

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 33, NO. 7 JULY 2009

Tradition Six: Enthusiasm Unbounded

Tradition Six: An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

I was a little over a year sober when I began answering phones with my sponsor at our local intergroup. During one shift, he overheard a conversation in which I waxed poetic about the virtues of AA and then tried to help the caller with other problems. After the call, he calmly asked, "Have you ever read the Traditions in the 'Twelve and Twelve?'"

My only exposure to the Traditions had been grumbling attendance at a few Traditions meetings.

"No," I answered.

"Well, if you are going to do more service," he said, "you might want to read about them. They're kind of ... important."

Although I was insulted and defensive — my first reaction to many of his suggestions — I realized that he had about twenty more years of experience than I, so I'd better take the suggestion.

I'm so glad I did. I loved reading about the trials, errors, and misadventures that the early AA's had while developing the Traditions that guide our Fellowship today. I realized that early AAs were just as fallible and, occasionally, as misguided as anyone else. But, by returning to a primary purpose, obstacles could be overcome, and the Fellowship would survive.

As I've continued to do service at the group level and beyond, I've witnessed how our Traditions help the Fellowship navigate through all sorts of situations. It's not always pretty, either, so I really started to appreciate the wisdom that came from the experience of those in the early days.

One Tradition that I've grown grateful for is the Sixth Tradition. At first, it took me a while to see how a Tradition that deals with specific issues — money, endorsement, lending out the AA name — could apply to

my own recovery. But the more service I've done over the years, the more I've come to realize how this Tradition really helps our Fellowship to keep it simple.

For a number of years, I took an AA meeting into a detox every other Friday night. The detox is part of a hospital and is run, like many hospital detoxes, by a trained, professional staff.

Early on in my commitment, a patient showed up after the meeting started. She apologized profusely and began telling me why she was late. I realized that because I was leading the meeting, some detox patients might assume that I work for the hospital.

I told her that I appreciated the apology, but it wasn't necessary. From that point on, I made sure I explained, at the beginning of each meeting, that I was neither a member of the hospital staff, nor a professional in the field of alcoholism treatment. I told them that I was simply a drunk, just like them, who had found a solution in Alcoholics Anonymous. The speaker and I were there to share our experience in the hopes that it might help another alcoholic — we wanted to give back what had been so freely given to us. We had nothing to do with the hospital, we weren't there to enforce any rules, make money, or sell anything. I found it helpful to make this clear from the beginning, both for the patients and for myself. It helped define the meeting's primary purpose, and it also, perhaps, made it easier for the patients in the detox to see me as a peer, not as a counselor or a doctor.

In my own recovery, Tradition Six reminds me not to overstep my bounds. As my sponsor witnessed that day at intergroup, there are times when I get excited and try to fix things I have no business fixing. Whether I'm answering phones, talking to a newcomer at a meeting, or working with a sponsee, my only purpose is to share my experience, strength, and hope, and to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. There are plenty of competent professionals, more qualified than I, who can handle everything else.

John G., New York, NY

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

17th Annual Foothill Roundup

July 30 - August 2, 2009
La Canada-Flintridge, CA
Email: jojopelli@gmail.com
Website: www.foothillroundup.org

35th Annual Maad Dog Daze

August 7 - 9, 2009
Cathedral City, CA
Info: Dawn T. 760-342-2901
Website: www.maaddogdaze.org

2009 Redwood Coast Roundup

August 21 - 23, 2009
Fortuna, CA
Info: Tom S. 707-839-3972
Website: www.redwoodcoastroundup.org

42nd Annual District 22 Convention

August 28 - 30, 2009
san Luis Obispo, CA
Info: Gloria G. 805-471-2790
Website: www.sloaa.org

34th Annual Great Outdoor Beaver Meeting

September 3 - 6, 2009
Beaver, UT
Info: Joe C. 213-792-7715
Website: www.greatoutdoorbeavermeeting.com

13th Annual National AA Archives Workshop

September 24 - 27, 2009
Woodland Hills, CA
Info: George R. 818-378-4186, Mike S. 805-338-5140
Email: NAAAW09@aol.com,
aaarchivesmike@sbcglobal.net
Website: www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com

Things We Cannot Change...

