

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 32, NO. 10 OCT 2008

Tradition Ten: A Question Of Tolerance

Keeping the door of AA open to all

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution, nor does it oppose any of these things. Yet, I've noticed that one denomination receives frequent—and mostly negative—mention.

When I hear this negativity in meetings, I'm glad that Sister Ignatia and Father Ed Dowling are not in attendance.

I remember reading about Sister Ignatia in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. The early Akron Group brought their new recruits to her at St. Thomas Hospital. With no beds or rooms available, and at Dr. Bob's request to admit a suffering drunk, Sister Ignatia "slyly bootlegged AA's first jittering candidate for admission" into the hospital's flower room. She accepted Dr. Bob's revolutionary ideas. No thought was given to religious affiliation. She and Dr. Bob cared for about 5,000 alcoholics in AA's early years.

Father Ed Dowling, another AA legend, sought out Bill in the New York clubhouse. He had read the first edition of the Big Book and was struck with the similarity between the Twelve Steps and the "Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, of Loyola." Bill and Father Ed talked at length about "ego deflation at depth" as a springboard to a spiritual awakening. Father Ed became a key spiritual adviser to Bill, started AA meetings in St. Louis, and helped scores of alcoholics discover AA and the Twelve Steps.

Bill, Dr. Bob, Sister Ignatia, and Father Ed knew that no one should be excluded from AA on the basis of their religion. This helped establish the AA practice of cooperation without affiliation.

Bill W. borrowed heavily from men of religion in writing both the Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: Both Bill and Bob encouraged a spirit of cooperation with clergy, recognizing them as a great resource for the referral of new members.

I am concerned about newcomers and other AA members active in this religion who come to our meetings. Our Third and Fifth Traditions encourage a wide open

door. Even well-meaning but critical sharing from ex-members of the denomination in question may make meetings unattractive to newcomers who still practice that faith. The unofficial saying that "AA is a spiritual program, not a religious program" gets misused. Some minds seem to register this as spirituality versus religion, as if the two were incompatible. For many of us who practice religious beliefs hand in glove with AA's Twelve Steps, these resentful sharings create intense discomfort. We sit quietly, however, not wanting to stir up controversy. But I believe our silence encourages others to join in the bashing because they mistakenly read this shared resentment as a universal AA stance. Sometimes, it seems that the criticism spreads into subsequent sharing by other members. Inaccurate dogma gets splashed around our rooms, uncontested.

Bill was diplomatic in his dealings with the professional community. He encouraged AA to develop a spirit of cooperation without formal affiliation. Some people in AA know these things innately; others are just wise enough not to promote their disdain for religion at AA meetings. Some, however, think in terms of spirituality versus religion and see two very compatible realities as somehow incompatible. They seem to share less-than-objective stories, looking back with resentment at their developing years.

These attitudes do not do credit to AA history and its Traditions. Great men and women of religion, and other professionals, have trusted us and referred thousands of sufferers our way. I wonder if they will continue to refer alcoholics to us if they become aware of the irreligious opinions, sometimes clothed in humor, expressed by some AA members.

This is not a call for censorship. The free flow of sharing should never be stymied at our meetings. Sponsors can handle resentments of religion, in private and using the Steps, with their sponsees. We must keep the doors of AA open, welcome, and attractive to all who have a desire to stop drinking.

Jack L., Ludwigs Corner, Pennsylvania

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

5th Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA

October 17 - 19 2008
Valencia, CA
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org
Info: 661-310-0384

24th Annual Santa Barbara AA Convention

October 24 - 26, 2008
Goleta, CA
Website: www.sbaaconvention.org
Email: chair@sbaaconvention.org

Yosemite Summit Conference 2008

November 21 - 23 2008
Yosemite National Park, CA
Website: www.serenityyosemite.com
Email: ysc@sti.net
Info: 209-966-8300

42nd Annual Las Vegas Roundup

November 27 - 30 2008
Las Vegas, NV
Website: www.lasvegasroundup.org

19th Annual River Roundup

January 8 - 11, 2009
Laughlin, NV
Website: www.rcco-aa.org
Info: Hildy 928-754-4613

34th Annual San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention

January 30 - February 1, 2008
Woodland Hills, CA
Info: 818-734-0383
Website: www.sfvaaconvention.org

