

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 31, NO. 4

APR 2007

Little Things Mean a Lot

"...I grew to understand that normal living meant being useful..."

EVEN AFTER I stopped drinking, it took me some time to awake from my alcoholic stupor. When my mind began to function, the promise of the Big Book that my feelings of uselessness and self-pity would slip away offered great hope. Both of my children were away from home. My daughter had finished nursing school and moved out of state, and my son was off to college, also in another state. It took me a year to discover I was at home alone in an empty nest. I was still a married housewife, on my feet but with some physical problems, and ill-equipped at middle age to launch another career. The feeling of uselessness was with me much of the time.

When people talked of being useful, I thought of earning money, of making frequent Twelfth Step calls, and of a lot of major doings—maybe I could be a delegate or go on the speaking circuit, all at a year of sobriety!

Gradually, some windows opened. A man who had stopped drinking after he retired told what happened on some days when he didn't have much of a program: Once he got up, put his feet on the floor, and started moving, he soon had his program one day at a time. So I started just putting my feet on the floor and moving. I had never counted watering my plants as useful, but my daily program often began with that small activity. A normal life was difficult for me. I had always expected life to be a big deal.

My sponsor recommended correspondence with AA Loners. I liked writing letters, not only because it filled my time, but because it was a thrill to receive letters. Meetings by mail became as important to me as those I attended.

Loading the dishwasher, though a small activity, became a useful one in my eyes—and a type of service, since I was still fortunate enough to have my husband. My attitude toward dishes and laundry during my drinking days boiled down to: "A bright college graduate like me must be meant to do something better, like write a great poem or at least be president of something."

As I became conscious of the needs of others, I started making phone calls to people in the Fellowship, not just seeking help or company, but trying to give a little, too. I was useful, and self-pity indeed began to "slip away." The Big Book was true to its promise. And I learned that a cup of coffee or a glass of iced tea and a treat after work added to my husband's happiness and gave him a lift. I was useful; I was becoming thoughtful of others.

I expanded and improved upon my cooking. A trip to the grocery store became a useful activity. I took over the banking, an errand my husband had always performed (along with many others) out of necessity. I began redecorating my home as we could afford it. I rearranged my kitchen so it was more convenient. I organized clutter in attractive baskets, took the 100 pictures off my walls, and hung up a few. I remembered birthdays of AA members and of my family. I crocheted for our annual AA fair.

Gradually, I grew to understand that normal living meant being useful where I was, accepting where I was, and not hankering after all those big things. As I had heard at meetings—my ship had already come in. All these little activities kept me sober and made me feel like a contributing person once again.

I might have continued feeling useless and full of self-pity if I had not begun to think again and, under the care of God and excellent sponsors, to see clearly that my attitude needed changing. Even as an alcoholic staying sober one day at a time at home, I could be worthwhile and step out of self-pity by stepping out of self. To me, that meant service of any small kind, and I came to view service as the opposite of uselessness.

The Big Book kept its promise for me. I am delighted to recognize what normal, constructive activity is. For this change in outlook, for seeing my worth where I am, I have become most grateful and happy in the everyday activities of life, all given back to me by the beautiful AA program and my God.

Z. H., Metairie, Louisiana

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

35th Annual ACYPAA

April 26 – 29, 2007
Los Angeles, CA
Website: www.acypaa2007.org

26th Annual Southern California Hospitals & Institutions Conference

April 27 – 29, 2007
Orange, CA
Info: (818) 342-1642 or (562) 438-2992

2nd Annual Ride 4 Recovery

May 6, 2007
Castaic Lake, CA
Info & tickets: Joel M. (818) 314-7335
Website: www.scv-aa.org

23rd Annual Tri-State Round-up

May 18 – May 20, 2007
Laughlin, NV
Info: Debbie A. (928) 681-2217
Website: www.tristate-roundup.com

23rd Annual South Bay Round-up

May 25 – May 28, 2007
Torrance, CA
Info Hotline: (310) 354-7660
Website: www.southbayroundup.org

A.A. DESERT POWWOW

June 14 - 17, 2007
Indian Wells, CA
Info: SherAli J. (760) 321-6568
Website: <http://www.desertpowwow.com>

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

Service Committee Schedule

- Apr. 16, 2006 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- May 7, 2007 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- May 7, 2007 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- May 7, 2007 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- May 1, 2007 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- May 2, 2007 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- May 9, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**
6PM, Central Office

- May 12, 2007 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- May 14, 2007 **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.