Bob W. — 43 Years

Obviously, the staff of Valley Central Office cannot know all the members of the local fellowship. If you have knowledge of the passing of one of our members, please notify us here at Central Office during literature sales hours or mail us the obituary from the local newspaper. You can also email us at sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net.

Service Committee Schedule

Jul. 20, 2009	SFV H&I THIRD MONDAY 8PM Business Meeting 7PM Get Acquainted Workshop 5657 Lindley Ave. *****
Aug. 3, 2009	G.S. District #11 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 315 W. Vine St., Glendale *****
Aug. 3, 2009	G.S. District #16 FIRST MONDAY 6:15PM meeting 15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills *****
Aug. 3, 2009	G.S. District #17 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood *****
Aug. 4, 2009	G.S. District #2 FIRST TUESDAY 5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta *****
Aug. 5, 2009	G.S. District #1 FIRST WEDNESDAY 6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park *****
Aug. 5, 2009	SFV Board of Directors 6:30PM, Central Office *****
Aug. 8, 2009	G.S. District #7 SECOND SATURDAY 9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd *****
Aug. 10, 2009	SFV Intergroup SECOND MONDAY 6:30PM Orientation, 7PM Business Meeting St. Innocents Church 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

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>.

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.

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 2010 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 June 8, 2009

Josh S. 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: Bernard - 7 yrs, Judy - 8 yrs,
Dave - 11 yrs, Mike - 13 yrs, Josh - 18 yrs,
Nathan - 23 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:27 PM
*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes
for June is available at Central Office
or at the Intergroup Meeting.
These minutes are pending approval on
July 13, 2009*
Next Meeting - July 13, 2009
Prepared and submitted by:
Di V., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

June 2009

Anonymous	4 years
Dewey H.	12 years
George R.	14 years
Kathy A.	17 years
Josh S.	18 years
Roger P.	20 years
Doug R.	22 years
Bob O.	41 years
Reseda BB Study & Disc.	48 years
Learning To Live Men's Stag	148 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.

We Set Them on Paper

Step Four: 'Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.'

“In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper.” That simple sentence in chapter five of the Big Book slowed my reading one evening as I sat with a blank pad in front of me, making no progress on my Fourth Step.

At that time I had been coming to meetings for two years and had not had a drink during that time. My introduction to the Steps was at my first meeting where the Twelve Steps were printed on a yellowed old shade that hung behind the speaker. I thought that if this was all there was to Alcoholics Anonymous, I'd have it down pat in four or five weeks, because everything that was on the wall had been included in my religious education. The Fourth Step was nothing more than an examination of conscience while the Fifth Step was the sacrament of confession. With that settled, I sat back to drink my coffee and the days passed.

I found hope in the Fellowship and moved forward like a horse with blinders on, never looking back. But the sharing, especially at Step meetings, brought reality to me as my head cleared. Like all who had gone before me in the Fellowship, I could not escape the past.

For the first year, the first three Steps held my attention. Every time that I got to the Fourth Step, I proceeded to lose myself in the text of the “Twelve and Twelve.” Why did I get lost there? Easy — just the mention of the seven deadly sins — pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth — and guilt raises its head. Guilt did help me not pick up the first drink though it kept me from understanding the rest of the text in the “Twelve and Twelve.” Privately I wanted to finish all the Steps so fast I'd make the Guinness Book of World Records, but publicly I nodded my assent when people said, “You should do a Step a year.” I found myself writing in circles every time I tried to list all my sins.

One day, anger became my companion. It stayed day and night. My sponsor said that his sponsor claimed the Fourth Step was the Step for anger. Why didn't I take another look at what the Big Book had to say about it?

That night I discovered the sentence. “In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper.” Nothing about guilt or

sin here. No examination of conscience or sacrament of confession, just resentments. The Big Book says “resentment destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease....”

I began at my earliest memory and came forward through my life. My list was thorough. No one I knew well was left off, nor were institutions with which I had had contact. I was a walking resentment.

As I got to the middle of my list, my need to justify my resentment with a short postscript disappeared and I attempted simply to discover whether my anger was based on threatened self-esteem, money, ambition, or personal relationships.

