

# Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 30, NO. 12 DEC 2006

## Every Step I Take

My name is Bill, I'm an alcoholic, and I'm grateful to be sober today. Last night, my group and I celebrated the fifth anniversary of the first day of my second attempt at continuous sobriety, and I have never felt such love and friendship in my life.

As my sponsor announced this grand occasion from the podium, he (as has become his habit) made sure to explain to the packed hall just what I looked like that first night when I stumbled into a meeting: the flushed and bloated face, the glazed eyes, the shaking hands that couldn't hold a full cup of coffee. He told of the negative power of example I had been to him when we were both "out there"—he had decided that if he ever got as bad as I was, he would quit drinking. For whatever reason, he got sober about three years before I did.

As for other celebrations I had during my drinking days, I remember few with any clarity. There were birthdays, when I managed to attract enough attention so everyone in the bar would celebrate along with me. One year, another bar across the street even sent over drinks! Someone would get the band to play "Happy Birthday," they'd mangle my name terribly, and I'd stumble over the feet of some poor girl who had agreed to dance with me. Yeah, those sure were good times.

There were some holidays I remember. Mainly, I seem to recall the ones where I wasn't with my family, because I was either too drunk to be with them or not drunk enough. One of the worst things about the holidays was that the bars closed early and the Chinese restaurants didn't open at all.

My AA anniversary usually falls during Thanksgiving week, right at the start of the Christmas season. In five years I haven't missed spending either holiday with at least part of my family, and while I'm becoming increasingly less interested in the material aspects of Christmas, the true spiritual meaning of this time of year is becoming more and more important to me. This Thanksgiving, it mattered to my sister that I be there, along with Mother, and the kids who call me Uncle.

Last Christmas, I didn't go crazy with presents; instead I supported some charitable organizations. But for the past few years I've given my family something they didn't have before: me, sober. My birthday comes a week after Christmas, and I hope it will pass unnoticed!

Nobody from the barroom has called me in five years, while my AA friends won't leave me alone. When I was recently made single again, members of my group, and AA in general, rallied round, refused to let me sit in my own stew, and pulled me through to where I am today: sober and grateful.

Now I'm sitting in my apartment, surrounded by little packages, shreds of wrapping paper, a small pile of congratulatory cards—the tangible evidence of an outpouring of warmth and love that can only be shared among sober alcoholics. The seemingly endless stream of hugs after the meeting tonight is etched in my heart, I hope never to be erased.

I have much to be thankful for, and many to whom I am thankful. I will give thanks tonight to my Higher Power, as I do every night, for the gift of sobriety, and for the gift of fellowship in AA. I offer thanks to my friends in the Fellowship for believing in me when I did not, for loving me when I could not, and for helping me become able to believe in and love my friends in return. I am thankful to my family for acknowledging that there is a "new me" that changes, and that improvements have been made. And I'm thankful to the newcomers, even to those still out there, for keeping my memory green.

Every step I have taken in my life thus far has led me to where I stand today, and the Twelve Steps of AA have insured that I stand here sober.

Bill T., Hull, Massachusetts

# Calendar Events

## Upcoming Events

### **Valley Club Speak-a-Thon**

December 30, 2006

9 AM – 9 PM

Northridge, CA

### **17th Annual River Roundup**

January 12 – 14, 2007

Laughlin, NV

Website: [www.rcco-aa.org](http://www.rcco-aa.org)

### **32nd Annual San Fernando Valley AA Convention**

February 2 – 4, 2007

Burbank, CA

Info: (818) 734-0383

Website: [www.sfvaaconvention.org](http://www.sfvaaconvention.org)

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

## Holiday Hours For Book Sales

**S. F. Valley Central Office  
Holiday Schedule for Book Sales  
will be as follows:**

**Sunday, Dec. 24, 2006  
OPEN 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**Monday, Dec. 25, 2006  
CLOSED ALL DAY**

**Sunday, Dec. 30, 2006  
OPEN 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**Monday, Jan. 1, 2007  
CLOSED ALL DAY**