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 2008 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 March 12, 2007

Rosanne L. 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: Terry - 2 yrs, Christine - 3 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:15 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 April 9, 2007

Next Meeting - April 9, 2007

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

March 2007

Anonymous	15 Years
David F.	19 Years
Anonymous	27 Years
Hal S.	35 Years
Shirley V.	?? Years
Reseda Big Book Disc.	Many Years
Learning To Live Men's Stag	Many 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.

Belonging

Tradition 1:

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity

THE WOMAN who had invited me to lunch with some AA members, in the summer of 1960, introduced me as a newcomer. The others greeted me and went back to their meal. I told my newfound friend Jane that I wasn't hungry. Actually, I was shaking apart and unable to eat. Every time I tried to get the cup to my lips and the coffee sloshed out, Jane "just happened" to turn away. My brain was in a fog, but I recognized her tactfulness. By drawing me into the fellowship at that table, she was leading me to the unity of AA.

That was my introduction to the First Tradition.

I had some more drinking to do after my first couple of weeks dry, but when I was ready for AA in the fall of that year, AA was ready for me.

One of the most inscrutable mysteries for the longest time was how the group knew exactly what my number one problem was even before I could tell them. And there seemed to be no limit to their understanding of my many other problems. It became a bit spooky.

Again, I was startled when individual members of the group told me they cared about me. Right away, the antennae went up: What did they want from me? It seemed that people had always wanted something. I was not yet at the point of recovery where I could see myself as someone who had always been trying to get something for nothing, just about all his life.

In spite of the mysteries and my doubts, I could see clearly that the group had made my welfare part of theirs. It was baffling, but it kept me coming back.

One night, a drinking drunk came to the group. Up to then, my idea of disruption of a meeting was somebody's sneezing while the speaker was talking. But the drunk that night was not sneezing. Finally, after repeated warnings, a few of our members escorted him out of the hall and up the street to the coffee shop. I was quite put out, to think that a drinking drunk should dare to come to our meeting.

I conveniently forgot that I had come to meetings drunk. Also forgotten was one of my favorite routines, while the meeting was in progress—standing in a corner at the front of the room with my face to the wall. Or else, in the middle of the meeting, I would run and hide in the coat closet. There

was one man in particular who would coax me back to the meeting. Jack was practicing the First Tradition then, and I am happy to say he still is.

Of tremendous importance was the fact that the group never lectured me. Lectures on drinking, or rather on not drinking, had left me cold and determined to do it my way. The AAs did not preach to me, either, and that was also very important—indeed, crucial. Ever since, I have tried to follow their example when other alcoholics show up at my group with pleas for help.

I remember a young man who had been around AA awhile but was unable to stop drinking. He charged into the group one night drunk, cornered me, and threatened me with a punch in the nose for some imagined slight. I was prepared to defend myself if he; but first, I tried another way. "You can punch me out if you want," I said, and looked him calmly (!) in the eyes, "but is that going to get you sober?" There was no further violence. I don't know what influence that episode had, but he took his last drink shortly thereafter. He is now sober over ten years.

Groups have to keep coming to grips with the question of what to do about the disruptive drunk. I heard of a case recently where a drinking drunk had been disrupting a group, but no one wanted to be the "bad guy" and do something about him. At last, one disgusted member called the police—and left the meeting without waiting for them. When they arrived and asked who called, not one of the old-timers or mid-timers present would take over the responsibility. It was up to a member with no more than a year's sobriety. She was more interested in staying sober than in being a "good guy." (Calling the police does not automatically mean arrest. It means that the disrupter will be escorted out and given warning.)

Groups find that it is simply not healthy to allow disruptions to go on. If a group's integrity is not placed first, there soon might be no group to disrupt. As for the disrupter, while he (or she) may need help—may even want it—to permit him to take over only enforces his delusion that he is the center of the universe and still all-powerful.

Some AAs feel that cliques are a major disruptive force within groups. I am not sure that they are, although my own experience leaves me skeptical. Once, I got into a clique that seemed very attractive from the outside. What I found →

Belonging *continued...*

was that one of their favorite games was passing judgment on newcomers, deciding who would make it and who would not. It was particularly horrifying because it forced me to admit that I, too, judged newcomers. The only difference was that I did not do it out loud.

