

# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 35, No. 7, July 2011

## The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter **Celebrating Independence... from Alcohol!**

After graduating from high school, I immediately joined the U.S. Marine Corps and was sent to Vietnam. Life after the service was fine for a few years, working and family, but then out of nowhere I started to have nightmares. They increased in severity as well as frequency. At first, I would have a couple of strong drinks before I went to bed. It wasn't long before I would slip out of bed, go into the basement, and drink most of the night. This was easy on the road working as a salesman where I was much of the time except for weekends. After I made my last call of the day, I would just buy a bottle and take it back to the motel room and drink until I was oblivious every day.



After a while, I started to get flashbacks during the day. A nightmare is like watching an old movie. You see it and hear it and you know what's happening because you have seen it before. A flashback takes you completely out of reality. You are back 'there' and you not only see it and hear it, you feel it, smell it and actually taste it. You are right there – back in the jungle and are oblivious to any of your surroundings. This is extremely dangerous if you are driving when one hits.

My condition worsened and my drinking increased to the point of being a 24-hour-a-day drinker. It was the only thing that seemed to help. With all the drinking and skipping work, my performance decreased to where I was let go. I became very depressed to the point of being suicidal. Then my wife checked me in to the Veterans Hospital. Doctors did not understand my condition back then; they called it 'shell shock' as well as other things. It wasn't until later they defined it as P.T.S.D. (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Because my condition was so acute, they tried E.C.T. (shock treatment). They gave me over 100 treatments. They would strap me down and fry my brain before they understood the damage they were doing. When they stopped and evaluated me, they found that I had lost all my long-term memory as well as my short-term memory. It had not touched my P.T.S.D. which attacks my serenity every day and night.

We lived in Atlanta at this time. My wife had been going to Al-Anon for several years and would drag me, drunk or sober, to meetings nightly. It was on one of these occasions when I was waiting for my wife's meeting to get out that a man approached me. I was sitting alone and basically talking to myself when he sat down and started talking to me. I was glad to have someone to tell my woes to. He pulled out his Big Book and opened it to the back. I was a little confused; I had never read that far before. He read the first paragraph which starts "Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today." He became my sponsor that day.



Every day I called him, I had to read that paragraph or the entire story before we started working on the Steps. That night was the last night I took a drink. I just celebrated 10 years of continuous sobriety and he is still my sponsor. Shortly after that, we had some financial problems. Our daughter, who lived in a small town in southern Illinois, offered to have us live with her and her family. (Continued on Page 4)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### **AA Foothill Roundup**

July 29 – 31, 2011  
Flintridge Prep Academy  
4543 Crown Ave, La Canada, CA  
[www.foothillroundup.org](http://www.foothillroundup.org)

### **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Mountain AA Conference (with AI-Anon)**

July 29 – July 31, 2011  
Performing Arts Center  
Big Bear Lake, CA 92315  
[www.mountainaaconference.com](http://www.mountainaaconference.com)

### **2011 Pacific “Additional” Regional Forum**

August 19-21  
Warner Center Marriott, Woodland Hills

### **Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast**

Sept. 24, 2011  
Woodland Hills, CA

### **60<sup>th</sup> So. CA AA Convention**

Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 2011  
Westin Mission Hills Resort & Spa  
Rancho Mirage, CA (Palm Springs)  
[www.aasocal.com](http://www.aasocal.com)

**Unity Day** (sponsored by all General Service Districts). October 2011 – date and location TBA

## **THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE:**



**Bob O. – 43 Years**  
**Judy G. – 10 Years**

**If you are aware of the passing of a member of our Fellowship, please call us at (818) 988-3001 or email an obituary to:**  
[sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net).