**Normal hours will resume on  
Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2007.**

## SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- Dec. 18, 2006 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop  
5657 Lindley Ave.  
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- Jan. 1, 2007 **G.S. District #11  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
315 W. Vine St., Glendale  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 1, 2007 **G.S. District #16  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6:15PM meeting  
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 1, 2007 **G.S. District #17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting  
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 2, 2007 **G.S. District #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 3, 2007 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 3, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6PM, Central Office  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 13, 2007 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Jan. 8, 2007 **SFV Intergroup  
SECOND MONDAY**  
6:30PM 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>**

# 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](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting November 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:** None.  
**New Business:** None  
*Birthdays: Dawn H. - 11 yrs, Jason B. - 11 yrs,  
Rosanne L. - 11 yrs, Cary N. - 16 yrs.*

*Motion to adjourn 7:22 PM*

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

*These minutes are pending approval on  
December 11, 2006*

*Next Meeting - December 11, 2006*

*Prepared and submitted by:*

*Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

**November 2006**

**Dusty R. 16 Years**

**Melanie H. 19 Years**

**Sarah M. 19 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.*

# Santa Gets Sober

I am an alcoholic; my name is Nicholas. You can call me Nick for short. I always knew I was different from other kids in my neighborhood. See, I was born with this beard, and instead of having a dog like the other guys, I had reindeers for pets. Most kids like to get things, but I always gave whatever I had. That made me happy and I hoped people would like me.

My mother always told me, “Don’t worry, someday people will look up to you.”

But I was so lonely, with no one to talk to except the reindeer. I had problems going to sleep at night when I was in high school, just tossing and turning and thinking about my future. That’s when I discovered that a little glass of wine at night would help me sleep. Soon I was sleeping real good, but after a while I needed more than just a little glass; I needed a big glass to produce that blessed sleep.

Things continued like that for a while. I functioned fine during the day, but nights were a different story. That’s when the wine took over.

During this time, I got a job, and I really, really liked it. I was helping this old guy deliver toys and presents on Christmas. This fit right in for me, because I always liked to give and now I could do it professionally, and people would like me more.

I didn’t have a car or a truck but I could use that big old sleigh that was out back in the barn. I could even have my friends the reindeer pull it. I was sleeping better, so I stopped drinking at night. Everything was going great. I even met the Mrs. Her name is Sara—what a wonderful woman. She made cookies and candies for me to bring with the toys on Christmas. Life was great until the old man died. There went the job. But Sara said, “Why not continue? You do a good job, you know what you’re doing.” So I kept doing what I loved best—delivering presents on Christmas.

But during the slow season I was bored, so I started hitting the eggnog and the fruitcake that Sara made (it had all that delicious brandy in it). Guess what? Sara started to change. She began to nag: “You never do things around the house anymore.” She even had the nerve to hint that I was slightly intoxicated sometimes. I worked so hard, I figured I deserved all the enjoyment I could get. What harm could a little eggnog do, or a couple of brews with the local elves?

Then the reindeer began giving me trouble. They were annoyed because I had gotten lost one Christmas Eve. It had nothing to do with the fact that I’d had several hot toddies during the trip. It was all that snow—anyone would have gotten lost. So I got myself a new reindeer to lead them, a guy with a bright red nose. He could set his radar and get us anywhere, and I could continue doing my thing with no problem. That is, until one night I got pulled over by a state trooper. I told him who I was and he said, “Sure you are,” and charged me with driving while intoxicated.

Things were getting most unpleasant. I was mixing up the toy lists. My wife wasn’t talking to me. The reindeer weren’t happy. My head hurt every morning. And I was having problems parking the sleigh on rooftops. I even tried the geographic cure—we moved to the North Pole. But things didn’t change.

Then one Christmas Eve, in my usual stupor, I parked sideways on this one roof and I had a terrible time getting down the chimney. In fact, I went headfirst, and now I really needed a drink. So when I got into this house, I started looking around for some booze. But there was nothing, just those rotten cookies and a glass of milk. How I hated the taste of milk by that time. Couldn’t someone take pity on me and leave me a nice hot toddy with rum? After all, it was so cold out there in the sleigh.

