

# Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 33, NO. 9 SEPT 2009

## Within AA

### *I found that the Traditions were not a series of strict rules and barriers*

One of our great Norwegian poets once wrote that popular traditions “haunt the future generations.” There are good traditions and traditions that are not so good. In this presentation I will be referring exclusively to our AA Traditions, which are all and only good.

When I arrived at AA in miserable shape, I was interested only in making use of the recovery program which, I learned, was made up of a dozen Steps. At the end of every meeting, however, one Tradition, and always the same one, number Seven, put in an appearance—which meant it was time to pass the hat. When I asked fellow members, “What about the previous six Traditions?” I regularly received an answer that I adopted as my own: these were things to keep the old-timers busy.

After a while, the whole truth was revealed to me. There were, it turned out, a dozen Traditions in all, equal to the number of Steps. Since a few of the Steps had started working for me, I began to study the Traditions and I discovered that they truly concerned me. My curiosity led me to find out that the Traditions were not a series of strict rules and barriers to limit my possibilities. Quite the contrary: the Traditions were rich in precious trial-and-error experience which had an incredible influence on my sobriety.

My daily life is now deeply affected by the Traditions that I had in the beginning feared and rejected. Today I know the Traditions better and have achieved a personal relationship with them. They present me daily with possibilities, with the freedom to choose or not to choose. They also present me with the responsibility to stay sober so that I can carry the AA message of sobriety. I even feel responsible for making other alcoholics be responsible. I also try to inspire other AA members to be good examples of the effects of the AA program, which functions through unity and the AA group. If the AA group were to disappear, I believe that I also would vanish.

Some years ago I took a break from my AA meetings. I planned my own research program aimed at producing a final cure for the suffering I experienced when drinking alcohol. After two years, destiny—or was it my Higher Power?—led me back to AA. My former home group was there for me that very day when most I needed it. I was welcomed again as an equal. The Traditions had made it possible for the group to stay healthy and wait for me to get over my sickness and return to receive their loving greeting.

The most important thing in my life is my relation to other people. Thanks to the Traditions, I am able to interact with people in a responsible way. This also goes for my relationship with my dog, from which I have learned a great deal. I can read my dog like an open book, watching the movements of tail and ears—body language. The dog cannot act to hide anything from me. As regards my acting, I still have a long way to go.

Big dogs do not live as long as small dogs do. I suppose the same rule applies to the ego. I will live longer and happier with a smaller ego. Until now, the AA Traditions have protected me against myself and my ego.

I hope you don't mind that profound quotations and words of wisdom are missing from this short presentation. While these elements may be lacking, what the presentation does contain is something unique: fragments of my own story, showing that I have managed to adapt a little to the Traditions in order to take part in my new life.

*Tore H.*

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

# Calendar Events

## Upcoming Events

### **31st Annual Ventura County AA Convention**

September 11 - 13, 2009  
Westlake, CA  
Email: [info@vcaac.org](mailto:info@vcaac.org)  
Website: [www.vcaac.org](http://www.vcaac.org)

### **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](mailto:NAAAW09@aol.com),  
[aaarchivesmike@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aaarchivesmike@sbcglobal.net)  
Website: [www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com](http://www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com)

### **58th Annual Southern California AA Convention**

October 9 - 11, 2009  
Garden Grove, CA  
Website: [www.aasocal.com](http://www.aasocal.com)

### **6th Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA**

October 16 - 18, 2009  
Valencia, CA  
Website: [www.scvaaconvention.org](http://www.scvaaconvention.org)

### **22nd Annual Inland Empire Convention**

October 16 - 18, 2009  
San Bernadino, CA  
Registration Info: Nancy P. 909-210-9317  
Website: [www.ieaac.org](http://www.ieaac.org)

### **25th Annual Santa Barbara Convention**

October 23 - 25, 2009  
Goleta, CA  
Info: Don G. 805-637-5705  
Email: [chair@sbaaconvention.org](mailto:chair@sbaaconvention.org)  
Website: [www.sbaaconvention.org](http://www.sbaaconvention.org)

## ***Things We Cannot Change...***

*Steve S. — 1 Year*

*Bob H. — 28 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](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net).