## **SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:**

**SFV H & I: Mon, July 18, 2011:** 7 p.m. Orientation/  
8 p.m. Business Meeting  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana, CA

**Gen Service, District 11: Mon, August 1, 2011**  
6 p.m. New GSR orientation/ 6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg  
315 W. Vine Street, Glendale, CA

**Gen Service, District 16: Mon, August 1, 2011**  
6:15 p.m. meeting  
15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills

**Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, August 1, 2011**  
6 p.m. New GSRs. /6:30 p.m. Bus. Meeting  
5000 Colfax, N. Hollywood

**Gen. Service, District 2: Tues. August 2, 2011**  
6:30 p.m. Business Meeting  
4011 Dunsmore Ave., La Crescenta

**Gen Service, District 1: Wed., August 3, 2011**  
6:30 p.m. Business Meeting  
7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

**SFV Central Office Board Mtg: August 3, 2011**  
6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office

**Gen. Service District 7: Sat., August 6, 2011**  
9 a.m. Business Meeting  
Agua Dulce Women's Club  
33210 Agua Dulce Canyon Road

**SFV Intergroup: Mon., August 8, 2011**  
6:30 Orientation, 7 p.m. Business Meeting  
St. Innocent Ch., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

**Happy July 4<sup>th</sup> and may we all experience continued sobriety and independence from alcohol~ Editor and Staff of San Fernando Valley Central Office.**



**SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES  
IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY:**



Central Office needs telephone volunteers for all shifts (esp. midnight – 9 a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up at the office or online: [www.sfvaa.org/involve.html](http://www.sfvaa.org/involve.html)

**Public Information Committee:** Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does & doesn't do. Need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs and to speak at schools & businesses.

**Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee:** Carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Call Central Office if interested.

**San Fernando Valley Convention Committee:** Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2012 SFV AA Convention to be held in Woodland Hills at the Warner Center Marriott. The Committee meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

**San Fernando Valley Young People in AA:** Committee Meeting is held the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., NoHo.

**San Fernando Valley Intergroup:** If your meeting/group does not currently have an Intergroup Rep, please consider appointing someone to represent your meeting. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group by sharing information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. The SFV Central Office coordinates a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. New Intergroup reps should arrive at 6:30 p.m. for orientation. Main meeting is 7 p.m. **To serve as an Intergroup rep, call Central Office: 818 988-3001.**

**CENTRAL OFFICE NEWS:**

**LIVE 24/7 PHONE SERVICE:** Whether you are reaching out for help from another AA member or surfing the Web, you can find the Valley Central Office any hour of the day or night. Visit us at: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) for meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, and links to other cool AA websites or call to speak with a sober AA member: (818) 988-3001.

**HAS YOUR MEETING CHANGED?** If your meeting info changes (location, time, meeting name or type of meeting), let Central Office know. Please provide meeting updates in writing by mail or delivered in person during office hours.



**HAVING A BIRTHDAY?** By sending a donation to Central Office, your birthday will be posted in Recovery Times. By making a \$1.00 donation for every year of your sobriety, you can support Central Office in reaching out to alcoholics all over the county (our phone lines are open 24-hours a day and we receive calls so we receive calls from alcoholics outside of Los Angeles and the Valley). Please send your donation in during the month of your birthday so we can acknowledge you in the correct issue of Recovery

Times. **This month's sober birthday celebrants are:**

**Lani S. – 16 Years**  
**Roger P. – 22 Years**

**Anonymous: 17 Years**  
**Doug R. – 24 Years**

**Paul D. – 18 Years**    **Regina S. – 20 Years**  
**Anonymous: 38 Years**



### **Heard Around AA:**

"Today is the tomorrow we worried about yesterday."

"Don't project the future and don't dwell on the past; just stay in the now."

"If you don't know what you are here after, we (A.A.) will be here after, long after you are gone."

### **Co-Founder Quotes:**

#### **Dependence - Unhealthy or Healthy?**

"Nothing can be more demoralizing than a clinging and abject dependence upon another human being. This often amounts to the demand for a degree of protection and love that no one could possibly satisfy. So our hoped-for protectors finally flee, and once more, we are left alone – either to grow up or to disintegrate."

Bill W. Letter, 1966.

"We discovered the best possible source of emotional stability to be God himself. We found that dependence upon his perfect justice, forgiveness, and love was healthy and that it would work where nothing else would. If we really depended upon God, we couldn't very well play God to our fellows, nor would we feel the urge to rely wholly on human protection and care." 12&12, Pg. 116

### **Central Office: IGR Mtg Notes of June 13, 2011**

**Chairman Tom T.** opened the meeting with the Serenity Prayer.

**Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion to approve the minutes from May's Intergroup meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.

