

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 31, NO. 9 SEPT. 2007

The Triple Whammy of Spirituality

"...being responsible, being somewhat disciplined and being available."

I went to my sponsor, a very smart man, and asked him, "What is the exact meaning of spirituality in AA? I'm really confused."

My sponsor leaned back, closed his eyes halfway, and peered at me.

"You've been sober over ten years?"

"It's almost twelve now."

"Have you read the Big Book lately?"

"Well, I go to a Big Book study group once a week," I told him.

"Let me tell you a story and you can figure it out yourself."

I expected this was going to be a long session, so I leaned back too, with my eyes half-closed.

"The Big Book says the spiritual life is no theory, that we have to live it," he went on. "This story is about a man not in AA who spent a lot of time in church. He was an usher on Sundays and he sang in the church choir. He really felt spiritual. But after a while the amount of booze he was consuming had increased to the point where he lost control. He became one of us. Luckily for him, he found AA and recovered. He still goes to church but his attitude has changed. What happened? He started helping others. He became responsible."

"You mean being responsible has something to do with spirituality?" I asked.

"It has everything to do with it. We have to live it, not just *talk* about it. And being responsible means doing the right thing on a daily basis."

"What do you mean exactly?" I shot back.

"Being responsible simply means doing things like paying bills on time, getting to work on time, doing household duties as needed, and so forth. This doesn't mean we can't have fun—recreation and vacations are very important. I also need to take care of my health by eating a good diet and getting regular exercise."

"Okay. Is that it?"

"That's a lot of it, but there's more. As a responsible person I also need to be fairly well disciplined—go to meetings on a regular basis, work the Steps on a regular basis, exercise on a regular schedule."

"Anything more?" I wanted to know.

"Well, another big item is being available. When people reach out, I need to reach back and listen to them talk about their situation. In some cases, I need to take them to their first meeting to get them started. I need to be available."

"Sounds to me like spirituality is more action than a lot of praying."

"True. But prayer is important because I must have the help of my Higher Power in everything. To sum it up, for me spirituality is a triple whammy—being responsible, being somewhat disciplined and being available."

"Sounds like a full-time job to me," I grumbled.

"Yes," my sponsor ended, "but it is the easiest way to gain peace of mind that I know."

G. L.

San Antonio, Texas

Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

56th Annual Southern California AA Convention
September 21 - 23, 2007
Garden Grove, CA
Website: www.aasocal.com

4rd Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA
October 19 - 21, 2007
Valencia, CA
Info: 661-310-0384
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

23rd Annual Santa Barbara Convention
October 12 - 14, 2007
Goleta, CA
Website: www.sbaaconvention.org

4rd Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA
October 19 - 21, 2007
Valencia, CA
Info: 661-310-0384
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

Area 93 Annual Oldtimers Event
with Spaghetti Lunch Social
Sat, October 27, 2007, 10:30AM-2:00PM
Camarillo, CA
Info: Phyllis V. 818-995-8213, George R. 818-708-0457,
Jeff J. 818-590-8404

41st Annual Las Vegas Roundup
November 22 - 25, 2007
Las Vegas, NV
Website: www.lasvegasroundup.com

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>

Opportunities for Service

Your Central Office needs
telephone volunteers
for the Late Evening (9 PM - 12 Midnight) shift and
the Overnight (12 midnight - 9 AM) shift.

If you have one year or more of continuous
sobriety, you can sign up to do a shift
(from your home!) once per month and
help your fellow alcoholics.

Service Committee Schedule

Sept 20, 2007 **SFV H&I**
THIRD MONDAY
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

October 1, 2007 **G.S. District #11**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

October 1, 2007 **G.S. District #16**
FIRST MONDAY
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

October 1, 2007 **G.S. District #17**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

October 2, 2007 **G.S. District #2**
FIRST TUESDAY
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

October 3, 2007 **G.S. District #1**
FIRST WEDNESDAY
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

October 3, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

October 13, 2007 **G.S. District #7**
SECOND SATURDAY
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

October 8, 2007 **SFV Intergroup**
SECOND MONDAY
6:30PM Orientation
7PM Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Damaged Books for Sale

From time to time Central Office has slightly to
heavily damaged books in inventory.

In early October we plan to start a program offering
these damaged titles for sale.

