

Recovery Times

New Meeting Directory SOON!!
Tell us your changes NOW!!

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

VOL 34, NO. 3 MAR 2010

Sponsorship - The Heart of AA

I guess it all really depends on whom you ask and on when you ask it: What is the most important job in AA? While I certainly don't wish to diminish the importance of our many "jobs" in AA, I am grateful for this opportunity to express my opinion.

There exists little doubt in my mind, or heart, that sponsorship has been, and continues to be, the most important job in AA for me. I also believe there are some valid criteria for a good sponsor. First of all, my sponsor has sufficient time in AA, with good quality sobriety. I've also been taught that the best way to be a good sponsor is to be a good sponsee. My sponsor has a sponsor. His sponsor has a sponsor. The people that I have respect for, with good quality sobriety and longevity, use sponsors themselves.

I further believe that if I am able to manipulate my sponsor, then I really don't have one. I'm glad to say I have never been able to manipulate this man. I also know my sponsor is the most active and positive member of AA that I've ever known. He has always been a good example. He has always been gentle but firm, firm but gentle.

At first my sponsor provided AA basics: how to stay away from that first drink one day at a time, the importance of going to meetings on a regular basis, the necessity of a "home group," trying to carry the message on a daily basis.

He has always been there for me. I've shared all of my life story with him over time, and he has always shared his with me. He can and does keep a confidence. As a result, I finally was able to put trust in another human being. I've been taught that trust is the very basis of faith. Without good sponsorship, I would have no faith in a Higher Power today. I wouldn't even be sober.

I haven't always liked this man but I have always respected him. And I haven't always followed his sug-

gestions or advice. As a result, I've made many errors and mistakes. Yet, he has always allowed me the right to be wrong. His "able example" of love, tolerance, patience, and kindness has taught me more about what my Higher Power is all about than I could have learned in any other way.

I've been sponsored into service. He taught me that "service is gratitude made visible." As a result, I've not only stayed sober but have found in the process a way of living infinitely better than any way I've ever known.

I found out after the fact that I didn't choose him. Rather, he made himself available to me as a friend. He's turned out to be the best friend I've ever had.

Today, I go to meetings looking for the newcomer. I try to quietly sidle up to him, and make myself available as a friend. We exchange phone numbers and get together for coffee. I try to give it away, as it's been so freely given to me. What a deal!

I believe Bill W. and Dr. Bob sponsored each other out of necessity in the beginning. Today, of course, we enjoy a Fellowship which owes its ever-increasing membership of recovering alcoholics (unprecedented in human history) to the well-wishers and combined efforts of many outside agencies and services, as well as many professionals. To these folks, we surely owe a debt of gratitude.

Yet, the heart of AA remains the same, thank God, when one alcoholic reaches out to another, and we find that we can do together what none of us could do alone.

*Jim T.
Aberdeen, South Dakota*

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

Alanest St. Patty's Day Alcathon

March 19 - 21, 2010
18321-A Sherman Way
Reseda, CA

33rd Annual San Diego Spring Round Up

April 1 - 4, 2010
San Diego, CA
Info: Michael S. (619) 972-3763 - hellojenil@yahoo.com
Website: www.SanDiegoSpringRoundUp.com

22nd Annual Indian Wells Valley AA Roundup

April 16 - 18, 2010
Ridgecrest, CA
Email: iwvroundup@gmail.com
Website: www.orgsites.com/ca/iwvroundup

34th Annual Springtime in the Ozarks

April 15 - 18, 2010
Eureka Springs, AR
Website: www.nwarkaa.org

Miracles Happen 2010

April 30 - May 2, 2010
Laguna Beach, CA
Website: www.miracleshappen.org

26th Annual Tri-State Roundup

May 13 - 16, 2010
Laughlin, NV
Website: www.TriState-Roundup.com

26th Annual South Bay Roundup

May 28 - 31, 2010
Torrance, CA
Website: www.southbayroundup.org

Things We Cannot Change...

Bruce G. — 56 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

Mar. 15, 2010	SFV H&I THIRD MONDAY 8PM Business Meeting 7PM Get Acquainted Workshop 5657 Lindley Ave. *****
Apr. 5, 2010	G.S. District #11 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 315 W. Vine St., Glendale *****
Apr. 5, 2010	G.S. District #16 FIRST MONDAY 6:15PM meeting 15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills *****
Apr. 5, 2010	G.S. District #17 FIRST MONDAY 6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30pm meeting 5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood *****
Apr. 6, 2010	G.S. District #2 FIRST TUESDAY 6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta *****
Apr. 7, 2010	G.S. District #1 FIRST WEDNESDAY 6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park *****
Apr. 7, 2010	SFV Board of Directors 6:30PM, Central Office *****
Apr. 10, 2010	G.S. District #7 SECOND SATURDAY 9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd *****
Apr. 12, 2010	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>.

New Meeting Directory SOON!! Tell us your changes NOW!!

