

Recovery Times

November is Gratitude Month

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 33, NO. 10 OCT 2009

Living to Good Purpose

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

I've heard it said that Step One is the only Step we have to take perfectly. Perhaps this idea comes from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*; on page 68, we read: "Only Step One, where we made the 100 percent admission we were powerless over alcohol, can be practiced with absolute perfection."

Thank God, in my case perfection was not required. My taking of the First Step was an educational process, a gradual realization that this Step did apply to me. I can't tell you at what point I consciously took Step One for the first time, but I know when I attended my first AA meeting I was sure I wasn't an alcoholic. I simply didn't match the picture in my mind of what an alcoholic was.

I'm one of those fortunate people who was introduced to AA by being taken to my first AA meeting. I didn't attend that meeting because I knew I was powerless over alcohol; I came because I was terrified of the man who brought me there. I knew this man had been locked up in a state mental hospital for being violent toward women. While there, he started attending AA meetings brought in by members of the local H&I committee, and when he came home on leave he informed me that we were going to a meeting. I wasn't about to argue with him. (Today I believe that my Higher Power sent this man into my life. He went back to the hospital the day after introducing me to AA, and I've never seen him since. I don't know if he was an alcoholic, but I thank God he knew I was.)

I don't remember what was said in that first meeting or anyone who shared, but at the end of the meeting an attractive, well-dressed lady came up to me, introduced herself, and asked, "Do you have a problem?" Of course I said no. I was sure I had many problems, but alcoholism wasn't one of them.

The problem wasn't that I hadn't reached my bottom—I had hit it and then dragged! I was ill, homeless, unemployed, and at that point of despair in which I knew nothing would ever make life better for me. I'd been a daily drinker for about three years. I weighed eighty-five pounds, had wine sores on my arms and legs, and couldn't remember the last time I'd taken a bath,

brushed my teeth, or washed my hair. I knew my life was unmanageable, I just didn't know that alcohol had brought me to this state. I thought I was mentally ill, immoral, and the victim of poor choices and bad companions. But not an alcoholic!

Within a few meetings, I began introducing myself as an alcoholic. After all, I was smart enough to figure out that was the way to be accepted in this outfit! I wasn't sure what these sober alcoholics had, but it was certainly better than what I had in my life. But I still thought I was different, that if these people had my problems, they'd drink too!

The awareness that I was an alcoholic came gradually, through identification with the stories that were shared, and through the recognition that my life was getting better. The only thing that had changed was that I wasn't drinking—and my life began to improve. I became aware that I was an alcoholic at about six months of sobriety. I was terrified. I thought that if I was alcoholic, if I was powerless over alcohol, I'd have to drink again. That fear launched me into willingness to attempt the other Steps.

What I didn't realize then was that I was beginning a lifelong process of applying these principles, one day at a time, to all of life's experiences, not perfectly but to the best of my ability.

Step One is just as important in my life today as it was at the beginning of my sobriety. Each day this Step reminds me that I'm still powerless over alcohol. I have a daily reprieve from the disease of alcoholism only as long as I'm willing to continue to do those things which keep me centered in my own recovery.

Each year brings me new challenges and opportunities and contributes a new understanding of myself and others, and of the process through which I can live to good purpose. And that process always begins with Step One.

*Mickey H.
Springville, Utah*

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

22nd Annual Inland Empire Convention

October 16 - 18, 2009
San Bernardino, CA
Info: Nancy P. 909-210-9317
Email: NJP60@yahoo.com
Website: www.ieaac.org

6th Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention of AA

October 16 - 18, 2009
Santa Clarita, CA
Info: 661-310-0384
Website: www.scvaaconvention.org

25th Annual Santa Barbara Convention

October 23 - 25, 2009
Goleta, CA
Info: Don G. 805-637-5705
Email: chair@sbaaconvention.org
Website: www.sbaaconvention.org

22nd Annual Lake Havasu City Roundup

November 20 - 22, 2009
Lake Havasu City, AZ
Info: Tom R. 928-566-1230, Al T. 928-453-8986
Website: www.havasuaa.com

43rd Annual Las Vegas Roundup

November 26 - 29, 2009
Las Vegas, NV
Website: www.lasvegasroundup.org

20th Annual River Roundup

January 7 - 10, 2010
Laughlin, NV
Info: Matt 928-754-4090
Website: www.rcco-aa.org