The valuable insight I gained there was that I was clique-minded; that is, my attitudes toward my fellow alcoholics were still exclusive (the old way of thinking), rather than inclusive (the AA way).

As a final thought on the subject, I know of an AA group that invited its clique members to form a welcoming committee. The results were surprisingly good.

I was drawn into AA unity by a number of other means—for instance, the special warmth of beginners meetings, the reassuring handshakes, the unstinting words of encouragement. By and by, the literature and the Steps began to take on meaning. Perhaps, the single activity most significant in making me part of Alcoholics Anonymous was my involvement in institutions service work.

Another unifying tool was the area meeting book. Each morning, I would plan the meeting I would attend that night. I regarded my job (I was lucky enough to still have one) as incidental to the meeting. In the course of the day, I would take the book out often to reassure myself that AA did exist. Even today, I catch myself fingering the book in my pocket and enjoying that same feeling of belonging.

Membership in Alcoholics Anonymous used to mean belonging to my home group alone. My comprehension

was so limited that I could not see the connection between my home group and a group on the other side of town. It was to be many years before I would see the connection between my home group and state, regional, and international conventions—many years before my fogbound condition permitted me to understand that my home group was an integral part of the local intergroup, the Grapevine, the AA General Service Office, and our General Service Conference. The grand illumination came when I finally was able to see that, not only was my group part of those bodies, but they were an integral part of my group.

Every once in a while, it seems I am growing and changing so fast that I have outstripped my fellow AAs. At such times, I have only to remember Jane, who put out her hand to me, and Jack, who kept bringing me out of isolation and back into fellowship. I must remember that once I place myself outside my group, I have lost contact with the source of my strength.

Groups and personalities may change, but AA unity does not change. I must be wary, though, not to take it for granted. It is not a magic formula that operates outside the sphere of human activity. AA unity, like sobriety, has to be worked at. Our entire worldwide Fellowship has to work at it. More to the point, I have to work at it.

W. H.
Manhattan, New York

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Co-founder Quotes

Bill Wilson on the 12th Tradition

We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of Anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that

our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him Who presides over us all.
November 1948

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Great modesty and humility are needed by every A.A. for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to A.A. as a whole. This principle of Anonymity before the general public can, if we take it seriously enough, guarantee the Alcoholics Anonymous movement these sterling attributes forever. Our public relations policy should mainly rest upon the principle of attraction and seldom, if ever, upon promotion.
March 1946

On the 10th Step. . .

This step is really an extension of the 4th Step. It is the “follow through” on that long list of things that we put down on paper after reading the 4th Step. The new twist is the part about “when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” The going may get a little tough when we try to put this Step into practice.

It’s easy to write down our good qualities and our bad qualities honestly if it’s done privately and we are sure nobody else sees it. If we are honest, the list of bad qualities will be very much longer than the list of good qualities. If we are trying honestly to live the A.A. program, we try to do something about that longer list. We make resolutions. We plan to “turn over a new leaf.” Then, unfortunately for most of us, we tear the list into tiny pieces, burn it and carefully bury the ashes.

Admission of an unkind remark to someone or of a persistent feeling of resentment is an overt act which means a growing maturity. And it is a matter of a person’s emotional maturity. Perhaps a better word would be childishness. How often have we acted like a child when we should have acted like a man?

A man admits his mistakes and tries to make amends; a child pouts. As problem drinkers, we were problem children. As problem drinkers, we sought to escape the consequences of voluntarily childish acts through alcohol. As arrested alcoholic cases, we must learn to face reality and responsibility for our acts if we are to “stay on the beam.”

The 10th Step is simply a device we use in attaining maturity. None knows better than we how hard it is to admit to our wife, or our boss, or our friends that we have been wrong about so many things. And yet, if we follow this device and make our admissions promptly we go a long way towards attaining the maturity necessary to a happy sobriety.

In a way, this Step is tied to those old standbys in A.A., tolerance and humility. To admit that we were wrong is truly to show humility; to revalue our own importance is truly to be humble. If we are trying to be tolerant, we are trying to understand the other fellow’s point of view. And if we understand his point of view, we are much less likely to treat him unkindly.