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 (818) 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 (818) 988-3001.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2011 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 February 8, 2009

Hal 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: Will - 1 year, Dennis - 3 years,
Lee - 5 years, Carrie - 7 years,
Rick A. - 14 years, Sandra - 16 years,
Michael - 21 years, Danny Joe - 21 years,
Hal - 38 years*

Motion to adjourn 7:25 PM

*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes
for February is available at Central Office
or at the Intergroup Meeting.*

*These minutes are pending approval on
March 8, 2010*

Next Meeting - March 8, 2010

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

February 2010

Edward D. 5 years

Anonymous 21 years

Hal S. 38 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.

How About a Group Inventory?

Step Four and Step Ten have to do with personal inventory. All twelve of AA's suggested Steps are personal in that they deal with the individual. They constitute his charter of freedom. The Twelve Traditions, On the other hand, relate to AA as a whole and to AA in its various parts, particularly the groups. They constitute AA's guide to unity. Now if the individual should take periodic inventory, why not the group? (And, incidentally, why not the local club, Intergroup, and General Service Headquarters?)

A group is not an inanimate thing. You hear references made to "the spirit of this group. . . ." A group has personality and so groups differ one from another as do individuals. Some groups do well, others do poorly. Some groups flourish for a while and then go into a decline. Some groups fail, close down and cease to hold meetings. Why?

If an individual should take inventory even if he is doing well, why not the group? If things are not progressing satisfactorily, then an inventory is particularly in order.

How does a group take inventory? Much in the same manner as an individual. It should probably be done at a closed meeting. The leader might have pencil and paper and some prepared questions. The group then, through its members present, should review its assets and liabilities—not just the financial items, though these, too, might be included. Emphasis should be given to the over-all job being done, to an examination of how the group is executing its responsibility. This might best be accomplished by asking some questions. The following queries are not intended to be complete in coverage but merely illustrative. They may suggest others more directly applicable to your group.

1. What is the basic purpose of the group? To keep its members sober? To welcome new members? To provide a social outlet? The Fifth Tradition says, "*Each group has but one primary purpose. . . to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*" Is that somewhat surprising?

2. Just what is your group doing to "carry" the message? Does it take refuge completely in the Eleventh Tradition which says, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion"? Sure, it welcomes newcomers, but is that carrying the message, or is it reaping the harvest resulting from the prior sowing of others? Does the newcomer in fact practically have to beat down your door in order to get in? If he sneaks in, do you ignore him?

3. Your group has 35 members after five years of existence. "Very good," you think. Are you sure the number should not be 100? What is your "trading area" population? 60,000? Applying the national average, there should be 1,500 drunks in your area. Again applying the rough national average, 55 of the 1,500 should be in AA. But with your group's talent, members with available time, and other assets, perhaps your figure should be half again as large as the

national average. Perhaps then you should have 82 instead of the projected 55 or the 35 you actually have? Why don't you have more? Has your group done anything lately to bring the AA message to the attention of local editors, physicians, judges, teachers, and other public leaders who can be helpful in reaching those who need AA?

4. Are you getting a proper cross-section of your community? Or just the low bottoms? Or just the high bottoms who form a cozy, exclusive clique to which other types of alcoholics receive a frigid welcome? Do you get the proper percentage of men and women? Or mostly men? Or mostly women?

5. Do your members stick or is turnover excessive? Do a lot of new prospects come in but fall by the wayside quickly? Are you complacently sure that part of this is not due to group methods? Does your group do a proper job in educating, encouraging, and assisting the spouse of the alcoholic?

6. How effective is your sponsorship system and how much of a sense of sponsorship responsibility does your group have? What does it do about a prospect who comes in without a sponsor? Or the one who comes for a while and then does not show up? How many times will you "go after" him? Twice, ten times? Or do you say, "to h—I with him," or "he knows where it is. If he wants it, let him come and get it"?

7. Has everything practical been done to provide an attractive meeting place where new people will be reasonably comfortable and to which older members will be glad to return? Or are you satisfied with inadequate quarters on the rundown side? Are you paying reasonable rent or are you taking advantage of some church, fraternal club or other organization which in a sense is underwriting your sobriety? Did you ever figure out how much cash your group could get up in an evening in the days when all who are now its members were drinking and when the cash was going for liquor?

8. Has proper effort been made to explain to all members the need and value of working in the kitchen and performing other housekeeping duties? Have they been told precisely how to do those jobs, or is the whole matter left to their initiative and imagination even though they have little of either? What methods do you use to bring members more definitely into the group, to make them feel that they belong?

9. Is adequate opportunity given to all eligible members to speak before the home group and before other groups? Does any one actually keep a check list to see that no one is overlooked? How far back does that list go?

10. Do you pick officers with care and consideration on the

Continued on the next page →

Group Inventory *cont.*

basis that officership is a great responsibility and an opportunity for unusual Twelfth Step work? Or do you consider the whole thing a chore and a sort of joke, electing someone in open meeting who may not even be present? Do you elect someone because you think it might be good for him, forgetting that our common welfare should come first?