I guess I was banging around and making too much noise, because I woke up this guy. He came downstairs and asked if he could help me.

“Help me? Sure. Where do you keep the booze—I need a drink.”

The guy said there wasn’t any because he didn’t drink. I wondered what kind of person I was dealing with. He must be a real nut.

Then he started to tell me that he had drunk in the past but it caused him so many problems that he didn’t drink anymore. I was interested in that. I wanted him to give me his magic formula and he said it was simple.

“I don’t drink one day at a time.”

He also said, “I go to meetings, I keep it simple, I read the Big Book, I carry the message—and that’s how I stay sober.”

At that point, I was so sick and tired of being sick and tired, I was willing to try anything. I wasn’t sure if there was a meeting at the North Pole, but this guy told me I could start one.

Before I left, the guy gave me a book which he referred to as the Big Book. This was my first present—I had always been the giver and never let anyone give me anything. I asked him to write something in the book for me, and this is what he wrote: Dear Nicholas, Merry Christmas! Your friend, Bill W.

And that’s how Santa got sober. Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

## Helpful Hints for Holiday Parties

First, if you think the party might bother you too much, don't go. If you're not too sure of yourself, but would like to try it anyhow, go late and leave early. (Or go early and leave early.)

Just say, "I'll have a ginger ale, please." It helps always to hold a half-full glass in your hand. Then you can say, "No thanks, I still have one."

Don't go into a lengthy discussion of why you're not drinking. A simple "I prefer ginger ale tonight" usually works.

While you're at the party, think of where you came from and how awful it would be to go back.

Don't fool yourself into thinking that maybe "just one" won't hurt. Remember all the stories you've heard about people who thought that way and where they ended up.

Have a good time. You'll be surprised at how easy it is and how much more fun it is to know what you're doing, instead of having to wait till the next day to hear the facts (probably unpleasant) from somebody else.

Take a look around the room once in a while and thank God you feel the way you do instead of the way some others do.

Think, too, of how hard it was to reach the point you've reached in AA and how much harder it will be to reach it again—if you can. Think of all the alcoholics who still suffer. Some probably don't even know what season it is. Maybe you have been picked to help one of them find his (or her) life again.

J. B.

Rochester, New York



### *Co-founder Quotes*

#### Comradeship in Peril

We A.A.'s are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck, when camaraderie, joyousness, and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to captain's table.

Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not

subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of sharing in a common peril—relapse into alcoholism—continues to be an important element in the powerful cement which binds us of A.A. together.

« « « » » »

Our first woman alcoholic had been a patient of Dr. Harry Tiebout's, and he had handed her a prepublication manuscript copy of the Big Book. The first reading made her rebellious, but the second convinced her. Presently she came to a meeting held in our living room, and from there she returned to the sanitarium carrying this classic message to a fellow patient: "We aren't alone any more."

## **My Ego Was Showing**

### **Self-Pity and Pride Made This Speaker Miserable**

I almost asked to get up to talk. I had the feeling that I needed to say something. I hinted around enough and even put on a tie for the meeting, in case I got called. I really didn't expect to be.

But now it turns out that the chairman needs a fill-in, because his scheduled speaker had to work late and couldn't make it. Well, I've been in the program a year and a half (this time) without a drink. I've spoken a few times to small groups, and I've usually run out of things to say after ten or fifteen minutes, because I thought I hadn't read enough of the Big Book and the other publications. But now? I not only shouldn't have any trouble—I should be able to say something worthwhile and in an easy manner.

You wanna bet?

I get up there, and I open with the usual "My name is Sam and I'm an alcoholic, and I'm gonna tell it just like it is." And I proceed to do so. I expected to be a little nervous, but after all, most of the guys and gals freely admit it. Maybe some of this honesty I've been yakkin' about has begun to rub off on me. I come out with the statement "I'm nervous and will probably ramble a bit, but considering that it takes a couple of years to get our brains out of hock and about three to unscramble them, it's to be expected. I've got the rest of my life to go in this program, and I'm supposed to be making progress all during the time, because not to go ahead means to stop growing, and this program is a process of growth."