Service Committee Schedule

Oct. 20, 2008	SFV H&I THIRD MONDAY 8PM Business Meeting 7PM Get Acquainted Workshop 5657 Lindley Ave. *****
Nov. 3, 2008	G.S. District #11 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 315 W. Vine St., Glendale *****
Nov. 3, 2008	G.S. District #16 SECOND MONDAY 6:15PM meeting 15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills *****
Nov. 3, 2008	G.S. District #17 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood *****
Nov. 4, 2008	G.S. District #2 FIRST TUESDAY 5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta *****
Nov. 5, 2008	G.S. District #1 FIRST WEDNESDAY 6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park *****
Nov. 5, 2008	SFV Board of Directors 6:30PM, Central Office *****
Nov. 8, 2008	G.S. District #7 SECOND SATURDAY 9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd *****
Nov. 10, 2008	SFV Intergroup SECOND MONDAY 6:30PM Orientation, 7PM Business Meeting St. Innocents Church 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

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.

November is Gratitude Month!

**This is the
ONLY Fundraiser
for Valley Central Office.**

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 September 8, 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: Jay - 18 yrs, Donna - 20 yrs,
Judith - 26 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:20 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 13, 2008*
Next Meeting - October 13, 2008
Prepared and submitted by:
Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

September 2008

Anonymous	12 years
Frank K.	24 years
Nancy M.	33 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.

Thinking It Through

Step 8 - Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

I had just married and moved from Canada to Barbados and was beginning to feel settled, even comfortable, in my new surroundings and my new AA group. After a few months, I decided it was time to take the plunge, make the list, and complete my Eighth Step. “Half measures availed us nothing” seemed louder than ever at meetings, and inaction on the Steps, I believe, are a dangerous thing for me.

So convinced, I read the Big Book, the “Twelve and Twelve,” and talked with my sponsor.

“It’s just a list,” I figured, “that’s all.” I had no idea how limiting my thinking was. Just beginning this Step has had a profound impact on my life. So far, there are sixty or so people on my list, and I’m not finished.

I don’t know how this life change has happened, but since beginning the Eighth Step I have stopped buying into my excuses. For example, rather than be miserable and blame everything on some person, place, or thing, I look at myself first. Rather than blow up at a person, I call my sponsor. Rather than judge someone who is angry toward me, I think, “How would I like to be treated here?”—and actually apply it. Sometimes I don’t feel I know the person in my head anymore. I like this new one better.

Recently, I was upset with my husband and decided to call him at his office to tell him precisely what was wrong with him (thank goodness he has Al-Anon). I sat down at the phone, picked it up—and called my sponsor instead. We talked about why I was upset and about recovery. At the end of the conversation, I told her that I wasn’t going to call my husband but would instead read *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*. And I actually did! This is not the me I know.

Lying on the couch with the book, I felt a mix of feelings. The book describes what Dr. Bob and Bill used to read regularly at meetings or to other drunks before the Big Book came along: the Sermon on the Mount, the Book of James, and First Corinthians, thirteenth chapter. I am not a Bible reader, but I figured it certainly couldn’t hurt, and it was something to take my mind off my perceived problems. I grabbed the Bible and read. There it was, the injunction to “turn the other cheek.” Right then, reading those words, something happened.

Maybe my husband was inconsiderate. Maybe he did do something to upset me. “Who knows, and who cares?” I

thought. “What about my behavior?” I started looking at myself and I was not pleased at what I saw. I sat there with the book on my lap and thought about my actions, my words, my behavior, my crazy feelings. I turned the camera on myself rather than on my husband. Next came this thought: what if, regardless of how others acted, I treated them well so that my actions were good and kind and necessary and true? What if I responded with “Is something upsetting you?” rather than “Stop talking to me like that, you (insert judgmental comment here)”? What if I were caring rather than judgmental?

When my husband came home, he expected me to be angry. If my past actions were any indication, he had every right to this expectation. He tried to avoid me and dismissed my attempt at casual conversation. Our meeting did not begin well, and yes, my buttons were pushed. However, my Eighth Step list, the Big Book, and *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* were on the table in front of me and made me stop. “How would he like to be treated?” I asked myself, and no anger came. My husband and I ended up talking like civil human beings, and it was wonderful.

