunged into the water. I recall laughing throughout the day—a lot. There were jokes, teasing, hamburgers, hot dogs, and soda. Once I entered the water, I didn't even think of my prior tubing drunks. Freedom! AA had taught me that past events could be redefined into occasions for fun. AA had taught me how to live.

Kathy R., North Carolina

Listen to Learn

AA Twelfth Step work has played a role in my life since my grandfather took the First Step of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1966, the year I was born. He was my first connection to AA service. For over twenty-two years, he persistently twelfth-stepped me without ever uttering a word about AA. Instead, he lived his life as a power of example. He had a glow about him that I've since discovered is the result of a solid AA program grounded in recovery, unity, and service.

The raging, careless drunk that my grandfather once had been was foreign to me. When I knew Grampa, he was like a gentleman angel. I cherish memories of visits with him when I'd stay up late in his book-lined bedroom and listen as he recounted tales of his life. When I was a child, he made me feel comfortable sharing my dreams, hopes, and desires. He was a great storyteller but he was also a great listener.

Grampa passed away before I got sober. Drowning in the black confusion of alcoholism, I used to chatter incessantly to fill up every moment of silence that came my way. Fear streamed out of my mouth. At times I'd remember Grampa's grace. He was always ready to listen, never afraid to stand up for himself, fiercely self-supporting, and forever tolerant. Now that I've been sober for five years, I see that my grandfather was a walking advertisement for AA. His serenity carried the message to me so that when I was ready to admit that I was powerless over alcohol, I knew where to turn for help. His gratitude was expressed in actions, not just words.

At my sponsor's kitchen table one evening, I met the man who had taken my sponsor to her first AA meeting. He was from the same quiet country town my grandfather had gone to in order to realize one of his sober dreams: being a blacksmith. He smiled when he heard Grampa's name. He told me that my grandfather had been his sponsor. So the circle is complete. I can keep it that way today by being silent and listening.

When I serve on the phones at intergroup, I listen, and when I'm sponsoring another alcoholic, I listen. I hear Grampa's experience, strength, and hope every time I listen in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Eliza B., Hoboken, New Jersey

Taking Gratitude for Granted

For a period of about two years, my daily walks became progressively more difficult. A searing pain in my lower legs eventually became almost unbearable. I found that stopping every block or two and sitting down would make the pain temporarily subside. The best physical therapists diagnosed my problem as stenosis (a gradual closing of my lower spine) and suggested I better get used to it.

A close friend in AA suggested that a doctor at a nearby university medical center might provide some help. I was very doubtful but did go to see the man, who suggested that a surgical procedure on my lower arteries might help. It didn't seem to make sense, but I was cajoled by my friends into the operating theater.

A three-hour procedure which installed stents into my femoral arteries brought about an almost unbelievable change. In two weeks I was walking without pain or strain. I felt remarkable surges of thankfulness as I passed the old "rest stops" without a twinge. I felt real gratitude every day.

About a month later, I found myself home from my walk and in the shower when I suddenly realized I had not noticed any gratitude as I made my round. Nothing had happened—I just had taken the pain-free condition for granted while I thought about other things.

As a result of this experience, it doesn't seem strange to me that I sometimes forget to feel gratitude for my sobriety. After all, it's been forty years since I drank, and it has become easy to take a sober life for granted.

This is why I must continue to work with others, to go to meetings, to be of some service to the world about me—not because these are "good" things, but rather so that I can once again be stimulated into the feelings of gratitude for this life I have found. (And which, for an alcoholic, is so easy to take for granted.)

Clancy I., Los Angeles, California

Reprint from The Grapevine



Co-founder Quotes

Arrogance and Its Opposite

A very tough-minded prospect was taken to his first A.A. meeting, where two speakers (or maybe lecturers) themed their talks on "God as I understand Him." Their attitude oozed arrogance. In fact, the final speaker got far overboard on his personal theological convictions.

Both were repeating my performance of years before. Implicit in everything they said was the

same idea: "Folks, listen to us. We have the only true brand of A.A.—and you'd better get it!"

The new prospect said he'd had it—and he had. His sponsor protested that this wasn't real A.A. But it was too late; nobody could touch him after that.

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I see "humility for today" as a safe and secure stance midway between violent emotional extremes. It is a quiet place where I can keep enough perspective and enough balance to take my next small step up the clearly marked road that points toward eternal values.

Grapevine, April, 1961 & June, 1961

Peace At Last

I grew up in a violent alcoholic home, and although I don't believe that environment turned me into an alcoholic, I can't deny that it played a part in my alcoholic drama. I stole my first drinks from my mother and grandfather as soon as I was tall enough to snatch their glasses from the dining-room table. I loved the attention and excitement as my mother yelled and chased me, trying to retrieve her brandy. I remember the burning sensation sliding down my throat, through my chest, and into my belly. I felt invincible.

As a child, I was full of anger and fought with my classmates on a regular basis. And when I learned that the violence and insanity I lived with at home were not normal, that knowledge fed my rage. I got into so many fistfights that the few friends I had grew frightened of me and stopped talking to me.

I was thirteen the first time I poured my own tumbler of booze. I was home alone, and I drank the whole thing. What happened next was magic. My anger began to subside. I didn't care about Mom's drinking or Dad's violence—or anything else, for that matter. I became numb, and I thought it was the best thing that had ever happened to me.

The next time I was home alone I repeated the experiment. Soon I began taking liquor to school in my book bag. Sure, I drank more than I intended sometimes, but at least I had stopped fighting. I didn't get angry as long as I could drink, and I got my friends back.