Have you given thought to the selection of a nominating committee whose job it would be to consider all eligible members, evaluate their stability, interest in the group, ability, available time, and other relevant factors? The nominating committee could then present the slate of candidates to the group for its consideration. While other names could be suggested at the election meeting, the group will usually support its committee. This method tends to eliminate the occasional nomination from the floor of the least likely member by an ill-advised or even confused buddy.

11. Does your group lend its fair share of support to Intergroup, the Grapevine, and General Service Headquarters? These service organizations are doing a Twelfth Step job on an area, a national and an international basis. No one group could carry out that responsibility. Could your group prepare and finance the publication of a Big Book? Or contact editors and movie producers to prevent the dissemination of erroneous information that might be harmful to AA, and to supply correct information of value to the alcoholic who still suffers?

AA is easier to know about today because of the work of our service organizations. AA is respected today and it is therefore easier for some of us to join than it was years ago. My sobriety or your sobriety in the final analysis might depend on the over-all national acceptance of AA. Any disgrace to AA on the national level would have an effect in every local area, in every group. Do you ever give any thought to these broader concepts, or is your group thinking solely on a provincial, selfish level? If your group has a

broad outlook, does it result in action, in generous help to your Intergroup, the Grapevine, and General Service Headquarters?

12. Just what *has* your group done during the last six months to carry the message?

Most of these questions relate to the Fifth Tradition, carrying the message. Many others could be raised relative to a group's success in the light of other Traditions: common welfare, unity, group conscience, money, outside interests, anonymity—could all be subjected to extensive inquiry.

In taking group inventory, the chairman, leader, or secretary might want to make some notes. The group might wish to take action as it went along. Ideas could be referred to committees and chores assigned to specific individuals for execution. A complete set of minutes might be prepared for reading at the next inventory meeting, say six months hence. The minutes might help to look back and see what improvements resulted from the inventory taking.

We are fortunate that it was *the group* which developed into the primary instrument for channeling the AA message. AA did not necessarily have to develop in that manner. The founders might have chosen paid consultations, paid sanitarium incarceration, paid correspondence courses, or a dozen other methods of transmitting the message.

The fact that the informal, no-dues-or-fees group was created is the principal reason why AA has grown so rapidly.

It may be the reason why you and I are sober.

The group Is a precious thing. Let's look after it.

Anonymous, Scarsdale, New York

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Co-founder Quotes

Bill W.

When we early AAs got our first glimmer of how spiritually prideful we could be, we coined this expression: "Don't try to get too damned good by Thursday!" That old-time admonition may look like another of those handy alibis that can excuse us from trying for our best. Yet a closer view reveals just the contrary. This is our AA way of warning against pride-blindness, and the imaginary perfections that we do not possess.

June 1961

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Fighting the Dragon of Procrastination

Step 10 - 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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Grown-up Living

Alcoholics Anonymous supplies the tools of recovery—they vary according to the individual.

All of these tools are good, but they are only tools. To *be of use* to us, they must be *put to use* by us. Some who are unhappy in their sobriety may be so because they have spent so much time admiring and polishing their tools that they have no time to use them.

St. James has said the same: faith without works is dead. For us alcoholics, both faith and works are necessary. Works without faith behind them can well be profitless. Faith with no works behind it can too easily become sterile. Faith in the AA sense is faith in the grace of God, the Higher Power as each understands Him; and faith in the medium of that grace, the help afforded by Alcoholics Anonymous. Works in the AA sense is applying that faith not only for one's own advantage, but also for others.

No one will turn himself into a religious fanatic—if that be his fear, by trying to live out the Twelve Steps. But these Steps can (and, if we use them fully, will) help us to become something of the person we hoped to be when first we set off on the adventure of living grown-up lives.

Anonymous, Dublin

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Grapevine Humor

Little Willie was warned that he must be on his best behavior when his wealthy aunt arrived for a brief holiday visit. It was at tea during the first day of her stay that Willie kept looking at his aunt.

Then, when the meal was almost finished, he asked, "Auntie, when are you going to do your trick?"

"What trick is that, dear?" she inquired.

"Daddy says you can drink like a fish," said Willie

« « « » » »

Then there is the story about a grandfather who drank too much, and his family was getting tired of him. While visiting his daughter and grandson, the six-year-old boy begged the old man to talk like a frog. Perplexed, the grandfather asked the kid, "Why do you want me to talk like a frog?"

The answer: "Because Mommy and Grandma said as soon as you croak we'll all go to Disney world!"

« « « » » »

"One night before a meeting, I asked a newcomer to read the Twelve Traditions. A few minutes later he walked back over, handed me the Traditions card, said, 'Thank you,' and returned to his seat. It turned out it was his very first meeting."

« « « » » »

"Why did you steal that taxicab?" asked the judge. The inebriated defendant fumbled around in his pockets, fished out the taxi company's advertising card, and read it aloud: "When you're drunk, don't drive. Take one of our cabs."

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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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