

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 32, NO. 1

JAN. 2008

Sponsorship - The Heart of AA

I guess it all really depends on whom you ask and on when you ask it: What is the most important job in AA? While I certainly don't wish to diminish the importance of our many "jobs" in AA, I am grateful for this opportunity to express my opinion.

There exists little doubt in my mind, or heart, that sponsorship has been, and continues to be, the most important job in AA for me. I also believe there are some valid criteria for a good sponsor. First of all, my sponsor has sufficient time in AA, with good quality sobriety. I've also been taught that the best way to be a good sponsor is to be a good sponsee. My sponsor has a sponsor. His sponsor has a sponsor. The people that I have respect for, with good quality sobriety and longevity, use sponsors themselves.

I further believe that if I am able to manipulate my sponsor, then I really don't have one. I'm glad to say I have never been able to manipulate this man. I also know my sponsor is the most active and positive member of AA that I've ever known. He has always been a good example. He has always been gentle but firm, firm but gentle.

At first my sponsor provided AA basics: how to stay away from that first drink one day at a time, the importance of going to meetings on a regular basis, the necessity of a "home group," trying to carry the message on a daily basis.

He has always been there for me. I've shared all of my life story with him over time, and he has always shared his with me. He can and does keep a confidence. As a result, I finally was able to put trust in another human being. I've been taught that trust is the very basis of faith. Without good sponsorship, I would have no faith in a Higher Power today. I wouldn't even be sober.

I haven't always liked this man but I have always respected him. And I haven't always followed his

suggestions or advice. As a result, I've made many errors and mistakes. Yet, he has always allowed me the right to be wrong. His "able example" of love, tolerance, patience, and kindness has taught me more about what my Higher Power is all about than I could have learned in any other way.

I've been sponsored into service. He taught me that "service is gratitude made visible." As a result, I've not only stayed sober but have found in the process a way of living infinitely better than any way I've ever known.

I found out after the fact that I didn't choose him. Rather, he made himself available to me as a friend. He's turned out to be the best friend I've ever had.

Today, I go to meetings looking for the newcomer. I try to quietly sidle up to him, and make myself available as a friend. We exchange phone numbers and get together for coffee. I try to give it away, as it's been so freely given to me. What a deal!

I believe Bill W. and Dr. Bob sponsored each other out of necessity in the beginning. Today, of course, we enjoy a Fellowship which owes its ever-increasing membership of recovering alcoholics (unprecedented in human history) to the well-wishers and combined efforts of many outside agencies and services, as well as many professionals. To these folks, we surely owe a debt of gratitude.

Yet, the heart of AA remains the same, thank God, when one alcoholic reaches out to another, and we find that we can do together what none of us could do alone.

*Jim T.
Aberdeen,
South Dakota*

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

33rd Annual San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention

February 1 - 3, 2008

Burbank, CA

Info: 818-734-0383

Website: www.sfvaaconvention.org

31st Annual San Diego Spring Round Up

March 20 - 23, 2008

San Diego, CA

Website: www.sandiegospringroundup.com

23rd Annual Orange County Convention

March 21 - 23, 2008

Costa Mesa, CA

Website: www.oacaac.org

Service Committee Schedule

- January 21, 2008 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- February 4, 2008 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- February 4, 2008 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- February 4, 2008 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- February 5, 2008 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- February 6, 2008 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- February 6, 2008 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- February 9, 2008 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- February 11, 2008 **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>

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 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 December 10, 2007

Rick A. Co-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: Brian - 1 yr, Michelle - 1 yr,
Maggie - 4 yrs, Dennis - 13 yrs, Di - 14 yrs,
Fred - 14 yrs, Wayne - 24 yrs, Cheryl - 25 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:23 PM

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

*These minutes are pending approval on
December 14, 2008*

Next Meeting - December 14, 2008

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

December 2007

Cheryl M-A. 25 years

Reseda BB Study a lot of years

Learning to Live

Men's Stag 127 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.

Doing the Next Right Thing

I was out of the treatment center a day, two days, a week—I can't remember. What I can remember is that I was scared. I was at home, sitting on the couch, with my two-month-old boy and my two-year-old girl. My wife was on a business trip. If she had known what was going on inside me, she wouldn't have made the trip. I had been placed back into the world after eleven days of detox and I was without a clue to what I was supposed to do. I was hopeless and helpless. In fact, there were three kids in that room, all looking for someone to take over. Waves of fear and desperation washed over me. My hands were shaking and I was sweating. Planes from a nearby airport were passing over my house and I would react nervously to the noise of each one. I was a total wreck. It occurred to me that a big glass of vodka would calm my nerves and I'd be able to function. But I didn't want to drink any more. The thought of it made me sick.

"I realized that God wasn't giving me direction on major life-changing decisions, only on what I needed to do right now—the next right thing!"