Anyone interested is invited to contact Central
Office. Ask to speak with Bob, Larry or Lindsay.

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 August 13, 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: Larry - 1 yr, Al - 3 yrs, Tom - 5 yrs,
David - 6 yrs, Brian - 7 yrs, Joan - 20 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:25 PM

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

*These minutes are pending approval on
September 10, 2007*

Next Meeting - September 10, 2007

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

August 2007

Kit V. 14 years

Joan E. 20 years

Myheir H. 25 years

Reseda BB Study a number of 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.

Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Service But Were Afraid to Ask

Secret society? Politics in AA? Elite group? Well, not quite . . .

Shortly after joining AA, I discovered what seemed to be a secret organization within our Fellowship. Every once in a while, a group of men and women would appear at the local club, go into one of the rooms, close the door, and have a special meeting. When I finally asked someone, I was told, "That's general service." I immediately assumed that they were a branch of the government somehow connected to AA.

Later, when I found that general service was part of AA, I decided that they couldn't be regular AAs. After all, they weren't members of my group. They were probably part of some sort of elite group that, I was certain, would exclude me. This happened during the period of my sobriety that I liken to being in the Land of Oz. I just came to meetings without ever giving a thought as to how the coffee, the literature, our meeting place, or our group leaders happened to be there.

I learned that AA consisted of more than just my home group

Then, my sponsor began to talk to me about something called "being in service." The next thing I knew, I was elected to become our group's intergroup representative. I'm not certain that the proximity of those two events was totally coincidental. At any rate, being fearful of accepting any responsibility, I said to my sponsor, "You don't think I should be an intergroup rep, do you?" He congratulated me on being one, and that ended that.

For the next six months, I resigned from intergroup each month—while talking to my wife on the way to the meeting. At the meeting, of course, I never mentioned what I'd decided on the way there. I didn't want anyone to know that I was afraid. During these monthly meetings, I began to notice that the committee seemed to be doing things all wrong. I thought, "I'd better stick around a while and try to straighten them out." And so it goes. The door to the Third Legacy swung fully open, and I stepped into an experience in fellowship that many choose to deny themselves.

Becoming active in service, first in intergroup, then in general service, I learned many things. First, I learned that AA consisted of more than just my home group. Service

expanded my horizons to encompass the whole of our Fellowship. I learned that our books and pamphlets were the result of many hours of love and dedication to our Fellowship from men and women like ourselves. I discovered that our service structure was based upon a system of representation that, like AA, was inclusive, never exclusive. Most important, I discovered that the distance between me and that mysterious group at the club could be bridged if I was willing to serve.

In today's fast-paced society, AA has grown in leaps and bounds, and so have our needs. In the beginning, the emphasis was on the traditional Twelfth Step call. Its importance is well documented by the fact that an entire chapter (the seventh) in the Big Book is devoted to the Twelfth Step. Today, our Twelfth Step is still the cornerstone of AA's Legacy of Service. However, we have discovered that we have the tremendous responsibility of providing the fertile soil in which the seeds of our Twelfth Step can take root and flourish. As our co-founder Bill W. says in *The AA Service Manual*, "Our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence."

Our co-founders and early members knew that it was imperative to seek the means by which we might carry the message to as many as possible as quickly as possible, so that others might be spared the destruction of alcoholism. The need to share our experience, strength, and hope thus gave birth to AA's Legacy of Service. It is to the credit of our members that so many have given freely of themselves and their particular talents and gifts that others might live.

Service in AA is more than being our group's intergroup rep or GSR (general service representative). It also means that we, as group members, should support our representatives by becoming interested in AA beyond the confines of our home group; that we should become aware of the many functions of service. If we are DCMs (district committee members), service means taking the time to visit those groups to whom we have a responsibility. It means becoming knowledgeable about the service manual, our Traditions, and our Twelve Concepts. It means being willing to share with our district's GSRs our service experience, strength, and hope.