To “continue to take personal inventory” means to know ourselves. It’s so easy—and so human, too—to feel a little proud of our sobriety at times. How often have we said to ourselves: Poor old Willie! He was so drunk at the office party. What an ass he made of himself! What makes him so stupid? Why doesn’t he get smart and come into A.A.? We, of course, didn’t do anything wrong at the party. We were sober. We are quite a wonderful fellow! Oh, brother, are we the big A.A.!

This type of thinking is very dangerous. As a matter of fact, lots of persons at the office party probably thought that we were becoming a very stuffy individual. If we were smart, we would thank God that we were able to live through the office party without drinking. If we were honest, we would get down on our knees and thank God that we found A.A. And, as for criticizing Willie! We should try to secure our own sobriety by helping Willie instead of kicking him around.

The 10th Step is really a reminder. It reminds us to be alert about ourselves. It reminds us that we are only an arm’s length from a drink and a slip. It is a very important step. We would do well to learn its implications.

J.T.
Greenwich Village, New York City

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Ham on Wry - humor from The Grapevine

“I came to AA because of back problems—my wife was on my back, my boss was on my back, my creditors were on my back . . .”
William L., Asheville, NC

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“Sedate and well-mannered Pasadena even knows how to caution tipsy citizens. We spotted this cocktail lounge sign: ‘Patrons, please do not stand while the bar is in motion’.”

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Had the dangest dream last night,” said a drunk to his companion at the bar. “I dreamed that suddenly about 1,000 funny little men were dancing on top of me. They had pink caps and green suits and furry red boots that curled up in front.”

“Yeah,” agreed the second. “And there was a tinkly bell at the toe of each of the boots.”

“That’s right,” said the first drunk. “But how did you know?”

“There are a couple of them still sitting on your shoulder.”

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The City Prosecutor was questioning a man in police court charged with reckless driving.

“As a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, you are not supposed to take that first drink,” the prosecutor said.

“That’s right and I don’t take, it,” the defendant said. “I order the first drink and set it aside. Then I order a second drink, a third drink and so forth. But that first drink never gets touched.”

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Easy to Forget

On a recent morning after our Attitude Adjustment Meeting, a friend shared that he'd been trying to help a distant newcomer by telephone. Although she'd attended meetings in her small community, she'd been turned off by the cliquishness she'd encountered. He asked my advice.

I thought back to a women's afternoon meeting I'd attended as a newcomer. At the break, the women had gathered in clusters of two or three, and I sat alone, feeling so conspicuous and uncomfortable that after a few minutes, I got up and left.

Fortunately there are so many meetings to choose from in my neighborhood that I found a meeting whose members extended a friendly hand and made me feel welcome. I remember one gentleman who sat by the door and greeted each person as he or she entered. He had a warm smile and always found something to say to each of us. His example has continued to be an inspiration to me in my continued sobriety.

It's so easy to forget how frightened and alone we felt at our first AA meetings. We become comfortable and friendly with people we know, and sometimes we may forget to extend the spirit of friendliness to the newcomer.

As I see it, this is a golden opportunity to work the Twelfth Step. Our smiles, our handshakes, our invitations to come along for coffee after meetings are important ingredients that make the AA Fellowship a program of attraction.

If I feel lonely or sad, for any reason, and my sponsor isn't available, I can usually find a meeting nearby. I try

to remember the friendly greeter who gave me the encouragement I needed as a newcomer and extend the same spirit of friendship to both new and familiar faces. Although I may want to sit with friends, I often sit near someone who appears to be alone and introduce myself. By the end of the meeting my sadness usually dwindles or disappears.

“...sometimes we may forget to extend the spirit of friendliness to the newcomer.”

Likewise, when we hear a fellow member share a painful experience during the meeting, it is vital that we share our understanding. Recently a sober friend shared in a meeting that one of her sponsees had committed suicide. She said that afterwards, as she was boxing up the literature, not one member of the group came up to acknowledge her sorrow.

While sobriety in AA brings the joys of fellowship, we must always keep in mind that our primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to maintain their sobriety. Reaching out beyond our immediate circle of friends to the newcomer or to the old-timer who needs encouragement is an integral part of this purpose. I'm grateful for every member of Alcoholics Anonymous who has taken the time to extend a friendly hand to me.

Lindie B.
Redondo Beach, CA

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*San Fernando Valley Central Office
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91405*

Current Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ ZIP _____

New

Renewal

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Moving ???: *We need your former address as well as your new address to correct our records. Fill out both forms and mail to the address above.*

Former Address

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ ZIP _____