I had been placed back into my life without the higher power I had used for the last fourteen years. I had come to rely on alcohol to get me through all kinds of circumstances, big and small, in life: making a presentation at work, going to the grocery store, watching the birth of my two children (I drank vodka in the birthing room of the hospital) and so on and so on. Now here I was, with no alcohol to numb my fears and anxieties, and with my two kids needing me to take care of them. I didn't know how.

My mind raced: how would I manage for the next few days without my wife? Would my wife even want to stay married to me when she found out what a whimpering, fear-ridden wreck I was? And how about the management position I held in my corporation? What would they say when they found out I had been in the hospital because I was addicted to alcohol? The ghosts of the

future were getting larger by the minute. I was just waking up to the realities of life without the deadening effect of alcohol that masks (until the morning) those feelings of fear and uncertainty. I was mentally exhausted, I was physically sick, I was an emotional wreck, and worst of all I was spiritually bankrupt.

I did have a glimmer of hope. I had met some people in a program called Alcoholics Anonymous who told me they understood how I felt and they had also felt this way. They went on to explain what they had personally experienced in detail. When they talked, I focused on when they described their feelings, not the events that had occurred in their lives. Today I realize that my ability to do that was purely a gift from God. It took away the I'm-different-from-them attitude that so many new people experience. These AAs went on to tell me that they had now recovered from a "hopeless state of mind and body," and I believed them. They weren't lying, I could sense it.

Back to the problem at hand. My two-month-old boy started to cry. I stared at him, paralyzed with fear. What was I going to do? As I once again pondered my future, a small inner voice overrode all other thoughts and said, "Change his diapers!" It was very clear and forceful. As funny as it seems now, I promise you it wasn't funny then. So I asked God for help with this task, and I got up and did it. Then I thanked God. Next voice: "Now feed the kids." I asked for help and then did it. "Wash the dishes." Same routine: Please help; thank you. This happened all day long. At the end of the day, after the kids were in bed, I realized that I was following the guidance of God in as practical a manner as possible. And he wasn't giving me direction on major life-changing decisions, only on what I needed to do right now—the next right thing!

It's four and a half years later. My life is better than it has ever been. Yesterday, I was contemplating a career option and wasn't sure how I wanted to proceed. I sat for an hour or so contemplating (I mean projecting!). My wife and kids came into the room (we spend a lot of time together now) and I explained to them what was going on in my head. As the last complicated sentence came out, a small inner voice jumped right in: Why don't you go cut the lawn?

Rick H., Roselle, Illinois

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How My Sponsor Got Better

At a recent meeting, the topic was the indispensability of sponsors. Member after eloquent member shared experiences with marvelous, mind-reading super-people. I got the impression that sponsors were universally loved; no one seemed to have any complaints.

“Pedestaling” of sponsors scares me, even though I know that my fellow members were sharing experiences and that those eulogies were their perceptions of sponsors. My experience was a little different.

When I first came to these rooms, I met a very formidable woman whom I asked (in fear, trembling, and ignorance) to be my sponsor. She had lots of demands. She knew exactly what she wanted of me. She demanded that I go to meetings. She *suggested*, with gimlet eye fastened to mine, that I go to ninety meetings in ninety days. She insisted I call her every day. And she expected me to absolutely *not drink*, one day at a time.

I soon discovered that she didn’t understand me—that *I* had special problems, that *I* was especially intelligent. She didn’t have a sense of humor, either, and I knew she’d have to be replaced.

But I did what she told me to: I went to at least one meeting each day, and each day I didn’t drink for one day. I called her every day and talked both her ears off.

I don’t know how—but this program works. *She got better*. She became the most patient, caring person I knew. She became able to interpret the Steps to me, and she became adept at sorting out my feelings—a jumbled mass of nerves wanting a drink. She *always* made me feel better when I called her, and that skill helped me to get some happily sober days. Best of all, this angel developed a sense of humor.

She and I both stayed sober. And while I don’t know how this program works, I do know it worked for her, and of course, she owes it all to me. And of course, you always love someone you have helped, and I do.

A. M.
White Plains,
New York

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Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob

Tolerance furnishes, as a by-product, a greater freedom from the tendency to cling to preconceived ideas and stubbornly adhered-to opinions. In other words, it often promotes an open-mindedness which is vastly important—is, in fact, a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual.

Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, p. 273

Are We Really Willing to Change?

Step Six - Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character"

The first step was a cinch for me. I had run out of options, and the results of my drinking had been devastating; so self-debate about drinking simply didn't exist. I knew I couldn't drink safely. I did the First Step at the moment I entered a hospital for detoxification, and I have never questioned it since.

It then took several weeks to get to the Second Step, but it became apparent that I hadn't stopped drinking on my own. A Higher Power had obviously intervened, so the Third Step was understandable and necessary.

If I was sincerely willing to change, why did I remain so much the same?