When my list was complete I began to discover a startling truth — I had really been dependent on everyone. In this context the words “selfish,” “dishonest,” “self-seeking,” and “frightened” took on new meaning. I appeared to be as powerless over the things I feared as I was over alcohol.

But I had only to turn the page of the Big Book for the instruction to make a list of my fears, ask my Higher Power to remove my fear and direct my attention “to what He would have us be.” The Big Book says that after completing the Fourth Step, “you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.” This was true. Yet these truths were not accompanied by guilt. Instead I felt a deep sadness at the desperation with which I had acted. It was the beginning of an acceptance of myself, shortcomings, wrongs, and all.

The Fifth Step stood ahead — the road to “perfect peace and ease.” I was ready to call my sponsor and set the time for it. We made the date two weeks from then — I wanted to stay on the old, familiar road a little longer before sharing my inventory with him.

*Bernie B.
New York, New York*

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Easy to Forget

“It’s so easy to forget how frightened and alone we felt at our first AA meetings.”

On a recent morning after our Attitude Adjustment Meeting, a friend shared that he’d been trying to help a distant newcomer by telephone. Although she’d attended meetings in her small community, she’d been turned off by the cliquishness she’d encountered. He asked my advice.

I thought back to a women’s afternoon meeting I’d attended as a newcomer. At the break, the women had gathered in clusters of two or three, and I sat alone, feeling so conspicuous and uncomfortable that after a few minutes, I got up and left.

Fortunately there are so many meetings to choose from in my neighborhood that I found a meeting whose members extended a friendly hand and made me feel welcome. I remember one gentleman who sat by the door and greeted each person as he or she entered. He had a warm smile and always found something to say to each of us. His example has continued to be an inspiration to me in my continued sobriety.

It’s so easy to forget how frightened and alone we felt at our first AA meetings. We become comfortable and friendly with people we know, and sometimes we may forget to extend the spirit of friendliness to the newcomer.

As I see it, this is a golden opportunity to work the Twelfth Step. Our smiles, our handshakes, our invitations to come along for coffee after meetings are important ingredients that make the AA Fellowship a program of attraction.

If I feel lonely or sad, for any reason, and my sponsor isn’t available, I can usually find a meeting nearby. I try to remember the friendly greeter who gave me the encouragement I needed as a newcomer and extend the same spirit of friendship to both new and familiar faces. Although I may want to sit with friends, I often sit near someone who appears to be alone and introduce myself. By the end of the meeting my sadness usually dwindles or disappears.

Likewise, when we hear a fellow member share a painful experience during the meeting, it is vital that we share our understanding. Recently a sober friend shared in a meeting that one of her sponsees had committed suicide. She said that afterwards, as she was boxing up the literature, not one member of the group came up to acknowledge her sorrow.

While sobriety in AA brings the joys of fellowship, we must always keep in mind that our primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to maintain their sobriety. Reaching out beyond our immediate circle of friends to the newcomer or to the old-timer who needs encouragement is an integral part of this purpose. I’m grateful for every member of Alcoholics Anonymous who has taken the time to extend a friendly hand to me.

*Lindie B.
Redondo Beach, California*

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*Co-founder
Quotes*

Bill W.

My basic flaw had always been dependence — almost absolute dependence — on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

*Reprinted with permission of the A.A. Grapevine, Inc.
January 1958*

At the Expense of Others

“I’m an alcoholic — and a drug addict.” “I have to say this — for me.” “I know this is a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous but....”

I used to think I *had* to share about my drug use. After all, AA teaches us to be rigorously honest, doesn’t it? And as a younger person in AA, I was different than a lot of the older, “pure” alcoholics, wasn’t I? Nobody is going to tell me what to say. Nobody did, either. (A couple of old-timers took me aside after the meetings to talk about this, but I dismissed them.)

One night, I was talking in the parking lot after a meeting of my home group. As the people cleared out, I realized there were just two of us left — myself and a newcomer. He was in his sixties. We got to talking and he actually seemed to be listening to me! I really felt amazed that a man old enough to be my grandfather would listen to me about anything, and especially about AA.