## Service Committee Schedule

- Sep. 21, 2009 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8PM Business Meeting  
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop  
5657 Lindley Ave.  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 5, 2009 **G.S. District #11  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting  
315 W. Vine St., Glendale  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 5, 2009 **G.S. District #16  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6:15PM meeting  
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 5, 2009 **G.S. District #17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting  
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 6, 2009 **G.S. District #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 7, 2009 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 7, 2009 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6:30PM, Central Office  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 10, 2009 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct. 12, 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](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting August 10, 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: Victor - 2 yrs, John - 5 yrs,  
Brian - 9 yrs.*

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM  
*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes  
for August is available at Central Office  
or at the Intergroup Meeting.*

*These minutes are pending approval on  
September 14, 2009*

*Next Meeting - September 14, 2009*

*Prepared and submitted by:  
Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

### **August 2009**

<b>Anthony S.</b>	<b>9 years</b>
<b>Kenneth K.</b>	<b>20 years</b>
<b>Joan E.</b>	<b>22 years</b>
<b>Colleen M.</b>	<b>22 years</b>
<b>Linda K.</b>	<b>27 years</b>

#### *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.*

# All Things to All People?

*“I identified with the people in that first meeting because, when they talked about what alcohol did to them, I knew exactly what they were talking about.”*

I would be dead today if I had walked into a meeting and heard people introducing themselves as belonging to every part of the addiction spectrum. Never would I have discovered in such a milieu that what I am and always have been is an alcoholic. By that I'm not talking about anything except that my physical makeup is totally unlike that of my husband who is definitely nonalcoholic.

I'm alive today only because I was able to identify with every single person in those first meetings I attended. No other reason. The understanding that alcoholism was also a spiritual and psychological disease came later. I am alive today because in a blinding flash of understanding, I finally knew what was wrong with me. When I take alcohol into me, my reactions are those of an alcoholic. And I do believe there is a genetic factor to alcoholism, even though the disease does not fully manifest until alcohol is imbibed.

Sure, I used a painkiller and I used marijuana and I tried cocaine—but I could stop the painkiller and the marijuana and the cocaine at will. I could choose whether or not to take more drugs. If I took a drink? Choice fled. Today I might have one drink, tomorrow a dozen. I identified with the people in that first meeting because when they talked about what alcohol did to them, I knew exactly what they were talking about. And because I knew that, instead of the one to five years of life the medical profession projected for me, I am still alive today, almost twenty-two years later.

And this doesn't mean that people who are still struggling with the question of whether or not they are indeed alcoholic don't belong in closed meetings. But that struggle has to be there—even, “I'm so-and-so and I don't think I am an alcoholic, but the judge ordered me here because I just got my third D.W.I.” Hey, that person might be in the right place! But someone who says, “I am an addict. I have never had problems with alcohol”? When it comes time to talk about what brought us to Alcoholics Anonymous, what experience does that person have that I will be able to understand as though it were mine?

I tried once to sponsor a young woman who attended AA meetings and introduced herself as an alcoholic/addict. She

talked briefly to me about what six beers had done once, and then went on to talk about the horrors of her drug addiction. She was not an alcoholic; she was an addict. Her counselor had told her to call herself both so that she could attend AA meetings. When I say I tried to sponsor her, I really did. But I soon realized that I simply did not identify with her drug experiences. They were not mine. I am an alcoholic, and I identify with alcoholism not with drug addiction. Sure, the “feelings” may be the same. But they do not spring from the same well, and I find definite differences, sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious.

I feel safe in closed meetings because I know (or should be able to know) that when I talk about the humiliation, the utter degradation, the horrors of being a woman alcoholic, I am understood at gut level, that those are shared experiences and that nobody will sit in judgment on my past. I will never forget these words of a good friend, a nonalcoholic, who attended an open speaker's meeting. After the speaker had shared the “how it was” part, my friend leaned over and said, “Pretty awful! How can he talk in public about such things! And laugh about them!” I know that no alcoholic will say that to me about my own sharing. I cannot know for certain that I am understood in depth when the listener has never been in those spaces. My safety is at stake. Sure, a nonalcoholic addict could say, “Gee, I know how you felt,” but I would know that to be untrue. He has not walked that other sloshing mile.

