

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 32, NO. 6 JUNE 2008

Don't Bet on 'Me'

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Step Three is a pivotal point in the twelve step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. In this Step *we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him*. Many people who have made a beginning on Steps One and Two falter here. This is a pretty big decision for most of us. It represents a drastic change of focus. What is suggested is that we put all our chips on the God theory. This involves taking at least ninety-five per cent of those chips off the "me" theory where they have been for many years. Now this whole proposition is desperately serious.

Step Three makes it clear that I am free to understand God in my own way, but whatever this understanding is, it had better be real to me because through it I will now be dealing with grievously real difficulties: compulsion, obsession, anxiety, depression and many more.

The weakness of the "me" or self-will way of handling these problems was that it didn't work. Too bad it didn't, because for a long time I had worlds of faith in it, and the fact of "me" always seemed as real to me as the problems I was fighting. The obstacles to my latching on to the God way are that my belief in it is weak and, at first, the fact of God may not *seem* as real as the fact of an immediate problem such as, say, a deep depressive state. Before I can make the decision called for in the third Step, I must come to terms with these obstacles.

First, let's not make the difficulties any bigger than they have to be. The Step does *not say turned our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him*, it says "made a decision" to do so. Just the decision is enough here. This point was (and is) helpful to me because I'm the type of alcoholic (the arrogant type) who continues mechanically tending to turn back to self-will. It is too big an order for me to turn my life over and keep it turned over. But I can (and believe that

to stay sane and sober I must) make the decision to turn it over and renew that decision at least once every twenty-four hours.

As far as the weakness in my allegiance to the God theory goes, two factors come to my rescue here. First is the fact that I have proven in my own life the bankruptcy of the "me" theory in handling my alcoholism. As long as I felt that "me" would somehow, sometime, be able to solve my drinking problem, I was not in the market for AA. Now that that has changed, I have only to go a step further and take the positive action of consciously throwing my support to the Power which can do for me what "me" could not. The second saving factor is the strength of the Fellowship. Were I alone I probably could not make a real start on Step Three. But in the AA meetings I attend I am surrounded by tens, hundreds and thousands of men and women for whom the God way is succeeding with problems just like mine. And so I trust these people, my AA friends and my sponsor, more than myself. I listen to their advice and follow it even when it goes against my own notions.

On the basis of the success of those who had gone before in AA I made the decision, and it has worked and is working as nothing else I have ever tried.

In the final analysis, the most meaningful statement for me about the third Step is that it *works*; it produces results in terms of salvaged lives. Specifically, by taking it we connect in a new way with the power one day at a time to stay away from the first drink. This power is a spiritual power. Through it our spiritual horizons begin to broaden, and we get the strength to commence the spiritual cleansing of Steps Four through Nine.

*T. P. Jr.
Hankins, New York*

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

A.A. Desert Pow Wow

June 12 - 15, 2008
Indian Wells, CA
Info: 760-321-6568
Website: www.desertpowwow.com

35th Annual Antelope Valley Round Up

June 27 - 29, 2008
Palmdale, CA
Info: Steve H. 661-916-4551

24rd Annual South Bay Roundup

July 3 - 6, 2008
Torrance, CA
Info: 310-354-7660
Website: www.southbayroundup.org

7th Annual Tehachapi Mountain Roundup

July 11 - 13, 2008
Tehachapi, CA
Info: 661-823-0518
Email: tehachapi_roundup@yahoo.com
Website: www.tehachapiroundup.org

16th Annual Foothill Roundup

August 1 - 3, 2008
La Canada - Flintridge, CA
Info: Dayna R. 818-249-9390
Email: rdruby699@yahoo.com

41st Annual District 22 Convention

August 22 - 24, 2008
San Luis Obispo, CA
Info: 805-931-0601
Email: archay_one@charter.net
Website: www.sloaa.org

Service Committee Schedule

- June 16, 2008 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- July 7, 2008 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- July 7, 2008 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- July 7, 2008 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- July 1, 2008 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- July 2, 2008 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- July 9, 2008 **SFV Board of Directors**
6:30PM, Central Office

- July 12, 2008 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

- July 14, 2008 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30PM Orientation
7PM, Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church

To All Meeting Secretaries

Help us keep your meeting information up to date.

If your meeting has changed its Location, Time of Meeting, Meeting Name or Type of Meeting, please update this information *as soon as possible* with your Central Office. Updates can be completed by mail or in person during Literature Sales Hours at San Fernando Valley Central Office. Our address is listed on the back cover of this newsletter. Meeting updates *must* be completed in writing. Any questions can be answered by calling your Central Office at (818) 988-3001 and asking for a staff member.