**George M. represented Treasurer Brian H.** saying Central Office is currently in the red \$2,099.29 MTD and in the red \$15.84 YTD. Group and birthday donations continued to be down over the previous year.

**Executive Secretary Bob F announced** phone volunteers are still needed, especially for the 9PM-12AM/Sat and 12AM-9AM/Sun shifts. Those willing to do 12-step work, including being a contact person for out-of-town guests are also needed. Interested parties should contact Central Office. Everything is fine with the Internet site at [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) Prospective volunteers who just want to observe how Central Office operates are welcome to drop by the office during business hours.

**H & I: Tom T.** said volunteers are needed to go out on jail panels and to staff the "Bridging the Gap" committee, which acts as a liaison between alcoholics in hospitals and institutions and the general recovery community. H&I Committee meets the 3rd Monday of the month at St. Innocent. Orientation at 7PM, meeting at 8PM. New members are always needed and welcome.

**San Fernando Valley AA Convention:** The 2012 SFVAAC Planning Committee held its first meeting for the new season on April 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at St. Innocent Church. All are welcome to attend and be part of this annual event. The 2012 AA SFV Convention will be held January 27-29, 2012 at the Warner Center Marriott.

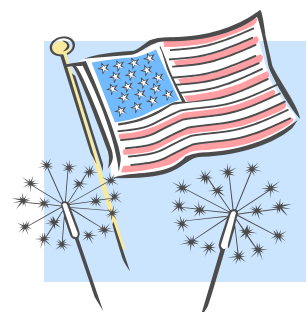
### **IGR Rep Birthdays:**

- Paul – 18 years on 6/18
- Josh – 20 years on 6/1
- Joseph – 20 years on 6/11
- Loretta – 23 years on 6/10



### **Celebrating Independence... From Alcohol**

We scrubbed up enough money to convert her basement into an apartment and live there today. Now living in such a rural area in St. Jacob, meetings are few and far between. There is one meeting a week attended by about eight people. To make other meetings, we have to drive considerable distances. As I am not even allowed to drive, I have to depend on others. My wife is the only one willing to drive me but then has to sit in the car for an hour while I make the meeting. With my inability to attend face-to-face meetings, I am trying my best to stay connected with other alcoholics. One alcoholic sharing with another is a major part of my sobriety and I am in hopes of being able to connect to other A.A. members in the future through the Loners Internationalist Meeting (LIM). **Geoffrey T., St. Jacob, IL**



## My Date with the Nut-House



I had been drinking for twenty years while dealing with mental health issues, as well. At one point, I got sober for seven years before relapsing. When I came back I stayed sober for 4.5 months then I went out again and this time, it took me to the Nut-House. When you hear that continued drinking for the alcoholic will take you to institutions, insanity or death – it's true!

My drinking progressed to the point where I would consider it unmanageable in 1988: I couldn't stop drinking on my own and I was drinking to the point of being ill. That's when I first came into A.A. After my relapse, I came back and although I had medication for my mental illness, down deep, I had this horrible fear that I would relapse. I was going to a lot of meetings but I wasn't telling my sponsor what was really bothering me and my fear of financial insecurity was becoming a problem. As I started feeling more depressed, I decided to look for an Old Flame on the Internet, someone who I hadn't spoken to or seen in over 30 years. Initially, I was looking just out of curiosity but then it became an obsession and brought up all those old feelings I had in my heart for him from so long ago. I should never have opened that door again. My depression kicked in and I began a downward spiral. So I went out again.

I began drinking heavily for the next two weeks and in doing so, my life really began to look hopeless. I started feeling like my whole life had been a waste and that nothing would ever change plus I was now getting older and that meant I was a total loser.

In addition to all my distorted feelings, I could not sleep at night and the lack of sleep was causing me to become frayed at the edges. That's when I made a decision to take myself out and I came very close to succeeding. Without going into the gory details, I woke up in my bed after passing out from the drinking and realized that I needed to get to the hospital. I sat for a while and drank some more and then, the God Shot was that I decided to drive myself to the nearest hospital. I made a decision to live instead of to die.

I was admitted immediately to the emergency room then placed on a 72-hour hold (51-50). After that, I was moved to the Mental Health ward (i.e. "The Nut House) which was a really terrifying experience, to put it simply.