If AA opens to everyone, I suspect AA will go the way of the Washingtonians, who also thought they could be all things to all people. AA has offered sobriety to alcoholics precisely because of its singleness of purpose. I am an alcoholic who also suffered from brief encounters with drugs. I found my salvation, my coming home, in Alcoholics Anonymous precisely because its membership consisted of others like me. Dual addiction? Fine, but the primary disease to be addressed in Alcoholics Anonymous is alcoholism.

*Mimi M.  
Ridgecrest, California*

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

# Lifting the Burden

*Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves,  
and to another human being  
the exact nature of our wrongs.*

I had been sober in AA for two years when I went to a meeting and admitted I felt ashamed of being an alcoholic. The feedback I got was extensive and helpful, and something one fellow said to me really clicked. "It sounds as if you're ready for Step Five," he said.

I was between sponsors at the time, so I asked a woman who attended one of my regular meetings if she'd hear my Fifth Step. Using all I had learned about Step Four in the meetings, I set about writing my inventory.

Searching and fearless it was, as I proceeded to write pages that unearthed memories I'd long buried. And along with my past history, I realized I wanted to be rid of a resentment against someone I'd been carrying since getting sober. I had tried to pray for the person and to let go of the resentment, but each day my anger toward this person still simmered. I knew I was finally ready to be rid of the resentment when I admitted it was hindering my progress toward sobriety and peace.

When I finished my Step Four writing, a friend suggested that I not let too much time go by between writing my inventory and sharing it. So one cold February day in 1990, I sat at her table and read my inventory.

Before I started, however, she offered some important guidance: "Remember that our Higher Power is also here listening" and "You can trust that nothing you say will leave this room." That second statement was especially helpful because if anything was an exercise in trust for me, it was this experience.

As I read my inventory, I was sure she'd be shocked or judgmental. What a relief to encounter only understanding and acceptance. I felt my shame melt away. When I finished, she said, "The things you've talked about today are over and no longer a part of you. If you do another Step Four and Five, it won't be on what you've addressed now, for that's gone."

I left her home that day feeling relieved of a huge burden and also cleansed. Several days later, I realized I hadn't once thought of the person I'd resented so much. This was a miracle. Through Step Five, God had removed my shame about being an alcoholic as well as the resentment I'd harbored for so long. And that freedom still exists, years later.

*Teresa P., Syracuse, New York*

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



## *Co-founder Quotes*

### **Bill W.**

Let us never fear needed change. Certainly we have to discriminate between changes for worse and changes for better. But once a need becomes clearly apparent in an individual, a group, or in AA as a whole, it has long since been found out that we cannot stand still and look the other way.

The essence of all growth is a willingness to change for the better and then an unremitting willingness to shoulder whatever responsibility this entails.

*Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine,  
July 1965*

# Leadership in AA

*If I want to stand for election as a leader,  
I ought to take an inventory of my motives.*

The Second Tradition states: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

From this I deduce that there ought to be leaders in AA; that these leaders ought to consult the group conscience regularly; that these leaders ought to be trustworthy; and that these leaders ought not to be governors, dictators, or prescribers. This brings to mind the word “good” in the Ninth Concept for World Service: “Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.”

If I want to stand for election as a leader, I ought to take an inventory of my motives. Do I truly want to be the executive arm of the group conscience? Do I want to serve—or do I want power? Am I searching for status? Do I think that a service leader in AA is a higher class of member than the ordinary members? If my answers aren’t clear, it may be better for me and for AA that I don’t stand for election.

A person’s sobriety does matter—but not length in years. (My observation is that some members who are, say, ten years sober are in fact only one year sober, ten times repeated.) What really matters is that I’ve used my time to work on my ego. The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* says that “selfishness and self-centeredness are the root of our troubles.” It is not for nothing that the service Step, Step Twelve, comes after eleven other Steps—these eleven are supposed to make my ego smaller so that I can serve better.

The Third Step Prayer in the Big Book says “Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.” And the Big Book, in treating Steps Eight and Nine, clearly states the ultimate purpose of our program: “At the moment we are trying to get our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”

Because a leader ought to see to the “future functioning and safety” of an AA group (Concept IX), he ought to be in AA long enough to have done as many of the Twelve Steps as possible, so that his ego is troubling him minimally, and he has become as serviceable as possible. If I want to stand for election as a leader, I ought to take an inventory of my practicing of the Twelve Steps. How much have I really worked on my ego? How many of the Twelve Steps have I really done consciously? Is my ego small enough so that I am serviceable enough to fill this service position? How trust-

worthy am I? How consistently do I distinguish between principles and personalities in all of my affairs?