Valley Events

Central Office will be
CLOSED

for literature sales on *Friday, July 4, 2008*
for the Independence Day Holiday. We will
be open Saturday & Sunday 9AM - 5PM.

Opportunities for Service

Your Central Office needs
telephone volunteers for all shifts,
especially the Overnight (12 Midnight - 9 AM) shift.

If you have one year or more of continuous
sobriety, we invite you to join us and help your
fellow alcoholics. You can sign up in the office
or online at <http://www.sfvaa.org/involve.html>.

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 2009 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 May 12, 2008

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: Karen - 3 yrs, Laura - 4 yrs,
Lloyd - 5 yrs, Andre - 15 yrs,
Emily - 21 yrs, Hank - 28 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:22 PM
The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for May is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting. These minutes are pending approval on June 9, 2008

*Next Meeting - June 9, 2008
Prepared and submitted by:
Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! **May 2008**

Terefe B. 19 years

Greer S. 21 years

Steve M. 26 years

Learning to Live

Men's Stag 119 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.

Where and When

Your AA Meeting Directory

What is an AA meeting directory? It's generally a taken-for-granted booklet that the central office/intergroup compiles, edits, and prints on a regular basis. As a worker in an intergroup, I want to give a behind-the-scenes glance at the effort involved in putting together such a directory.

The first step for the trusted servants at the central office is to extract all relevant information from the membership and then organize it in some meaningful order. Meetings are first arranged by a geographical location in the city. Then, types of meetings are given: open ones, closed ones, men's, women's, speaker, discussion, gay, smoker, nonsmoker, beginners, Step study, Big Book study, young peoples, old-timers, Spanish-speaking, signed for the deaf, plus any possible combination of these.

As the numbers of groups increase and groups continue to change, maintaining the meeting list becomes more difficult. New geographic areas must be added, as well as detox and rehabilitation centers with AA meetings. Because of all these changes, any resemblance between the printed meeting schedule and actuality at the end of the year may be slight. For an intergroup trusted servant, it seems as if mischievous alcoholics, driven by an unending compulsion that "half measures availed us nothing," are trying to establish an AA meeting on every corner of every block on every night of the week.

Some newly-established groups never last beyond a couple of months, but somehow their secretaries (if the group has one) neglect to inform the intergroup when the group ceases to function. The only way an intergroup discovers that a meeting has been canceled may be when an irate alky calls to chew out somebody for sending her to a nonexistent meeting the day before—or the address listed was wrong or the place has been boarded up. Alcoholics love to call up intergroup with information on meetings; through experi-

ence, most intergroups will insist that the information be submitted in writing.

Once the new list is printed, all the secretaries of all the groups—who were importuned for the previous six months to make sure that their group information is correct—will call to advise the intergroup that the new meeting schedule is in error. By some unwritten law, it is axiomatic that a new meeting schedule will always have errors. Typically, Gus from the Alky Fetcher's Group on Possum Trot Boulevard will call and demand to know why the meeting of the Healthy Livers was designated as an open meeting when everyone knows it changed to a closed meeting six months ago. Or a club whose phone number is printed on the cover will call to change to a new number, and the first of many pencilled-in corrections begins. The compilers are always playing catchup.

Suppose the unpardonable oversight has occurred, and some group's schedule has been omitted. Then the intergroup hosts a stamping party to insert the information on some fifteen to twenty thousand copies of the meeting schedule. Or, to take an incident of recent memory, when someone protested the designation "gay" after the name of a meeting, the "gay deleters" gathered at the central office with their trusty black markers and, in the interest of uniformity, expunged the word "gay" from about eleven different places on six different pages of the twenty thousand copies. There was just a little grumbling here and there, but on the whole the incident gave many of us a chance to gather for chitchat and fellowship.

A meeting schedule is a flexible thing, ever-changing to meet new conditions, and never, ever, finished.

Gyulene J., Houston, Texas

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Hellish Pride

"Religion is for those afraid of going to hell. Spirituality is for those who have been there." I cringe when I hear those words.

The first time I heard this statement, I thought it sounded wonderful. Finally, I had a way to declare that I had chosen a spiritual path and found that elusive Higher Power without tying myself to some hypocritical religion and a God I couldn't please. But when I stopped and looked at this statement, I saw it was just another way of building myself up by putting others down.

When this saying is used, it diminishes all alcoholics who find their Higher Power through religion. What do we gain when we claim spirituality and shun religion? All alcoholics have been to hell. Why don't we welcome them all—no matter where they find their Higher Power?

