

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 32, NO. 2

FEB 2008

What We Were Like *Fragments of AA History*

Son, I've spilled more booze than you've drunk"—an old-timer's comment, once common in AA—is rarely heard today. It seems clear that while AA is growing older—the Fellowship is now in its fifties—its members are getting younger. And we are looking at a new definition of “young” and “young peoples’ groups.”

Historically, AA has always been concerned with young people. In 1939, the Big Book talked about “young” men: “Several of our crowd, men of thirty or less, had been drinking only a few years, but they found themselves as helpless as those who had been drinking twenty years.”

In earlier days, some AA members believed that younger people had high bottoms or weren't “real” alcoholics at all. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* describes those people entering AA as “scarcely more than potential alcoholics. They were spared that last ten or fifteen years of literal hell the rest of us had gone through.”

But young people kept coming and by the mid-forties, several young peoples’ groups had begun around the country.

In Philadelphia, a group of six (only three of whom had been sober for more than four months), met in January 1946. They wrote the Grapevine that “we were under the impression when we began this group that we were trailblazers in the field, but reports from some of our visiting AAs have indicated that it has been tried before, although with very little success.”

In San Diego, a Young Woman's Group (under 35) and the Young Men's Group (under 40) were formed in 1946. The young men felt that there was a group of “old goats” telling newcomers that they “couldn't make the Program because they hadn't been kicked around enough.” But the “old goats” came to the meetings long enough to see that these young members were serious. And the meeting grew—like so many others.

By 1958, there were enough young people and groups to hold the First International Conference of Young People, in Niagara Falls, New York. This ongoing Conference (known as ICYPAA) now attracts over 4,000 participants.

Young people, according to one member from a San Francisco young peoples’ group, have a problem in that “being young, we recover fast physically and some old-timers believe we're doing great. It often takes the closeness of a group setting to break down that barrier. But our insides still boil like mad.” A young peoples’ group allows members to share their *inexperience*, as well as “strength and hope.”

In such a group setting, it is easy for young members to identify quickly with others who have short but desperate drinking histories. They are spared what one member from the Bahamas called the “listen to me my children and you shall hear what you have been spared” attitude sometimes found in older AAs.

At a 1961 Conference of Young People in AA in Milwaukee, members talked about groups that started with “high hopes and flood-tide energy, but little stable or wise leadership.” Older members are needed—and are available—to share the structure that is the cement of the Fellowship. Groups give testimony to the strength lent by those “white-haired types” whose length of sobriety adds credibility in the community and stability within the group.

One of the continuing problems of young peoples’ groups is that they are often poor. Many young people do not recover financially for several years. They lack an employment history so it takes longer to achieve some economic stability and this is reflected “in the basket.” But rent and coffee and other responsibilities are somehow dealt with, and the groups flourish as young people come in increasing numbers.

And those who are coming are often half the age of those who have traditionally been considered “young

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

31st Annual San Diego Spring Round Up

March 20 - 23, 2008

San Diego, CA

Website: www.sandiegospringroundup.com

23 Annual Orange County Convention

March 21 - 23, 2008

Costa Mesa, CA

Website: www.oaac.org

5th Annual Spaghetti Dinner with AA Speaker

to benefit the Santa Clarita AA Convention

March 29, 2008

Newhall, CA

Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

5th Annual Round Up

April 25 - 27, 2008

Pahrump, NV

Info: 775-253-0338

Email questions to: earthart@teknett.com

21st Annual Tri-State Round Up

May 16 - 18, 2008

Laughlin, NV

Info: 928-753-6035

Website: www.tristate-roundup.com

Service Committee Schedule

- February 18, 2008 **SFV H&I**
THIRD MONDAY
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- March 3, 2008 **G.S. District #11**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- March 3, 2008 **G.S. District #16**
FIRST MONDAY
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- March 3, 2008 **G.S. District #17**
FIRST MONDAY
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- March 4, 2008 **G.S. District #2**
FIRST TUESDAY
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- March 5, 2008 **G.S. District #1**
FIRST WEDNESDAY
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- March 5, 2008 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- March 8, 2008 **G.S. District #7**
SECOND SATURDAY
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- March 10, 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 you 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](mailto:sfvaaews@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting January 14, 2008

Rick A. 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: Haley - 2 yr, Laura - 8 yrs, Cliff - 28 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:30 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 February 11, 2008

Next Meeting - February 11, 2008

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

January 2008

Laura B. 8 years

Dusty B. 17 years

Kevin McC. 24 years

Marie B. 28 years

**Reseda BB Study
& Disc. 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.

Paving the Way

*Tradition Nine - AA, as such, ought never be organized;
but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*

It's always fascinating to learn just how people came to Alcoholics Anonymous. In my case, I looked AA up in the phone book and called our local central office. Thank goodness, some service board or committee put it there! The person on the other end of the line took my number and had an AA member call me back for the one-on-one, language-of-the-heart introduction that began my incredible journey in sobriety.