So what do I do? I start at the end and tell of my latest problem—having been asked to resign from my job at the post office. I try to be funny about it and to let it be known that I really don't care. I'm really happy about the whole thing. It's a relief for me to be out of "that madhouse," especially during the Christmas season. But am I happy?

Now my mouth is getting kinda dry, and my "thung" is getting kinda "tick." My heart is beating sixty miles an hour, and I'm desperately trying to hang on to my train of thought. What am I doing, telling this latest part? We're supposed to tell how it was, what happened, and what we are like now. And I'm not doing it, and that's why I'm getting all shook up, I think to myself.

So I go back and skip over teenage drinking, because I think I've lost some time. I get on with my first serious, dedicated drinking, when I joined the Navy just before WW II, at the age of twenty. I then illustrate Navy drinking and brawling and explain how to get assigned to bread and water in the brig and how to get court-martialed for trying to belt officers. I even go into a blow-by-blow and round-by-round description of one main event, taking quite a few pains to show that the other guy was mostly on the deck. I leave out other bouts where the situation was the reverse and I was the one busy picking myself up from whatever barroom floor happened to be the arena.

I then proceed with the time I was a guest of the local sheriff for a couple of months over the Christmas and New Year's holidays and I bring out the hardships and dangers of being in such a situation and by now I'm choking up and having difficulty speaking at all. I'm on the verge of busting out in tears. I wonder what the hell is the matter with me!

This last episode also took place while I was in the Navy, just before the war broke out. Now I finally look at my watch, and I see that twenty-five minutes of my thirty minutes of time has been taken up, and I haven't even gotten myself out of the Navy! It flashes through my mind how often I've felt critical of speakers going on and on with their drunkalogs, and here I am doing the same bloody thing!

*continued on page 7*

## **My Ego Was Showing (cont'd)** **Self-Pity and Pride Made This Speaker Miserable**

I want to fall through a trapdoor, to be swallowed up somehow, out of sight of all the friends in front of me. (I remember I've made no secret of how I feel about such speakers.) But I go ahead, trying to pack into the remaining five minutes all of what AA means to me. It is hurried, it is disconnected, and it is not what I wanted to say at all, and I have all I can do to keep my voice going, because I want to cry or lose my temper (an old standby of mine throughout my thirty-some years of dedicated drinking) or perhaps just lie on the floor and kick my feet in childish frustration.

Well, at fifty-three years of age, I don't think that would go over so well, so I muscle it through and come to some sort of awkward finish, which doesn't bring any standing ovation, only what seems a somewhat embarrassed round of clapping. I'm sure the audience is as glad it's over as I am.

A couple of the guys come up and shake hands with me and tell me I've done well, but I am sure they are just being polite. I lose no time in getting the hell out of the place and getting on home, where I lie on my bed and glare up at the ceiling and churn and churn inside. I impatiently pick up my copy of the Twelve and Twelve, and it just happens to open up to Step Four. So I read it.

Nobody, but nobody had ever better give me any argument that this program isn't inspired by a Power that's greater than ourselves. In the Twelve and Twelve, divinely inspired words add up to "self-pity" in spades for me. They spell out "pride" for me. Just who in the hell do I think I am? Some professional speaker? All the time I was speaking, I was unconsciously asking for pity for poor little ol' me, because I'd suffered so much. I was ready to cry in my beer if there had been any in front of me. And my pride was hurt because everybody didn't crowd around me and congratulate me on a great speech and tell me they had gotten so much out of it. Just who in the hell do I think I am to take myself so seriously!

A description of humility comes to my mind: "Humility, after the first shock, is a cheerful virtue." Some day, when I absorb more of the stuff, I'll come out with a good healthy laugh and take it from there, I hope. And I know that I won't have done it by myself by any means, but with the help of the Power which is really the motivating basis for this "spooky" program.

S. M., Lake Worth, Florida

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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 \_\_\_\_\_