

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 31, NO. 10 OCT. 2007

Next month is Gratitude Month

Being Grateful In November

Gratitude is always in order, but many groups have designated November as a particular time to give thanks to the A.A. program. It has been that way since the 1940s, when the General Service Board held small "gratitude dinners," which were replaced in the 1960s by bigger and more elaborate "gratitude luncheons." These get-togethers, which Bill W. would address, were occasions for A.A. members to express their appreciation for the program. More important, it was A.A.'s opportunity to meet with members of the media to thank them for their sympathetic coverage. According to a G.S.O. memo at the time, the aim of the functions was, "to advance A.A.'s public relations by bringing editors, publishers, writers and broadcasters in personal contact with sources of reliable information on the movement." The luncheons, which later were deemed too expensive, ended in 1968.

Why November became Gratitude Month in the U.S. (in Canada, it is in October) is uncertain. It may have something to do with Bill W.'s mistaken notion for a time that his sobriety began in November, instead of its actual start date of Dec. 11. There are clear connections to Thanksgiving, though. In 1956 and 1957, there were floor actions at the annual General Service Conferences recommending that Thanksgiving week in those years be designated "A.A. Gratitude Week." The floor action suggested that this "be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help worldwide services."

However it was that November became Gratitude Month, A.A.s early on saw that staying grateful was important in staying sober. Acceptance may be the answer to all our problems, but gratitude has to be a close second.

As many in A.A. have discovered, gratitude is a sure cure for self-pity. And can you be resentful at the same time that you're grateful? Some in recovery will coax their thinking onto spiritual lines with gratitude lists. If not forced to look — in black and white — at what they have been given, too many A.A.s find they can drift off into a reverie about what they imagine they've been denied.

Being quick to take credit for what has been a gift also takes its toll. Bill W. once detected in himself a strain of self-congratulation for his contribution to A.A. Seeing that this attitude was cutting him off from his fellow A.A.s, he reflected, "How much better it would have been had I felt gratitude rather than self-satisfaction — gratitude that I had once suffered the pains of alcoholism, gratitude that a miracle of recovery had been worked upon me from above...." (Grapevine 1946)

Some groups will hold Traditions meetings in November to remind themselves of the rich heritage of A.A. Others do topic meetings on the various aspects of gratitude, such as "gratitude is not passive" or "giving it away." During the course of the year, many members of the Fellowship send a gratitude gift of one or two dollars for each year of sobriety on their anniversaries to their local intergroup or to the General Service Office.

As Bill W. wrote in a letter in 1959, "if you carry the message to others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given you."

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

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

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.

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

- October 15, 2007 **SFV H&I**
THIRD MONDAY
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- November 5, 2007 **G.S. District #11**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- November 5, 2007 **G.S. District #16**
FIRST MONDAY
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- November 5, 2007 **G.S. District #17**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- November 6, 2007 **G.S. District #2**
FIRST TUESDAY
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- November 7, 2007 **G.S. District #1**
FIRST WEDNESDAY
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- November 7, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- November 10, 2007 **G.S. District #7**
SECOND SATURDAY
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- November 12, 2007 **SFV Intergroup**
SECOND MONDAY
6:30PM Orientation
7PM Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

November

is

GRATITUDE

MONTH

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 September 10, 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: Phyllis - 6 yrs, Judith - 25 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:27 PM

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

These minutes are pending approval on October 8, 2007

Next Meeting - October 8, 2007

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

September 2007

Randy H.	10 years
Anonymous	11 years
Frank K.	23 years
Mary Jane A.	25 years
Nancy M.	32 years
Reseda BB Study	a lot 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.

Group Meetings Grow, and So Do Expenses

Amounts of money may differ, but the principle of group self-support hasn't changed in 35 years

More and more, our meetings are outgrowing the small home gatherings where meeting needs are at a minimum. The greater proportion of meetings are now of necessity held in some hall or meeting room where it is necessary to pay rent.

The very growth of AA and the size of the average group are the primary factors behind this necessity. By the same token, expenses mount. Heat and light are in some instances added expense. The increasing demand for AA literature becomes an expense factor. The group share of area central committees and the AA Foundation office [now the AA General Service Office] must be counted in the overall group expense budget. An increasing number of groups also give AA year pins to members who have attained a year of sobriety. In the larger groups, this becomes quite an expense item. Many groups also purchase a limited number of copies of the Grapevine or a local area paper, to be given to newcomers. Even refreshments add to the expense.

Actually, this meeting cost may now average more than fifty cents per person per meeting; and when we remember that newcomers and non-alcoholics do not contribute, that means at least one dollar per alcoholic member per week.

In the face of this growing expense, our group leaders bravely and proudly stand before the groups and proclaim to the world that we are self-supporting, that no outside financial aid is solicited or accepted, and that our expenses are small and are taken care of by voluntary contributions of members at each meeting.