I was assigned to share a room with a woman who was very violent. During the week I was in that room, she beat up a nurse and had to be strapped down and sedated. After that, she kept me up all night because she didn't sleep, tearing up magazines and stuffing them under her mattress.

Then there were the two, 300-pound guys who ran down the hall naked screaming and beating on each door of my hallway. There was also the short woman who wore sunglasses and a wash cloth on top of her head, who cursed me out for 'messing with her mother."

During this experience, I was going through withdrawals from alcohol and the medication I was receiving was very minimal. I was physically, mentally and emotionally a wreck but I was still unable to sleep, out of fear as well as anything else. The 12 days I was there included my 58<sup>th</sup> birthday which was very depressing. On the bright side, my pastor and A.A. sponsor visited me and I got to go to an A.A. meeting care of an H & I panel. That was a high point of my experience there.

While I was there, I was diagnosed as Bi-Polar, which was a blessing because I finally got the meds I needed to treat this condition. Since getting released, I have been adjusting to life on life's terms: talking with my sponsor, journaling about my feelings, and getting back into the swing of regular meetings. I have made a conscious decision to stay away from things that trigger me emotionally. I am hopeful that things will be better as long as I stay sober, take my medications as prescribed and meet regularly with my mental health worker and my sponsor.

For my part, I know that I have to pick up a phone when I need help and stop isolating. I need to work on getting healthier by eating right and getting exercise. I do believe that God loves me and has a plan for my life. So I need to stay out of self pity and in gratitude for all the things I do have in my life right now. From the perspective of this A.A., I have seen the insanity of my disease but I have also seen the beauty of the program of A.A. at work in my life. And I choose to keep on living despite whatever I may have to deal with. **Anonymous, Los Angeles, CA**

**Newsletter Subscriptions:** If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times** mailed to you, please complete this form with your address and a \$7.00 check (donation to cover cost & delivery) to: **SFV Central Office, 7417-E. Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91405**

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**(Please circle):** **New**   **Renewal**    **Additional Contribution**

**Moving?** Please give us your former address:

**HOW CAN YOU ROLL WITH A PUNCH?**

On the day that the calamity of Pearl Harbor fell upon our country, a great friend of A.A. was walking along a St. Louis street. Father Edward Dowling was not an alcoholic, but he had been one of the founders of the struggling A.A. group in his city. Because many of his usually sober friends had already taken to their bottles that they might blot out the implications of the Pearl Harbor disaster, Father Ed was anguished by the thought that his cherished A.A. group would probably do the same.

Then a member, sober less than a year, stepped alongside and engaged Father Ed in a spirited conversation – mostly about A.A. Father Ed saw, with relief, that his companion was perfectly sober.

“How is it that you have nothing to say about Pearl Harbor? How can you roll with a punch like that?”

“Well,” replied the yearling, “each of us in A.A. has already had his own private Pearl Harbor. So why should we drunks crack up over this one?” Grapevine, January 1962. Reprinted with permission.

**A.A. Word Search #7:** *(Submitted by Susan H.)*

*Find the A.A.-related words in the puzzle. Words can be read forward, backward, up, down, or diagonally.*

Y	S	H	A	P	P	Y	D	E	S	T	I	N	Y	<i>GREAT FACT</i>
U	O	T	C	A	F	T	A	E	R	G	Y	D	I	<i>FREEDOM</i>
O	I	N	S	P	I	R	A	T	I	O	N	K	M	<i>HAPPINESS</i>
Y	C	A	E	L	C	A	R	I	M	A	Z	N	C	<i>PEACE</i>
R	Q	H	S	J	Y	S	F	S	P	T	M	H	S	<i>HAPPY DESTINY</i>
O	E	A	N	M	J	L	M	B	T	B	O	T	O	<i>INSPIRATION</i>
F	M	P	T	E	W	C	W	R	L	Z	R	B	D	<i>STRENGTH</i>
N	R	P	V	P	X	R	P	Z	X	E	U	M	L	<i>MIRACLE</i>
O	J	I	L	E	G	I	V	D	N	C	M	B	A	<i>HELPING</i>
I	C	N	S	A	L	W	Z	G	T	B	H	X	B	
S	N	E	R	C	D	N	T	A	G	J	W	R	K	
I	K	S	F	E	D	H	A	S	E	D	I	T	Y	
V	W	S	K	L	F	R	E	E	D	O	M	C	O	
A	G	N	I	P	L	E	H	N	I	K	W	R	S	<i>A VISION FOR YOU</i>