If we are area officers, we should be willing to seek an informed group conscience and to accept its decision even

continued on Pg. 6

The A.A. Pamphlet: A Modern 'Cinderella' Story

Early every Monday morning this past spring, when most Manhattanites were waking to a new work-week, Joan E. could be found at her home group, the 79th Street Workshop, setting up for the closed discussion meeting that would start promptly at 7:15. On each chair she placed an A.A. pamphlet—this week “The A.A. Member—Medications and Other Drugs.” After opening the meeting, Joan or another member of the group read excerpts from the pamphlet, then gave each person in the room a chance to share about the subject and how it related to their own experience in recovery from alcoholism.

“Each Workshop member who chairs the meeting, usually for a six-month period, selects the topic for discussion,” Joan explains. “Often it will center on the Steps, traditions or an emotion—from anger to gratitude—on A.A. books and booklets, ranging from the Big Book and Twelve and Twelve to *Daily Reflections* and *Living Sober*. But whoever heard of an A.A. pamphlet study group? To me our pamphlets, despite being all they can be, are the Cinderellas of A.A. They deserve a chance to shine at the ‘ball’—in other words, at our discussion meetings.”

Joan knows about Cinderellas. “When I was a kid,” she recalls, “I got into stamp collecting. What intrigued me most were not the mainstream stamps up front but the “Cinderellas,” as they were called, at the back of the book—beautiful, colorful stamps issued seasonally or commemoratively, but definitely

not the leaders.” Years later in A.A., she says, “it all came back to me: Go to almost any meeting, and there they are in all their glory—the A.A. books and booklets, nicely bound, pleasing in appearance and laid out with care on the literature table. Backing them up, and often stuffed into a rack or shoebag like so many Cinderellas, are the hardworking pamphlets that most groups offer free of charge.

The pamphlets, she points out—and there are more than sixty in the English language alone—“offer a wealth of information about all aspects of the Fellowship. What impresses me is their universality. There’s something for everybody, from teenagers to older alcoholics and those with special needs and interests. The Fellowship spends a lot of time, effort and expense on these pamphlets, but so many members either don’t seem to know they exist or else have no idea of how incredibly much A.A. information, history and sharing they cover. For any question we have about A.A., or if there’s a problem that affects the individual or the group, there’s usually an answer, or new light on the subject, to be found in one or more of them.”

Back at the 79th Street Workshop, the pamphlets had their months in the spotlight (and may well again). Those who were there came away with a new appreciation of the Cinderellas in their midst that had been there for the asking all along.

Box 459 Aug/Sept 2007



Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob

Of far more importance was the fact that he [Bill W.] was the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience. In other words, he talked my language.

Dr. Bob's Last Major Talk

Bill Wilson

The Traditions are neither rules, regulations, nor laws. No sanctions or punishments can be invoked for their infraction. Perhaps in no other area of society would these principles succeed. Yet in this Fellowship of alcoholics, the unenforceable Traditions carry a power greater than that of law.

AA Today

Grapevine Humor

A heavy drinker was proud of the fact that he could tell by taste what was in every drink put before him. One day a wise bartender dumped into his glass the leavings of several drinks and told him to name them.

He rattled off scotch, bourbon, gin and so forth. The bartender then gave him a glass of plain water and said: "Okay, what's that?"

The lush took a drink of water, looked puzzled, and finally said: "You got me that time, but let me tell you, it will never sell!"

« « « « » » » »

A New York AA member tells of an active alcoholic who was selected from the studio audience one day to participate in a TV game show. The show's host said, "Name two famous brothers who made it possible for all of us to fly."

"That's easy," the alcoholic replied. "Ernest and Julio Gallo."

« « « « » » » »

It's two o'clock in the morning. The phone rings. A very drunk voice asks, "Harry there?"

"There's no Harry here," growls the half-asleep owner of the phone, "you've got the wrong number."

Five minutes later the phone rings again. "Lemme talk to Harry."

"You've got the wrong number!"

Another five minutes and the same thing. "Harry?"

"No!"

Five more minutes go by. The phone rings. This time the irate but wise citizen answers, "Alcoholics Anonymous!"

The phone goes dead and stays quiet for the rest of the night.

« « « « » » » »

One night before a meeting, I asked a newcomer to read the Twelve Traditions. A few minutes later he walked back over, handed me the Traditions card, said, 'Thank you,' and returned to his seat. It turned out to be his very first meeting.

« « « « » » » »

"A nudist colony wanted to start an AA group, but central service denied the request on the grounds that everyone would be comparing instead of identifying.