I see the change in many areas of my life. I’m less likely to react. I do this for partly selfish reasons, too: I don’t want to add any more names to my list. Sometimes this is plain old work. I am forced to think of a better, healthier, non-amends-requiring action. I pray and think it through. In several cases, thankfully, the emotions—be they sad, angry, or indifferent—left me before the answer arrived so I was able to go forward through difficult situations without my emotions in the way, having a clear head and a clear conscience.

When on the verge of reacting, I often think about what my friend Katherine once said to me about dogs and cats and the messes they create. “It’s odd,” she said, “how when an animal does something wrong, we simply let it know it has misbehaved, and then we promptly forget about it.” I have never found myself mad at an animal for an hour, let alone weeks, months, or years. This helps me to balance situations I find myself in.

If these are the results of the Eighth Step, I can hardly wait to see the promises the Ninth Step holds.

Brenda B., Barbados

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12 Steps Cafeteria Style

“...maybe a repeated inventory of “these principles” might be in order.”

THE two words “these principles” did not make much of an impression on me in my early days in AA. In fact, I was often told that the Twelve Steps were merely suggestions—that I was to take them “cafeteria style”—take what I wanted and disregard the rest.

I followed the course taken by many who start with reservations about the First Step; yet trying to “carry this message to alcoholics” even without “having had” any sort of chance of spirit or “spiritual awakening as the result of these steps.”

Recently I have heard a number of so called old timers who seem proud to proclaim “I don’t know the Twelve Steps—oh sure, I have read them—but I don’t know one from the other.”

It was not until nearly six years after my entry that I realized that such a statement is a hollow boast. And, as one who had to learn the hard way, I would like to suggest that (if there are any others who are as I found myself to be) maybe a repeated inventory of “these principles” might be in order.

Am I, of myself alone, powerless over alcohol? If so, would it not be wise for me to remember the need for

continued help from a power other than my own ego?—and keep to my decision to turn my way over to that something beyond my own ego? And hadn’t I better continue to do some honest work on uncovering my own character defects—admit them—become willing to have them removed—and humbly ask? And, as a result of these Steps, won’t I be able to do a more sincere job of making amends to all who should be in an honest list of those I harmed? And won’t I be in a more sound position to continue a daily inventory? And won’t I have a real basis for meditation and prayer to open the door for a conscious contact with God, a knowledge of his will for me, and the power to carry that out?

I feel that as I *try* to improve my understanding of the Twelve Steps (and to me, they are in logical sequence) I will find that I am enjoying a spiritual awakening as the result of *these* steps, and feel better able to carry *this* message to alcoholics and practice *these principles* in all my affairs.

F. O.
Vermont

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Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob

“Another thing that was difficult for me (and I probably don’t do it too well yet) was the matter of tolerance. We are all inclined to have closed minds, pretty tightly closed. That’s one reason why some people find our spiritual teaching difficult. They don’t *want* to find out too much about it for various personal reasons, like the fear of being considered effeminate. But it’s quite important that we do acquire tolerance toward the other fellow’s ideas. I think I have more of it than I did have, although not enough yet. If somebody crosses me, I’m apt to make a rather caustic remark. I’ve done that many times, much to my regret. And then, later on, I find that the man knew much more about it than I did. I’d have been infinitely better off if I’d just kept my big mouth shut.”

Reprinted from Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, pages 272-273, with permission AA World Services, Inc.

Passing the Basket . . . Or Passing the Buck?

When I was newly sober in AA, fourteen years ago, I seldom attended a meeting without taking a pamphlet to read. I always had at least two cups of coffee, and if there was anything to eat, I ate. When the basket was passed, I always put a quarter in it—for two people, my wife and me. If we could truly stretch a dollar as far as I must have thought we could, the financial world would be beating a path to our doorsteps to learn AA's remarkable brand of economics.

Most of us decry the fact that more than forty percent of the groups do not support the Fellowship. When it comes to AA's being self-supporting, many fail to recognize one important aspect: If we aren't even willing to pay our own way at a meeting, how can we expect the group to support the Fellowship? What we need to realize is that we *are* the groups, and we *are* Alcoholics Anonymous. I have seen AAs spend more money at a coffee shop than they would ever think of putting in the collection at a meeting.