The leader may also say, "Visitors, please do not contribute," and so the visitors depart later in complete ignorance of the fact that the local secretary has hastily called a meeting of a few of the steadfast members to inform them that the evening collection was far short of the amount needed to meet the cost of the meeting. These few steadfast members, who have earlier put their dollar bills in the collection, calmly and quietly make up the deficit, thankful that they have enjoyed another evening of sobriety, which—even counting the extra donation—is far less costly than an evening of drinking. Unconsciously, they have added to their insurance that another evening of drinking is extremely unlikely.

Another group happily departs as soon as they've had their

coffee. Those members never visit any other meeting but religiously, once each week, set aside an evening to attend their own group meeting. Having done so, they close the book for another week. They have done their duty. They have attended a meeting, and when the hat was passed, they carefully put in the usual twenty-five cents. For the balance of the week, they will not be disturbed; no Twelfth Step work, for they have carefully refrained from divulging their telephone numbers. AA is a great thing! They are sober! Happy? No, they can't claim much happiness, but they are sober!

Then there is that group of people who are always the last to leave the meeting; who are deriving so much good and so much happiness from AA that they prefer AA meetings to any other way of spending an evening. They make it a point to meet and talk with the newcomers at each meeting, the addresses or phone numbers of newcomers, and call them or visit them during the week. They quietly drop a dollar bill in the hat at every meeting, nearly always remembering how much cheaper that is than a fifth or a pint. They seek out the leaders or co-leaders after a meeting, thank them, and tell them what a good meeting it was. Frequently, they quietly approach the local treasurer, ask whether the collection was adequate, and offer to help if it was not. These are the backbone of the AA movement. Happy? You bet they are happy! They will tell you that they have never before enjoyed the happiness that is theirs since they found AA. Serenity? Yes, they have at last found a serenity they did not dream would ever again be possible for them.

This is not an attempt to scold. Neither is it an attempt to take the other fellow's inventory. Rather, it is intended as a helpful suggestion that we in AA receive more benefits from our participation in *all* AA activities as we give more of our time and of ourselves to the program, morally, spiritually, physically, as well as materially. It is a constructive suggestion that the group is only as successful as the participants allow it to be, and a reminder that we in AA strive for the greatest good for the greatest number.

These are controversial issues, you say? And you further remind me that we do not indulge in controversies. Can we not look at these things as the less pleasant details of our daily living? Things which we all hate to bring up, yet of which we are always conscious? Isn't it far better to discuss them openly here, where all may participate, than



Group Meetings

cont.

to have them arise in whispers in corners after the meetings? Shouldn't we, as normal people now, squarely face the small common issues that so closely touch our daily lives? Doesn't "our path" partially consist of sharing *equally* the cost of holding meetings for our mutual benefit?

Let us fairly admit that the group expenses are the responsibility of every alcoholic in the group, and all of us should honestly try to do our share. Let us go beyond the expenses and each bear a share of the little tasks of operation: where necessary, help place the chairs and tables; help clean up after meetings; offer our services on the various committees appointed to attend to the mechanics of meetings. Let us be thankful that we have the companionship and fellowship of these meetings—thankful that we have the blessings of sobriety—humbly grateful for the happiness and serenity offered to every person who will accept and practice the principles of the program.

"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path."

We can be self-supporting.

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H. W.

Grapevine, November 1947

Humor from the Grapevine

A drunk was walking along the bank of a river when she spied one of her drinking buddies on the other side.

"Hey, Sal," she yelled. "How do I get on the other side of the river?"

Sal looked up the river and down the river. Then she replied, "You *are* on the other side."

« « « » » »

Toward the end of his life, when he was suffering from the accumulated effects of a lifetime of drinking, an ill W.C. Fields was discovered reading the bible by one of his friends.

The astonished friend asked: "What are you, an atheist, doing reading the bible?"

"I'm looking for loopholes," Fields is said to have replied.

« « « » » »

While standing in the grieving line at my Uncle Bill's wake, I overheard the woman in front of me offering her condolences to my aunt.

"Mary, I'm so sorry," she said. "But doesn't Billy look good?"

"He should," replied my aunt. "He hasn't had a drink in four days."

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Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob Smith

The fact that my sobriety has been maintained continuously for thirteen and a half years doesn't allow me to think that I am necessarily any further away from my next drink than any of you people.

Dr. Bob's Last Major Talk

Bill Wilson

One way to get at the meaning of the principle of acceptance is to meditate upon it in the context of AA's much-used prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Grapevine, March 1962

One Man's Opinion As He Sees the 'Spiritual Angle'

"There are no atheists in foxholes" is an expression which has been current nearly three years, though its authenticity has been challenged by skeptics. It also might be said that "there are no atheists in A.A.," though this statement, too, might be open to question.

It is by no means easy to estimate just how much spiritual faith is necessary to grasp the A.A. message and to follow the A.A. program in its fullest measure. The problem has been brought home several times recently when this writer was engaging in 12th Step work, and the question was not answered easily.