Service

continued from Pg. 4

when we are obliged to set our own ideas aside in favor of the majority. As trusted servants and leaders, we have a responsibility to uphold that trust by being informed leaders. We may be asked to make sacrifices, but we will discover that they are not sacrifices at all—when we view them in the light of where we might be now if AA had never existed.

If we are chosen as area delegates to the General Service Conference or as trustees, we serve the whole of AA in the United States and Canada. We are elected by our peers and given the task of guiding our Fellowship with the help of a loving God, as we understand him. No greater compliment can be given to any man or woman than to be entrusted with such a responsibility by those about us. They have known us as intimately as only AAs can know one another, and they have chosen us with love.

I'm not certain that I fully comprehended AA's Third Legacy when I was elected delegate, but I understand it now. My greatest wish upon returning from my second and final Conference was to impart to AAs in my area at least a portion of the love, dedication, and gratitude that had been so strongly expressed at the General Service Conference. I don't know whether I have been able to accomplish that

goal, but I am sure that I have become able to recognize that same expression of love, devotion, and gratitude in the eyes of all those who have become willing to give of themselves in order to serve their fellow alcoholics. Perhaps, this is part of the "Great Reality" about which Bill spoke.

If, at one time, service seemed like a secret society to me, it was because I was depriving myself of the opportunity to freely give of myself in the spirit of our Twelfth Step. Service is truly freedom of the spirit in a Fellowship where individual freedom is cherished. This spirit of service and the legacy it has provided can best be described by the closing paragraphs of Bill's chapter on the Twelfth Concept:

"Freedom under God to grow in his likeness and image will ever be the quest of Alcoholics Anonymous. May our General Service Conference be always seen as a chief symbol of this cherished liberty.

"To a man, we of AA believe that our freedom to serve is truly the freedom by which we live—the freedom in which we have our being."

C. C., West Palm Beach, Florida

Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.

K.I.S.S.

For years, I stumbled along in AA “trying to figure it all out.” I devoured all the literature and listened to the collective wisdom in the meetings. Then I tried to fit it all together into an intellectual formula, as if my life and the program were part of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle that I could solve if I thought about it long and hard enough.

During this period, I attended meetings regularly, read the Big Book, and managed to stay sober. But for all my valiant efforts, I was woefully short on serenity. Oh, I’d have glimpses of it on rare occasions, but it was hardly a regular visitor. Then, about a year ago, I quite unintentionally quit trying to figure it all out. It became unnecessary to make intellectual sense of what I had once perceived as the inconsistencies (or at least the ironies) of the program. It became all right if I didn’t try to turn into logic each word or phrase I met in the program. At first, I wondered if I was just becoming intellectually lazy. Perhaps I am, I thought, but I *feel* so much better simply accepting what the program offers rather than dissecting it in my mental laboratory.

My sponsor was the first to comment on my new condition. The way he put it—bluntly as always—was “You seem a lot calmer these days, not so full of intellectual b.s.” Later he put it more kindly when he allowed that I appeared to have experienced a form of spiritual awakening.

I pointed out to my sponsor that my newfound serenity seemed to flow because I quit trying to figure it all out, rather than from the Steps. His response was again blunt: “Stupid, you’ve finally started working Steps Two and Three after all these years. As long as you had to figure it all out, you really hadn’t come to believe that ‘a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity’—as described in Step Two.” He pointed out that I still clung to the delusion that my puny intellectual faculties could do the job. As long as I had to figure it all out, there was no way I could turn my will and life over to the care of God in Step Three because I continued to have more faith in my intellect than in God. Now, finally—slow learner that I am—I have grown spiritually to the point where I no longer have to control everything by figuring it all out, and I’m finally working Steps Two and Three. This has finally led me to the Twelfth Step, “These Steps,” he said, “have resulted in a form of spiritual awakening—your new serenity and emotional acceptance have replaced the old intellectual control which had blocked your path for years. Do you understand?”

I’m not sure I fully do, but it’s no longer important. I just know I don’t have to understand fully or figure it all out, and I sure feel a lot better these days.

Skip B., Telluride, Colorado
Reprinted with permission of the AA Grapevine.

Newletter 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 \$ _____

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 _____