Early in my sobriety, it was explained that it was imperative for me to get my priorities in order. Learning to become responsible was one of them. This financial buck-passing certainly seems to run counter to responsibility. If we want "the hand of AA always to be there," we each need to assume our own share of responsibility. If money and spirituality do mix in the basket, as the "Twelve and Twelve" says,

then how much better they will blend when money is used to perpetuate AA by making more Twelfth Step work possible.

We, who have had so much given to us freely—in love, with no strings attached—sometimes forget that this also is an area where we have to give it away to keep it. One of the promises in the Big Book is freedom from "fear of economic insecurity." Long ago, one of my sponsors suggested that if I stayed sober and tried to live along spiritual lines, my needs would always be met. Today, I can honestly say that never has there been an instance where I have given of myself, financially or otherwise, and have not been compensated many times over. Our family has never lacked anything because we accepted our responsibility to help carry the message.

God has given each of us a share of the responsibility. He has given each of us the tools to work with and the ability to use them. Let's all of us assume our shares so that we may all reap ever-increasingly the fruits of selflessness and love in service to our Fellowship.

C. C.
West Palm Beach, Florida
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Wanting to be wanted

Recently, I attended a new (to me) group meeting. After two and one half years of sobriety, I relearned an important truth.

When I arrived several men near the door nodded coolly as I said hello. Four ladies mumbled a weak response to my eager "Hi." They resumed an intimate, stranger-excluding conversation, so I—once a shy person before alcohol—reverted to my old tendencies and sat in an isolated chair and took a booklet from my handbag to concentrate on.

Then one girl called over, "Don't be so solitary. Come sit by me."

I did. An old-timer, I thought, trying to make me feel at home. We chatted ten minutes, then she said, "I've only been coming to AA for six weeks but I love it. I'm sure it will do me lots of good."

"And you'll do AA a lot of good too," I told her. Practically a newcomer, but the most cordial person there.

This experience was what I needed to remind me I am not always alert to help a stranger feel wanted in my home group. I don't always say, "Have some coffee. It's on the house."

I'll bet hundreds of lonely alcoholics feeling fear-ridden and neglected at a first meeting, rush out the door to go get a drink.

Last night was for me another awakening.

D. C.
Los Angeles, California
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Humor from the Grapevine

There's only one thing two alcoholics can agree on—
what the third alcoholic should put in the basket.

« « « » » »

Doctor: "If you quit drinking, you'll live longer."

Lush: "Yeah, I know. I tried it one day a while back, and I thought that day would never end."

« « « » » »

A prospective member of the Fellowship was heard to ask in the supermarket, "Pardon me, miss. Can you tell me where I can find a six-pack of tomato juice and a fifth of milk?"

« « « » » »

A man and his spouse were seated at a bar next to a rather disreputable-looking character, who was putting away large quantities of beer. Eventually, the gas could no longer be contained, and the fellow gave a loud burp, whereupon the husband, a haughty type, exclaimed, "How dare you belch before my wife!"

"Sorry," muttered the offender. "I didn't know it was the lady's turn."

« « « » » »

A sponsor and sponsee were enjoying a wonderful cruise when their ship got caught in a devastating storm and went under. Washed up on a desert island, they were the only two to survive. They decided to take it a day at a time and had just started scouting for food, when they came upon a mysterious lamp. They brushed it off and poof! out popped a genie.

"I will grant you each one wish," said the genie.

The sponsor, being a good AA, told his sponsee to go first, but the sponsee humbly declined. So the sponsor closed his eyes and exclaimed: "I wish I were back at our home group." And poof! he was gone.

The sponsee was amazed! The genie commanded, "Now, your wish!" The sponsee started pacing. "I don't know what to wish for. Long-term sobriety? A relationship with that cute newcomer? Man, I wish my sponsor were here..."

« « « » » »

Doctors have to be careful about what their employees say around the office. Consider the psychiatrist who cautioned his nurse, "When you answer the phone, please say 'We're awfully busy,' not 'It's a madhouse around here today.'"

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

Current Information

Name

Address.....

City..... St ZIP

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