35th Annual San Fernando Valley AA Convention

January 29 - 31, 2010
Woodland Hills, CA
Website: www.sfvaaconvention.org

Service Committee Schedule

Oct. 19, 2009	SFV H&I THIRD MONDAY 8PM Business Meeting 7PM Get Acquainted Workshop 5657 Lindley Ave. *****
Nov. 2, 2009	G.S. District #11 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 315 W. Vine St., Glendale *****
Nov. 2, 2009	G.S. District #16 FIRST MONDAY 6:15PM meeting 15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills *****
Nov. 2, 2009	G.S. District #17 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood *****
Nov. 3, 2009	G.S. District #2 FIRST TUESDAY 5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta *****
Nov. 4, 2009	G.S. District #1 FIRST WEDNESDAY 6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park *****
Nov. 4, 2009	SFV Board of Directors 6:30PM, Central Office *****
Nov. 14, 2009	G.S. District #7 SECOND SATURDAY 9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd *****
Nov. 9, 2009	SFV Intergroup SECOND MONDAY 6:30PM Orientation, 7PM Business Meeting St. Innocents Church 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Things We Cannot Change...

John G. — 5 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.

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:sfvaaews@sbcglobal.net)

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting September 14, 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: Lynn W. - 20 yrs, Judith - 27 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:25 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 12, 2009*

Next Meeting - October 12, 2009

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

September 2009

Jerry	4 years
Diane D.	6 years
Coleen	9 years
Brian H.	9 years
Randy H.	12 years
Anonymous	13 years
Kit R.	16 years
Lindsay W.	20 years
Nancy M.	34 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.

Tradition Ten: 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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An Old-timer Opens up

“...we old-timers really need you!”

I've considered myself an active AA member and worker for the past ten years of continuous sobriety (not counting the eight years before, with one five-year period of sobriety). Since I came into AA, groups here have started beginners meetings, where advice and shared experiences can put a really new light on things.

This year, for some reason, I seemed to develop an allergy or sinus condition, causing me much discomfort. I became grouchy, nitpicking on people and meetings, full of self-pity. I had a constant buzzing in my head and a pressure that wouldn't go away with any medication (which I have to watch closely).

One night, as I was riding to a meeting with a dear friend, I started my usual complaining, and he very calmly said, “I think you need to talk tonight.”

It was a closed discussion, not exactly a closet where I could let everything hang out. But after one person—a newcomer, I might add—discussed some of his newfound feelings, I raised my hand. And I just seemed to open up at all seams. I admitted my gut-

level loneliness, depression, irritability, and just plain heartsickness. I cried awhile and felt as if I had exposed my whole being.

Then, I found I was getting support from the newcomers as well as the older members. And when the meeting ended—guess what! My head was as clear as a bell, and I haven't had that closed-in feeling since.

I've started working on new Fourth and Fifth Steps, and I am amazed at the change of attitude, changed sense of values, and new ideas that come to me. Now, I feel I really have something to share. It's a relief to be freed from old ideas. The barriers to bringing them up-to-date have fallen.

So, newcomers, please remember that we old-timers really need you!

*B. M.
Louisville, Kentucky*

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*Co-founder
Quotes*

Bill W.

For most of us, the first years of A.A. are something like a honeymoon. There is a new and potent reason to stay alive, joyful activity aplenty. For a time, we are diverted from the main life problems. That is all to the good.

But when the honeymoon has worn off, we are obliged to take our lumps, like other people. This is where the testing starts. Maybe the group has pushed us onto the side lines. Maybe difficulties have intensified at home, or in the world outside. Then the old behavior patterns reappear. How well we recognize and deal with them reveals the extent of our progress.

*Reprinted from As Bill Sees It, page 216,
with permission AA World Services, Inc.*

Fighting the Dragon of Procrastination

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Let me employ all possible care not to mistake the bridge for the land: the Tenth Step is not a stopping place. It's a connecting point between my efforts to get to know myself better and my desire to get to know God better—God as I understand him.

But that wasn't the way I saw it to start with. It looked to me as if Bill W. had run out of steam and in order to round out to twelve (the magic number), he put in another inventory Step.

Because of my religious upbringing, and my later revolt against religion, the wording of the Fourth Step in the "Twelve and Twelve" had been very difficult for me, with its emphasis on the moral. More helpful was the Big Book because it talks of "personal" rather than "moral" inventory, thus freeing the way for this battle-scarred veteran of the religious wars.