If I’m standing for election as a leader, I ought to see to the “common welfare” of a group of AA’s, so it is necessary that I know the Twelve Traditions. I ought to have experienced how they are being applied. It’s even better if I’ve learned to apply them myself, both in my group and in all my affairs. I ought to take an inventory of my knowledge of the Twelve Traditions. What do I know about the Twelve Traditions? Which Traditions have I experienced being applied? Which Traditions have I myself applied consciously? To which Traditions does my group not pay enough attention? (With what results?) To which Traditions do I not pay enough attention? (With what results?)

There are degrees of responsibility in AA: in the beginning I’m responsible only for myself and my own sobriety. After a while, if I’ve worked sufficiently on my ego, I’m fit to function as a service leader in my home group. When I’ve worked in my AA group for a while (and my ego hasn’t been mortally wounded by criticism), I’m fit to function beyond the group level. And after I’ve served, it’s good for me to become a very ordinary member of my group once again.

If I want to stand for election as a leader, I ought to take an honest and humble inventory of my true talents versus the talents demanded by such a service position. For example, the secretary of a group must be able to spell and must have overcome procrastination. The chairperson must know something about meeting procedures. A member of the literature committee must know something about printing. I must remember: enthusiasm is no substitute for talent or skills.

If a leader-to-be has asked himself or herself all the questions above, then quite possibly he or she may exclaim: “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” But I keep something in mind from “How It Works”: “Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines....” And so I come to what, for me, is the most important characteristic of an AA leader: does he or she continue to be willing “to grow along spiritual lines”?

*Johan C.  
Stellenbosch*

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

# Humor from the Grapevine

A slice of pizza is in the stomach, waiting to be digested. Suddenly, a shot of whiskey barrels down. The pizza lets it pass in front of him. A few minutes later, another shot of whiskey comes through. Courteously, the pizza lets it pass in front of him, too. A few minutes later, a third shot of whiskey tumbles into the stomach.

The pizza asks the whiskey, "What's going on up there?"

"They're having a great party!" says the whiskey.

"Really?" responds the pizza. "I think I'll go up there and take a look."

« « « » » »

"The best thing for you," said the doctor to the dissipated young man, "is to give up smoking, drinking, and women."

The kid thought for a minute, then asked, "What's the next best thing?"

« « « » » »

I guess my five-year-old daughter had heard me say "I need a meeting" so often that one Saturday, when I picked her up at her mother's and asked what she wanted to do, she said, "Dad, I really need a cartoon."

« « « » » »

"Norman, I liked you better when you were drinking!" declared an old pal, feeling no pain. "That makes us even," replied Norman. "When I was drinking I liked you better, too."

# Attention Archivists

*And all friends of Archives*

Come join us at the

13th National AA Archives Workshop

With Al-Anon Participation

September 24-27, 2009

Learn the methods to preserve and protect your archives for the future.

Warner Center Marriott Hotel  
21850 Oxnard St., Woodland Hills  
(Los Angeles), CA 91367.

Visit our website for the flier and registration.

[www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com](http://www.aanationalarchivesworkshop.com)

Mission Statement: The National AA Archives Workshop is committed to helping Alcoholics Anonymous Archivists working within the service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous who are bound by the principles of our fellowship.

Contacts:

Chair: George R. (818) 378-4186 [naaw09@aol.com](mailto:naaw09@aol.com)

Co-Chair: Mike S. (805) 338-5140  
[aaarchivesmike@sbcglobal.net](mailto:aaarchivesmike@sbcglobal.net)

*Newsletter Subscription: If you wish to receive your copy of the Recovery Times at your home, please complete this form and return with a check (\$7 donation to cover delivery cost) to:*

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 .....

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

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Non-Profit Org.  
**U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 82  
Van Nuys, CA  
91405

*Your Name and Address Here to  
have the Recovery Times sent to  
your home. \$7.00 for 1 Year.  
Subscription Form on Page 7.*