By way of preamble, it is best to assert that the present writer is not an atheist, since he does not pursue a system of thought opposed to belief in God. Strictly speaking, atheism is not the declining to assert an affirmative belief in theism, but is the assertion of the negative to theism. It may take the form of asserting the exclusion of a First Cause, or of asserting the non-existence of a personal God. Moral atheism is expressed in the assertion that no spiritual First Cause exists, that if God exists man never has learned and never can learn His will, and that, since no divine sanction can be found for morals, right or wrong in conduct are determined solely by circumstances. Any philosophy, then, which omits the existence of God from its consideration may be defined as negative atheism.

It is this writer's opinion that even such a blank conscience as the foregoing might be receptive to the A.A. program, granting a wholehearted acceptance of the first step, though he does not endorse the above tenets himself.

I believe there is only one source for all life whose ineffably superior power is revealed in the few details of creation which we are able to perceive with our limited understanding. To me, God is only the primal energy which set in motion the forces and laws which brought into existence and now govern the universe.

Let me hasten to grant that this is just my opinion. It could be incorrect. Furthermore, I may some day change my opinion. I do not claim to be infallible. I merely am stating my opinion on a subject which frequently arises in discussion with new A.A.s and some not so new.

Without putting forward any formalized creed of my own, I hold that every man has a perfect right to choose his own faith, unbound by any set of articles. While holding my own beliefs, I wish everyone to decide for himself what



An Important Stretch "...In truth most AA lessons are learned out there in the real world."

When I first got sober, I was unemployable. I had two dogs, a cat, a pregnant wife and a teenage daughter who was dating an AA-wannabe. I needed a job and I needed it quick. I was willing to go to any length to bring home a paycheck.

I had helped my brother-in-law move into his 1930s-era fixer-upper house that he had just purchased. When we had him settled in, he took me behind his lopsided garage and showed me an old water-logged forty-foot wooden ladder that he said I could have.

It took both of us to lift that ladder and put it on top of my \$300 hatchback. Of course, it was longer than the car, so I tied it to the front and back bumpers, secured a rope around the part of the ladder that rested on the car's roof and tied it off through the two open front windows so that the rope passed right behind my head as I drove. I had to untie the rope in order to open the doors and get out.

The next day I bought a two-inch and a four-inch paintbrush and—just like that—I was the owner of my own house painting company.

An AA old-timer became my first customer and it was there during the next three weeks that I worked on that house that I learned some of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The old-timer's house was built in true Depression Era style. It was three stories, straight up, and straight down. There were no frills or fancy trim, and it didn't look as if it had been painted since it was built, decades earlier. In short, it had that gray forlorn look as if it were left over from an Alfred Hitchcock movie.

I knew enough about house painting to know that you started at the top and painted down, so that first morning at five minutes after eight I realized two things: first, it takes two people to use a forty-foot ladder, and second, anybody in his right mind would realize that in order to paint this house I would need scaffolding and a crew to erect it.

After an hour or so of trail-and-error, I invented my own way of getting that ladder to where it needed to be: at the highest apex of the roofline. After struggling and after taking a trial run up the ladder, where I could stretch myself just tall enough to reach the highest point, I came back down and formulated a plan. I knew that the hardest



Spiritual Angle, *cont.*

God is, without forfeiting my right to choose among conflicting views of doctrine and statement those which seem to me to be true and right.

Since ethics are an important subject for us, I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy through perfect liberty, increased fellowship, and cooperation among mankind.

Perhaps those who are fortunate to have beliefs rooted in those of an organized faith might be tempted to say that such a creed as mine is not enough for an A.A., yet one who holds to such broad conceptions of a Power Greater than Ourselves has been helped thereby in achieving almost three years' sobriety.

I will add this qualification: One must keep an open mind on the so-called "Spiritual Angle." But that also holds for other matters in A.A.

Truly, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

R. E. B.

Manhattan

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Stretch, *cont.*

part of this job was not going to be the scraping, the puttying, or even the painting. The hardest part by far was going to be moving the ladder.

I put all my tools into a five-gallon bucket and went back up. My plan was simple: I would reach all that I could from where I was. I would stretch myself as far as I could upward, then left, then right. Then, I would dip my brush again and see if I couldn't reach a little farther and when I felt I just couldn't stretch another inch, I would stretch that inch and paint a little more.

Was I scared up there? You bet. I was way up there all alone stretching, stretching, stretching until I felt like Spiderman crawling along the face of that house. After I had done my first section and returned to earth, I was struck by how solid that old ladder was. Once I had stomped its legs into the ground, I realized that it was way more solid than the standard aluminum ladder.

We talk about the program in the meetings and on the phone but in truth most Alcoholics Anonymous lessons are learned out there in the real world. That's the way it happened to me that summer long-ago. I learned two important AA lessons for living: Sometimes, when we don't have anything else to work with but the simple tools we are given and our desire to do well, we can turn a burden into an asset. Then we can use that asset to reach out as far as we can—to do all that we can from where we are.

John K. Russell, Manhattan Grapevine.

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Van Nuys, CA 91405

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