Anonymous

Stansbury Park, Utah

From P.O. Box 1980 (letters to the Grapevine)

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Phone Calls from Betty

“...some of us are given the gift of sobriety...”

Betty called again tonight. For more than six years, she has called the hotline. Generally, she calls late at night, and each time she is drunk. She complains about how the world has done her wrong, how her kids don't treat her right, how she just can't go on like this, and how she can't get medically detoxed because she doesn't have the money.

For more than six years I have listened to her. Each time I share the message of hope I have found in the Fellowship and program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I've been on Twelfth Step calls to her house. I have met Betty's distraught daughter, who no longer knows what to do with her alcoholic mother. I have watched other members take Betty to meetings where her elderly body shook violently from the lack of alcohol in her system. For over six years, I've listened and watched, but one night something changed.

“Betty, it's late and I need to go to bed,” I told her.

“Okay, honey,” she said. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, Betty. I'm hoping and praying for you. Sleep well.”

I hung up the phone. The silence lasted only a few moments. I began thinking. She spoke about how she was functioning in blackouts. It was the first time I ever heard her utter the words, “I love you.” She had shared how painful her growing up was, and the hurt of being molested as a child. She spoke of getting her revenge on the world, how angry she was at everything, and how disgusted she was with herself for being born. I heard the despair and the loneliness that only an alcoholic can know.

I didn't hold back the tears. It took me over six years to realize that, aside from a few key differences, Betty and I are one and the same. Only a few things set us apart: she is a senior citizen; I am thirty-two. She is actively drinking; I am actively sober. She is dying one day at a time; I am living one day at a time.

It is clear to me that these differences are simply a matter of grace, nothing more and nothing less.

It is a mystery why some of us are given the gift of sobriety while others die drunk. That night, more than ever before, I wished Betty could experience the miracle of sobriety and the privilege of both the fellowship and program of Alcoholics Anonymous that I have often taken for granted.

Betty will probably call the hotline again and be connected to my house. More than likely, she will complain about how the world has done her wrong, how her kids don't treat her right, how she just can't go on like this, and how she can't get medically detoxed because she doesn't have the money.

I will listen and share the message of hope I have been given to carry. I don't know if it will ever make a difference for Betty, but I do know hearing from her is an incredible gift. As long as she keeps calling, I will continue to pick up the phone because, as AA's Responsibility Declaration says, “I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible”... and grateful.

Heather L., Sonora, California

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*Co-founder
Quotes*

Dr. Bob

We have all known and seen miracles—the healing of broken individuals, the rebuilding of broken homes. And always, it has been the constructive personal 12th Step work based on an ever upward-looking faith which has done the job.

AA Grapevine Sept. 1948

Bill W.

The phrase “God As We Understand Him” is perhaps the most important expression to be found in our whole AA vocabulary. Within the compass of these five significant words there can be included every kind and degree of faith, together with the positive assurance that each of us may choose his own.

AA Grapevine April 1961

Ashtrays, Brooms, and Chairs:

The ABCs of Sobriety

Service. One word but such a big action. One word but such a wonderful change of perspective. People who are in service know exactly what I mean. People who aren't probably wouldn't read an article like this anyway.

I heard a speaker share recently that what changed her life was emptying an ashtray—and man, could I relate. I spent over five years just hanging around on the fringes of AA. I didn't drink, but didn't do anything else either. I didn't work the Steps, I didn't read the Book, I didn't get involved in service or the Fellowship: I just went to meetings and didn't drink. I refer back to it as a period of being “stark raving sober.”

Then something happened. I somehow got out of myself long enough to help someone else. I somehow put aside all the false pride and bravado that had kept me from doing things I saw as beneath me. I hadn't come here, I reasoned, to set up chairs or empty ashtrays. I came here to quit drinking. I hadn't yet learned that Alcoholics Anonymous is not about “not drinking,” Alcoholics Anonymous is about relearning everything I'd ever learned—except the multiplication tables, the multiplication tables still worked. And the moment I started to help, everything changed.

Over the years since first becoming a secretary of a meeting, more has been revealed. Service is basically just being friendly, living the words at the top of page 20 in our book that tell me my very life as an ex-problem drinker depends upon my constant thought of others and how I may help meet their needs.

Being of service means staying after the meeting to help clean up. Being of service means getting involved in carrying the message behind the walls. Being of service means writing an alcoholic in Nepal because he has no

meetings to attend on the mountain where he lives. (That contact is made through the Loners Internationalist Meeting.) Being of service, to me, is a state of mind: being willing to help whenever and wherever I can, period.

Listing the ways I've found to be of service is not something I'm interested in doing, as it would take away from the “why.” I am not of service for credit or recognition. I am of service because it's fun, I enjoy it, and it's the right thing to do.