My sponsor pushed, shoved, and tugged, and I eventually did the Fourth and Fifth Steps. From that point onward, I made immense progress. Even the Ninth Step was faced with resolution and courage. I made the appropriate amends and experienced the feeling of liberation that my sponsor had promised. The other Steps were the logical extension of the program for me. I became active in Twelfth Step work and enjoyed the rewards.

Still, something was missing. There remained lingering feelings of vague discontent. The personality flaws I had uncovered in doing the Fourth and Fifth Steps had diminished—but were still there. And they started up the same old process that had produced feelings I had when drinking—impatience, irascibility, quick temper, and an unforgiving attitude toward others. I didn't like the way I felt, so I had dinner with my sponsor and discussed my situation frankly with him.

He gave me one of his knowing smiles, but said nothing. "Well," I demanded, "what's your solution to this problem?"

"You really think you've done all the Steps, don't you?" he asked. I assured him, somewhat indignantly, that I had. Hadn't I done the Fourth and Fifth with him? Had he not seen my Twelfth Step activity with his own eyes? Wasn't he aware of how faithfully—in my mind—I was doing the Tenth Step?

"All very true," he said, "but what about the *Sixth Step*?"

That came like a bolt from the blue. Of course, I was willing to change and have my Higher Power remove my defects of character, wasn't I? . . . *Was I?*

If I was sincerely willing to change, why did I remain so much the same? I realized that I had been paying lip service to the Sixth Step. Compared to most of the other Steps, the Sixth is apparently simple. I believed this, because no overt action seemed required. There is none of the dramatic confrontation that exists when we do the Ninth Step, nor is there the feeling of accomplishment that comes with the Twelfth. The Sixth is not dramatic. There are no enthusiastic witnesses to rush up and shake one's hand. It's a rather solitary affair and hence seems simple.

The Sixth Step means facing ourselves, and that is often more difficult than being honest with another person. I have found it difficult to lie to others but still easy to lie to myself. When I say, all too swiftly, "Of course, I'm willing to change," I now ask myself, "Really? Who's kidding who?" The fact that I am now questioning my willingness to change has increased my ability to be increasingly willing. I simply don't take the process as lightly as I did before. I can't learn anything unless I'm sincerely willing to learn. Nor will making myself promises to change have any significance until the willingness factor is developed.

My sponsor intervened again with a few of his pointed questions. "You played football in college, didn't you?" he asked—knowing full well that I had. He reminded me that I had told him I absolutely hated the practice, "getting all those lumps and bruises for no good reason." And he also reminded me how I had said I loved the actual game, especially the applause when I did something very well.

"You know," he said, "no one gets all excited about the practice. It has no flash to it. It's the game that counts. But a good game performance requires hard practice. And the Sixth Step can be compared with football practice. If you're going to continue to make progress in the program and with the other eleven Steps, you have to really work on the Sixth Step. Don't stand around on one foot waiting for applause. There won't be any. But you'll play a far better game."

What my sponsor told me carries an important moral lesson. It's one I'm working diligently to learn, because I now—finally—see the true value of the Sixth Step.

R. B., Manhattan, New York

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A Program for Alcoholics

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

To carry its message to the alcoholic who is suffering is our one purpose in this Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. For no other reason are we here, as this Fifth Tradition tells us. And we sober ones are also in the process of recovering and may come across many fears and pains; so we too need the group to stay sober; we cannot do it alone. So this is a program for alcoholics, active or sober. Our sole purpose is to pass it on, so we may live and help others to find their lives.

Let us never forget the precious gift that we were given. AA is unique because we have one primary purpose. Let us not dilute this purpose in our group meetings or activities, at group, district, or area levels. Though our program has the answer to the affliction of alcoholism, through our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA cannot help nonalcoholics. This world is full of afflictions and wrongs, and there are other programs for other problems.

*Raul M.
San Antonio,
Texas*

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Humor from the Grapevine

Two somewhat lubricated gentlemen were seated in a tavern, telling each other their troubles. Finally, one of them complained, “My wife just doesn’t appreciate me. Does yours?”

“I wouldn’t know,” replied the other. “I’ve never heard her mention your name.”

« « « » » »

The problem drinker in this anecdote was a copy reader on a newspaper. One day, he reported for work after having too many doses of morning-sickness medicine, causing a certain fuzziness in his judgment. As a result, the paper printed a story on capital news headlined “Half Our State Legislators Are Crooks.”

The editor gave him fits, and orders to amend his mistake. Unfortunately, the poor chap was in no better shape the next day, either, and the correction came out: “Half Our State Legislators Are *Not* Crooks.”

« « « » » »

A detective was interrogating a drunk about a man he was trying to locate. He inquired, “Do you know a man with one eye named Tony?”

“Maybe, maybe not,” said the lush. “What’s the name of his other eye?”

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

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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.*

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Address _____

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