On Step Ten in the "Twelve and Twelve," I found discussion of "spot checks." I'd been doing that from the beginning of my AA life. But with a difference. I did it only when I thought of it, usually when I was hurting. Now my spot-checking became more conscious and regulated. As a result, I was better able to deal with such problems as criticizing, losing my temper, sulking, and seeking to dominate.

There was one problem, however, that I seemed unable to come to grips with: resentments. My fellow AAs frequently talked about the nature of them and how they dealt with them. And I would listen politely and sympathize that they still had what evidently was a serious problem for them. Viewing myself as the most benevolent man on the eastern seaboard, I could not face the fact that resentments were coming out my ears! Thank goodness, I was finally able to make a breakthrough but only as a direct result of regular attendance at AA meetings and practicing all the Steps to the best of my ability.

I found it helpful to review the foregoing Steps, in the light of the one I was focusing on. As I came to believe that I could be restored, I began my brand-new adventure in faith. By making an act of trust, I was admitting again that my power-driven ways—my reliance on self, to the exclusion of accepting any kind of help from outside myself—did not work.

My undertaking of a fearless and searching personal inventory was yet another exposure to the deflation at depth that

Doctors Jung and Silkworth saw as requisite in the recovery of an alcoholic. In my willingness to detail the exact nature of my wrongs (and of my virtues, as well), my old defect of intellectual arrogance was dealt another major blow.

In the Sixth and Seventh Steps, I mustered faith and trust and willingness, drew heavily on the hope and courage that my fellow AAs shared with me at meetings, and—in the fashion of our AA pioneers—on my knees asked that my character defects be removed.

In the amends Steps, my intellectual pride was put on the spot as I reached out to others, both in and out of AA. My plea was for forgiveness and for the chance to set right my harmful actions done in actual drunkenness or through emotional drunkenness in sobriety.

There is one thing about the Tenth Step that confounds some of us. The leader of a Step meeting at my home group summed it up: "I don't mind admitting when I am wrong," he said, "but why do I have to do it promptly?"

In a series of pieces on the Steps published by the Grapevine some years back, the author had this to say: "Promptness' is of fire-alarm importance whenever, through Step Ten, we find ourselves to have been in the wrong. If we delay admitting the wrong it may bury itself. . . and fester into misery."

For me, the need for promptness cannot be stressed too much. I don't know about you, but I have a distorted perception of time. It comes into play whenever there is a question involving remedial action that ought to be taken. Time structures seem to crumble, and once again the dragon of procrastination has his day. At such time, the need for promptness becomes an academic matter, and I can rationalize quite easily why I should defer action or not take any at all.

It is fairly easy to spot this distortion in others, since it is so evident in myself. But whether it's the Tenth or the Fourth Step, I owe it to myself to keep the focus on me. My taking of your inventory is not going to help me one bit. And it certainly won't help you.

*W. H.
New York, New York*

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Humor from the Grapevine

Desperate for work, a resourceful old lush answered a want ad for an experienced sea captain. Striving for authenticity, he wore a peg leg, a hook, and an eye patch. "You certainly look the part," observed the interviewer, "but tell me, how did you lose your leg?" "Ahh, me leg," improvised our man. "A cannonball blew that off years ago in Far Tortuga." "You don't say...And what about your hand?" "Aye, laddie, that went in a swordfight, beating off pirates." "Amazing...And how did you lose your eye?" Our hero hesitated here, then confessed a bit sheepishly, "To tell you the truth, I was staring into the sky one day and a dang old seagull dropped dung into it!" "And that put your eye out?" "Aye," he admitted. "See, it was me first day with the hook."

« « « » » »

An old drunk's favorite topic of conversation was his disbelief in the existence of heaven and hell. Eventually, he died. The next day, two of his drinking buddies met at the bar to console each other. "Poor old John," said one. "There he is, down in the funeral parlor, all dressed up and nowhere to go."

Realization

PO Box 1980

Recently, when i picked up my thirty-two year chip the group asked, "How'd you do it?" I gave them a pat answer: "I didn't drink and I went to meetings."

But the other day, I had a revelation: in celebrating others' sobriety, it helps me to remain sober and enjoy mine. In fact, that is one reason I continue to come to AA meetings, as well as to listen to those who went back out and returned to say, "It was hell."

I thank God every day for my sobriety and I ask for help to stay sober in mind, body, and spirit so that I don't slip back into my selfish, self-centered ways, and take all the credit for my sobriety.

Conrad R.
Old Hickory, Tennessee
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Current Information

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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.

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