My ten-year-old daughter, Jessica, has learned something that it took me twenty-odd years to comprehend. She has learned to give of herself. Last week I went to pick her up at her after-school program. All the kids were out on the playground, but I couldn't find Jessica. I learned that she was in the kitchen, helping to wash cups. I was so proud when the woman rushed to assure me that Jessica had volunteered to help, that she was not being punished for anything. Such a thought hadn't even crossed my mind.

I recently stood at the podium of a big speakers meeting and asked for folks to step up and lead the meeting. A relative newcomer with six months shot his hand up. I then asked for suggestions for the ten-minute speaker—same guy, hand shot right up. But when I asked for help cleaning up, his hand was noticeably (to me, at least) still. When the meeting was over, and we were cleaning up, someone suggested a ten-minute speaker. I said, “Fine. Ask him the next time you see him.” My friend replied, “Why don't you ask him yourself. He's right over there.” He was helping to clean up, emptying an ashtray, and putting away chairs.

M.L.C.

Santa Maria, California

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Humor from the Grapevine

A drunk was driving down the street. He was nervous and anxious because he was due to appear in court, but couldn't find a parking place. Raising his eyes to the heavens, he cried, “God, take pity on me. If you find me a parking place, I will go to church for the rest of my life, I will be kind to my family, and I will give up drinking.”

Miraculously, a parking place appeared immediately. The drunk again looked up and said, “Never mind. I found one.”

« « « » » »

A pessimist sees the glass as half empty, an optimist

sees the glass as half full, an economist sees the glass as too large, and an alcoholic sees the glass as pointless.

« « « » » »

What's the last thing a drunk says before he's hospitalized?

“Watch this!”

« « « » » »

“I have been listening carefully to you people, but I do not understand why I need twelve steps to get sober when I did not need them to get drunk.”

I Nearly Quit

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

When I first encountered this Step, I took offense at the word sanity. If the Step had said, "Power greater than ourselves could put us back on our feet," or "back on the right path," I could have understood. Sanity, with all that the word implies, seemed too strong.

I felt I couldn't be crazy or I wouldn't have sought help. Truthfully, I very nearly quit the program, all over the word insanity.

It was not until the Fourth Step (after stumbling and skipping over the Third) that I began to see the light. But it wasn't until the autopsy had gotten well underway that I found out that, though I appeared normal to see and talk to, I was extremely selfish, thoughtless, heartless, inconsiderate and resentful of the very air I breathed. Was this the moral make-up of a normal person? I decided not. I had lost all true perspective in daily living. I couldn't plan and carry out one full day without confusing my hours with a lot of unrelated side issues and off-the-track thinking. Yes, I finally agreed that I needed the restoration of my sanity.

Then fear set in. Cold, unreasoning fear. What to do? Where to begin? Suddenly I became angry. Angry with myself. Angry with AA. "I might have known," I thought. "I get myself involved with some offbeat outfit and here I am, more confused and upset than ever." I recall wondering, "What's wrong with these people anyway? Why can't they handle their own affairs and let me handle my life as I see fit?" At that point I marched back to Step Two.

Another snag! I knew that somehow if I were to have any semblance of success with the program, I had to believe in a

Power greater than myself. I didn't kid myself there. I knew that the answer to that was God and God alone. How to contact Him? I didn't know. I knew about prayer and the universally accepted benefits to be derived from it. I also remembered such phrases as "in God's own time" and "All things cometh to him who waits"—but I wanted my request for restoration of sanity to be stamped "To God for *immediate* action." With that thought in mind, I really believe I sat back and waited for the flash of lightning and the peal of thunder heralding a spiritual awakening.

Up to this time, my prayers had consisted of half-hearted attempts for relief from my hangovers, from financial strain due to drinking and from marital difficulties brought on by my folly. However, I began to pray in earnest. At first, haltingly, ill-worded and selfishly, but ever so earnestly and sincerely, I laid bare my sins and misspent life. I gave vent to my fears and frustrations, my trials and tribulations, praying that if there ever was a stupid fool who needed help, I was that fool.

Still, I could see or feel no change in myself or my attitudes. I kept coming to AA. Each time I went to a meeting, I insisted to myself that this would be the last time. Later, as each "last one" went by, I finally found myself looking forward to the next "last meeting."

And so I have come to accept the Second Step, and to see that through staying in AA, sanity has been restored. I think I'm a better man for the struggle to understand.

J. S., Walla Walla, Washington

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

Current Information

Name

Address.....

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New 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

Name

Address.....

City..... St ZIP