At my very first AA meeting, I was warmly greeted and taken to the literature rack at the front of the meeting room. My greeter selected some of the pamphlets for me to take home. I could relate not only to the AA members but to the AA literature as well. Thank goodness, some service board or committee wrote, published, and distributed these pamphlets!

Although I only planned to attend one meeting a week, I went to more because I had a car and some other newcomers didn't. One would call and ask if I planned on going to a meeting that night and I'd say yes in spite of myself. So, I picked up a meeting list which helped us find meetings—where and when. Thank goodness some service board or committee gathered the information, printed and circulated this list!

Many of my AA friends—and yours too, I'm sure—found the Fellowship in a variety of ways, and not a few are due to some kind of service board or committee whose efforts facilitate our Twelfth Step work. Correctional, Treatment, and Hospitals and Institutions committees arrange for institutional meetings and bridge the gap between a facility and an individual AA or a group.

In some instances, a doctor or member of the clergy recommended AA to their patient or parishioner; Cooperation with the Professional Community committees most probably paved the way. Some AA members were exposed to a radio or TV program, not necessarily produced by AA but by someone who has benefited from the work of a Public Information committee. All these dedicated endeavors of service boards or committees make our Twelfth Step work possible.

The preliminary work done by AA service boards and committees directly responsible to those they serve (you and me) is invaluable to the future of the Fellowship. I might not be here today if they hadn't put Alcoholics Anonymous in the phone book!

Lois C, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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What We Were Like

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people." Newcomers today include preteens. In one area a young peoples' group (ages twelve to eighteen) was begun in 1981, because those nineteen-year-olds in the original group were declared "too old." It is difficult for such new members to identify with some of the stories they hear. One member who got sober at age eighteen in 1965 found that he had to identify with how people *felt*. He realized that "all those people in those meetings, whether seventeen or seventy," were just like him. And he vowed to concentrate on what he had in common with others, rather than on differences.

This continuing thread of remembering what alcohol did to us, instead of a recitation of how much and how long we drank, is found throughout the history of young peoples'

recovery in AA, and in the continued growth of their groups.

Young peoples' groups have truly "come of age" within the Fellowship, and they have provided trusted servants throughout the structure. Some recent delegates to the General Service Conference began their sobriety as members of such groups, often expressing their gratitude that young peoples' groups provided them with service opportunities early in their sobriety. One member explained that "because we wanted so badly to be accepted, we were always concerned with the Traditions and frequently the back half of the 'Twelve and Twelve' to find solutions to group problems."

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The Cement That Binds Us

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

It seems to me, after attending meetings for the past thirty-four years, that Tradition Five has been gradually chipped away by individuals having problems other than alcoholism. Many of the meetings I have attended have discussions about other drugs; occasionally, there is not even a mention of alcohol or recovery from its grasp. At a recent convention [published in May 1998] in California, the main speaker at the big Saturday night meeting spent forty-five minutes talking about his cocaine use and never mentioned alcohol or the Twelve Steps of recovery. I find this to be more common than not nowadays.

Why is our primary purpose becoming diluted? Well, having discussed this with many young AAs, I'm told that most AA members now are "dually addicted." There seems to be a common statement issuing from most of those individuals: "I know this is an AA meeting, but drugs are a part of my story so I'm going to mention them too." And they do! Now, it can be rationalized that if "each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers," then maybe that particular group's message concerns drugs other than alcohol. But what, then, is "the message" the group carries to the *alcoholic* who still suffers?

Few AA members, old-timers and newcomers, have ever read the third paragraph of the dust cover of the Big Book, wherein it tells that the AA message is to be found in the text of that book. I've noticed that many AAs read the Big Book but few study it, and fewer still follow its suggestions.

It is not uncommon to hear a member state, "I work my own program." In my home group, on Tuesday nights, we discuss the written program as it is in the Big Book and how it has helped each of us to a better way of life. We have a caveat in our opening message before the Preamble asking that only alcoholics share at our meeting. But we say that all are welcome. This seems to work pretty well and as a result we have good AA discussions certainly helpful to our newcomers.

My home group's primary purpose is to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Some of those have much sobriety, because the alcoholic who still suffers is not necessarily a newcomer. However, when newcomers do show up at our home group we try to focus our discussion on what's in the Big Book and how it can help them if they are willing to follow some simple suggestions.

I think that without Tradition Five there could not be an AA program. I believe that the Twelve Traditions are the cement that binds us together into a cohesive society. For my part, I hold an informal study group at my home for newer members of my home group. We study the program so that all of us can better fulfill our "real purpose" as it states on page 77 of the Big Book.

Tom H.
Paso Robles, California
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Co-founder Quotes

Bill W.

Our chief responsibility to the newcomer is an adequate presentation of the program. If he does nothing or argues, we do nothing but maintain our own sobriety. If he starts to move ahead, even a little, with an open mind, we then break our necks to help in every way we can.

As Bill Sees It, p. 105

A Love That Asks for Nothing

Step Twelve - Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

I went on my first Twelfth Step call when I was three months sober. To tell you the truth, I didn't want to go. I didn't want to go on that Twelfth Step call any more than I wanted to be doing anything the old-timers had me doing, like washing the cups, reading chapter five, or going to meetings every day. But they told me to do these things if I wanted to stay sober and so I did them though they made no sense to me at the time.