## The Seagull's Lesson

While visiting an A.A. friend who lives in San Diego, I experienced a very moving encounter between a surfer and an injured seagull. The incident occurred while Lauren and I were walking down the Pier by the Harbor. She pointed out to me that a seagull was trying to fly but was unable to because one of its legs was caught on a fishing line. Every time it tried to fly, it would only rise above the waterline a few feet then fall back down again. Clearly, it was getting tired and was starting to sink into the water beneath the waves.

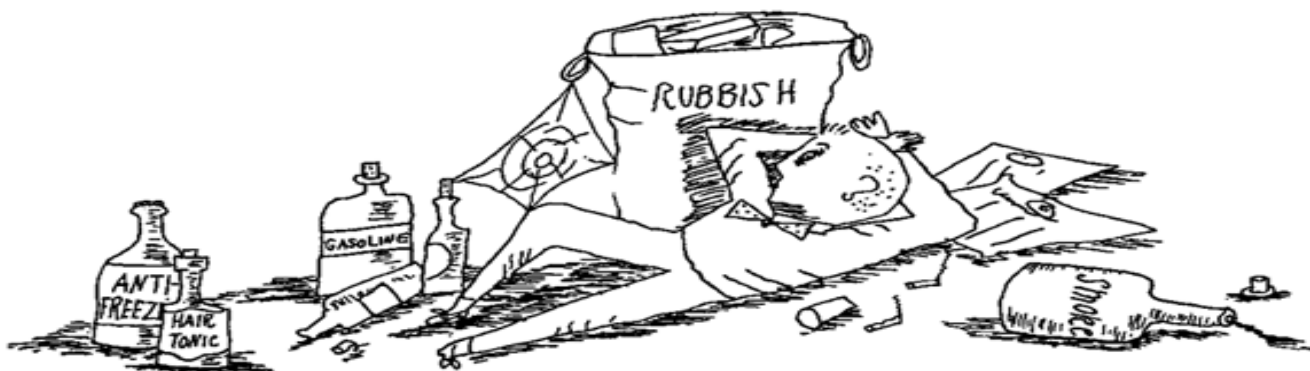
At that point, one of two surfers noticed the bird's efforts and paddled over to it. We watched as he tried to help remove the fishing line. The poor seagull was terrified and kept flapping its wings to escape. Finally, after about 10 minutes, he freed the bird but it still could not fly injured. That's when I got to see a lesson in compassion for all creatures, large and small.

As the surfer was trying to help this bird, first one, then two, then five, then twenty-five seagulls came circling around the two, showing their support for this wounded and terrified bird. Each time they circled, they would caw to the bird, then fly away only to return with still more birds.

Eventually, the surfer was able to lift the injured bird out of the water then cradling it in his one arm, he paddled with the other back to shore. This effort took him quite a long time as the sea was very rough that day. When he got to shore, he carried it to the lifeguard station. I presume he then tried to get it medical care.

Watching this take place it occurred to me that we, in A.A., are very much like those seagulls in that we circle around our newcomers and others who are wounded by life's experiences. Where else can you open up your heart, share your misery, and then find people who understand and won't laugh at you, but will instead try to help? Standing there, watching that rescue take place reaffirmed my belief in the fellowship of A.A. and the compassion this one surfer dude showed for a poor, helpless bird.

Editor, Pat K.



THIS POOR GUY DOESN'T KNOW WHAT AILS HIM . . . HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS THINK HE'S A BAD EGG OR WORSE. "THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION ON ALCOHOLISM" IS GOING TO TRY TO GET THE PUBLIC TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS BIRD HAS A DISEASE CALLED ALCOHOLISM— THAT HE IS WORTH HELPING— AND THAT HE CAN BE HELPED (WITNESS US AAs!)

Grapevine, 1944, Reprinted with permission.

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