The meeting that night had been on Step One and many people, including me, recalled their use of drugs (some in great detail). This man and I began to talk about the meeting and then he dropped a bombshell on me. He didn’t think he qualified to be an alcoholic because he hadn’t used any drugs! Here was a man who drank for more years than I have been alive (most of them, by his account, alcoholically), yet he didn’t feel like he belonged in AA. And we were supposedly talking about alcoholism!

Well, I sputtered and stammered for a while and I finally convinced him that the only requirement for membership was a desire to stop drinking and that there were no requirements for drug use involved. Thank God he is still sober.

Later that night, I really began to question myself and the message I was carrying. Sure, it was important that I qualified and identified myself, but were the details worth it at the possible expense of others? I realized I should stick to alcohol and alcoholism in order to keep the door wide open, not make it more narrow. If even one person gets the wrong idea and feels they don’t belong, that is one too many. Besides, I had been sober for a while and I knew what I was.

I guess I started to think just a little more about other people than I did about myself. So that’s why some groups are so concerned about AA’s singleness of purpose — some groups in my area even read a statement of singleness of purpose before their meetings. It isn’t just to be tedious and nitpicky and to “bust chops,” especially the chops of young people. It is so all alcoholics can feel that they belong once they get to AA.

*J. H.
Dover, Pennsylvania*

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Humor from the Grapevine

A True Story

A group of us AA members gathered in a small conference room on the first day of an Alaskan cruise for a “Friends of Bill W.” meeting. A gentleman stood outside the door, keeping his eye on us. Those inside had exchanged first names and had shaken hands — a sure sign we knew why we were there. When we asked the gentleman at the door if he would like to join us, he looked at us rather suspiciously and said, “I don’t know. My name is Bill Wilson, and I would like to know who my friends are.”

« « « » » »

Another True Story:

While attending the 1985 Alcoholics Anonymous International Convention in Montreal, Quebec, a member

recalls checking into the hotel across the street from the offices of a well-known Canadian whiskey distillery. She looked out the hotel window and saw that their flags were flying at half mast. Next to the lowered flags, they’d hung a large sign that read: “WELCOME AA.”

« « « » » »

And another True Story:

Every day on my way home from work, I pass a corner frequented by guys asking for handouts. Typically, they brandish cardboard signs proclaiming “Need money for rent” or “Willing to work for food.” I’ve grown so accustomed to these fellows, I normally don’t read their signs anymore, but yesterday one guy’s boldly lettered sign got my attention. It read, “Why lie? I need a beer.”

Coffee and a Meeting

I had just celebrated my fourth birthday with my home group that summer. I usually attended and enjoyed the local AA meetings in my mother-in-law's hometown while on family visits. This particular evening I arrived about fifteen minutes before the meeting time. To my disappointment I saw no cars in the parking lot. I checked the local paper again to assure myself I had the right time and place. I did. Hoping someone would soon drive up, I got out of my car and sat on the steps. I amused myself by watching a gentleman across the road mow a large field on a riding lawn mower.

About five minutes before the meeting was to start, an old car (what was left of it) pulled into the parking lot. "Is this the place they meet for AA?" the driver asked. I introduced myself and told him I was from out of town and did not know where everyone was. About that time the gentleman on the mower stopped his mowing, walked over and asked if he could help. I told him our situation and he pulled out his keys from his belt and opened the door. "I'm sure someone will be here soon. Make yourself at home."

We went in and I put on some coffee. My new friend told me he'd just gotten out of treatment and this was his first meeting. I said we would have one. We had just sat down

with our coffee when someone else came through the door. Ah, I thought, a home group member, but it was no such thing. He asked us if this was the AA place. I assured him it was and that we were just getting started and to help himself to some coffee.

We had a wonderful meeting. During our sharing, both men told of their hopelessness and need to stop drinking. The late arrival said he had to report to the local jail the next morning to serve for drunk driving convictions. I did the chips and both men took a white chip. We washed the coffee pot, left a couple of dollars in the basket, turned off the lights and left, closing the door behind us. We talked a few minutes outside and wished each other the best.

Driving home I reflected on how God had put me in such a miraculous situation. I attended that same meeting some-time later and shared my experience with the group. A member told me that they almost folded during that period and he vowed to always have the doors open with God's help. I told him they were open "with God's help."

*Harley P.
Ripley, Tennessee*

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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

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