Once, when we got to a newcomer's house on a Twelfth Step call, one of the old-timers told me to say something. Since this was my first Twelfth Step call, I asked her what I should say. She told me to say that I had been sober three months and that the program worked. It was that simple then and has remained that simple for the twenty-one years I've been sober.

Of all the Twelfth Step work I have done since then, very few of the people I have worked with have gotten sober and some have died. It is very sad and heartbreaking at times and I have cried many tears, but I will never stop carrying this message because I am so grateful to be able to carry it. Through carrying this message I have learned to love. This is a love that asks for nothing in return, not even that the person stay sober. This is a tremendous thing to be a part of.

God bless those old-timers for all the things they taught me. Though I didn't know it at the time, they were telling me to do the things that would ensure my sobriety and save my life. Whether I was washing the coffee cups or going on a panel to share, I was keeping sober by staying close to the program.

If I felt like drinking, I would have to wait until I set up the meeting—and invariably after the meeting I always felt better. I started feeling a little better about myself each time that I did some small act of service and though I was very shy and introverted, I found that I could talk to people a little bit. All these little actions that I took gradually built a solid foundation of sobriety for me and took me into a new way of life which was incredibly joyous.

Today, when newer people in the program ask me how I have so many friends in AA and how I know so many people, I tell them that first, it takes time, and second, it all starts with small acts of service. These lead to larger opportunities and before you know it your life is full of good friends and wonderful experiences. But it does take time and I tell people that if they're alcoholic like me, they'll probably never feel like doing any of these things. But the great part is that it doesn't matter whether you feel like doing it or not—it works every single time.

Last month, I was having a bad day when the telephone rang. It was a woman whom I had met several years ago at a meeting. She'd called to tell me that when she was new I was very kind to her and that this kindness had meant a great deal. She has been sober now several years. How she had gotten my phone number or why she picked that particular day to call me I don't know. But she carried a powerful message to me that day and I'm grateful.

Robin F.
Los Angeles, California
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Humor from the Grapevine

Early one morning, two drunks stood on a street corner arguing about whether it was the sun or the moon that was shining down on them. Just then, another lush came along, and they ask him to settle the argument.

“How should I know?” he answered. “I don't even live around here.”

« « « » » »

Give a drunk a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a drunk how to fish and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

« « « » » »

A woman was driving home from a conference when she saw an old acquaintance, obviously down on her luck, thumbing for a ride. So the woman stopped the car, and the hitchhiker got in, smelling of gin.

After they'd been riding a mile or so, the rummy noticed a brown bag on the front seat. “What's in the bag?” she asked.

“It's a bottle of wine. I got it for my husband,” the driver replied.

The drinker fell silent for a minute and then said, “Good trade.”

There Are No Musts in AA—But. . .

He found he had to do something about his 'belligerent denial'

DEAR HARRY:

I attended an AA closed meeting in West Palm Beach on March 25th, and afterwards I got into a big argument about God with Jim, who was leading the meeting. I had a real hangup on the Higher Power, particularly if He was called God. Well, Jim surely will remember my making his meetings miserable on the weekends at Falkirk with my stupid anti-God remarks! Anyway, an AA from Massachusetts asked me if I'd ever read the pages on "Spiritual Experience" at the end of the new edition of the Big Book. Of course, I had not. So he handed me a copy and asked me to read it, and I did.

No one, absolutely no one had as closed a mind as I had for seventeen years! "Belligerent denial" is just what I had been doing. The Big Book doesn't hold out any hope at all of recovery unless you get the spiritual side. Did you know that? There are no musts in AA—but you'd better get that spiritual side or you can never make it! That's what it says, and that's what hit me hard. So I opened my mind—just a teeny-weeny crack—that night and bought a copy of the Big Book right on the spot and read it all the way home on the plane! Me—in AA seventeen years and never read the Big Book. My wife owns a copy, too, and she says she doesn't remember reading it, either. So I read it all the way through, and now we are reading it to each other at night before we go to sleep.

And another thing: I've made that decision—yes, sir, I really have. I know I must have, because I feel ten times lighter! Every day, throughout the day, I must stop and "turn it over." Every bit of my will has got to go, Harry. My will is the reason for all my messes. His will is all I want now, and only His will. What a difference already! I feel great, almost giddy.

So please tell Jim for me that I'm sorry for fouling up that one Sunday afternoon meeting he had when I was there. I can just see the ass I was making of myself with this anti-God bit. The "belligerent denial" of God is what has held me back, not just in AA, but in life itself. Now I know there is a God, a loving, powerful God that must run this show around me and run me, too. I've proved I can't run anything, not anything. Let me carry out the will of God, but never my own, ever again.

And it all happened in about thirty minutes in West Palm Beach on March 25, 1969.

B. R.,
Dominica

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7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91405

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Additional Contribution

Renewal

\$

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

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