Less than a year after my first drunk, my best friend asked me to go to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. She pointed out that I drank too much, that I drank whenever I was alone, and that when I wasn't alone, I refused to share my alcohol. Drinking had become the most important thing to me, and that wasn't normal. I told her, in a not-so-polite way, that I did not have a drinking problem; I had a solution, and my life was better.

But I could not admit to her that it was getting harder to drown the rage. I could ease it, but I couldn't numb it anymore. Sometimes the best I could do was drink until I was physically incapable of acting on my anger. I also had begun to have blackouts and sometimes "came to" in the middle of conversations, not knowing what I was supposed to be talking about.

When I was sixteen, the police arrested a member of my family for domestic violence. The state shuttled me off to a counselor, who quickly ascertained that I had a drinking problem. I loudly insisted that she was wrong; my problem was my violent family. But inside I knew I should probably stop drinking. And since I couldn't get numb anymore anyway, I decided to quit.

I was awfully proud of myself. I bragged about not drinking to anyone who would listen. Okay, so I was sipping here and there, but I figured that didn't count as drinking if I could remember what happened. But as each day passed, I got increasingly angry.

A few weeks later, my rage erupted. I hated myself. I hadn't hit anyone in three years, and I certainly didn't want to behave that way. Consequently, I reasoned that I didn't hit people when I was really drinking, so it seemed I was better off drunk. That kicked off a new cycle: I would stop drinking, become violent, and return to drinking.

Life wasn't all bad. I did have a few successes. I won honors in science, math, and music, became a published author, excelled at varsity sports, and did volunteer work. I was even inducted into the National Honor Society, although I was in a blackout during the induction ceremony. I also had half a dozen serious suicide attempts, several court orders keeping me away from family members, kidney and intestinal malfunctions, violent outbursts, and horrific hallucinations.

After my sixth suicide attempt, I returned to my sip-but-don't-gulp plan for about ninety days. Then on the day I was to graduate from high school, I began sipping in the morning. By the afternoon, I had drunk an entire fifth.

My most vivid memory of the ceremony is of my friend yelling at me for drinking again and then landing a solid right hook on my jaw. That was the beginning of a two-week bender, where I'd come out of one blackout just long enough to get back into another. The next time I stopped, I shook and saw caterpillars everywhere. A few days later, I again attacked someone, this time with a knife and with the intent to kill.

I finally realized that I behaved violently only when I wanted to drink—my drinking was part of the problem. I also realized that I had to ask for help. So I called the counselor the state had sent me to. But when she said she'd take me to an AA meeting, I told her I'd do absolutely anything but that. I told her I was too young; I wouldn't fit in; everyone there would hate me. She disagreed, but suggested the alternative of a treatment center for adolescents. I told her I'd think about it.

I drank that night, and for several nights after that. I didn't know how to stop. Finally, I called her back and entered treatment a week later. I was still hallucinating, but I hadn't had alcohol or a drug for the entire week. At age eighteen, I was the oldest client there. A fifteen-year-old approached me, handed me a Big Book, and told me how much she liked AA meetings.

When the rehab counselors brought me to my first meeting, they assured me that the people in the room were really alcoholics. Immediately, I saw that this was a lie. These people were smiling and laughing and carrying themselves with

continued on Page 7

Peace At Last (cont'd)

dignity. They obviously had not experienced my kind of trouble, and I dismissed them as salaried social workers. Then I saw a few people in the room frowning and complaining and some who were downright nuts and decided that if Alcoholics Anonymous was for them, I must be in right place, too.

When I left treatment, I went to ten or twelve AA meetings a week. I got a sponsor, I asked for help on a daily basis, and I continued to stay sober without violent outbursts.

But after a year, I was still full of rage, guilt, and shame. And I was having trouble finishing my Fourth Step, because I was scared of the Fifth: I wasn't interested in sharing my secrets with anyone. I was also contemplating suicide. I had gotten a gun, was holding it in my lap ready to load it, and some how decided not to use it. Shortly after that, I did my Fifth Step with my sponsor, and she didn't run away. She listened, and then she gently put her hand on my arm, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Welcome to the human race." I haven't picked up that gun again.

Doing the Sixth and Seventh Steps taught me to ask for help in all areas of my life. But only as I began to make amends did the havoc I had rendered become apparent to me, as did the hope I had of turning it around. Some relationships began to be repaired. My life began to change at a deep, emotional level, and I honestly began to care about—even love—the people around me and myself.

Keeping a Tenth Step journal about my day-to-day life, my relations with other people, and the stuff that still roiled around in my head helped me see patterns in my thoughts and behavior, which I could discuss with my sponsor. And once I began to sit quietly, reflect on what I'd written, and pray, I began to sleep peacefully for the first time in my life.

The Twelfth Step taught me to share my experience with others. So I've set up meetings, sponsored other alcoholics, served as group treasurer, been GSR, and done public information committee work. But one of the most rewarding experiences I've had in sobriety was taking an AA meeting to a local correctional center for women once a week. It's difficult to stay wrapped up in the misery of your own life when an inmate announces she'd like to talk about gratitude. More recently, I've been part of a group that takes meetings to the treatment center I went to in 1989. I see there how young I was when booze took over my life.

Not long ago, I was in a head-on-collision with an intoxicated driver. (There but for the grace of God go I.) My leg is badly broken, but the rest of me's intact. It's been a whole new lesson in powerlessness, yet people from AA have been here for me, taking me to doctors and to meetings, bringing me food and hugs, and showing me how to live sober, without violence.

My spirits are good most of the time, and I know my leg will heal. Although I won't be able to return to my job, I'm hoping to return to school and have begun the footwork to achieve that goal. In fact, I've become one of those smiling, happy, and (somewhat) dignified folk who intimidated me so when I first walked into the rooms of AA.

Karen S.
Manchester, New Hampshire

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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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