

# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 35, No. 10, Oct.

2011

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

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## From Hell to Hope



It was another night at the bar with one of my favorite drinking partners, Mary. We'd been drinking since we left the office and were feeling no pain. Mary and I loved to drink together and did so on a regular basis. It was easy in San Francisco, since there were so many places to do just that. She occasionally indulged in using cocaine, a drug I'd been very addicted to but had recently given up. I was only drinking at that time and was trying desperately to hold onto the thought that it really wasn't a problem for me. Anyhow, Mary told me that a supply of cocaine was en route to the bar and I'd better get out of there. She pointed out a man sitting at the bar and told me he was the bartender's brother and that he would drive me home. That was fine by me.

As we drove along I started to become alarmed when I realized he wasn't going in the direction of my house. He was in a part of the city I was unfamiliar with when he suddenly pulled over to the curb, stopped outside a restaurant, and asked me to wait in the car. As soon as he was out of sight, I jumped out of the car and ran down the street. It had started raining and I was still in my work clothes which consisted of high heels, nylons, and a dress. I spotted a pay phone on the street and ran toward it, looking back every few minutes to make sure the bartender's brother wasn't coming after me. I reached the phone, inserted a quarter, and stopped. I had no one to call. It was truly a pathetic moment as I realized I didn't have a soul to rely on in this world. There was no one to come and pick me up. Then I realized I could call a cab. I opened my wallet to check how much money I had only to find that it was empty. Scared and frustrated, I started to cry as I wandered away from the telephone and down the street. I would have to try and find my way home on foot.

Out of nowhere, a taxicab pulled up in front of me. There was a young man at the wheel. He asked if I needed a ride but I told him I had no money. He said, "Get in." Although I was still drunk and I don't remember much about that night, I know he spoke the whole way as he drove me home that night (for free). He told me he was in Alcoholics Anonymous and that I could get help there if I wanted it.

I believe that cab driver saved my life that night. He made a difference in my life and my getting sober. I cannot think about that night without crying with gratitude.

I've now been sober almost six years and I have always wanted to thank that young man. So to the cabbie who picked up a girl in 1989 in San Francisco and took her home: thank you from the bottom of my heart and God bless you.

Katherine C., West Virginia, Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine







## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Unit A. 30 Year Anniversary Alcathon, BBQ & Wacky Auction**

Oct. 15, 2011, 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. meetings, 3 p.m. potluck  
BBQ/ 4 p.m. Auction  
10641 Burbank Blvd., NoHo

### **24<sup>th</sup> Annual Inland Empire A.A. Convention**

Oct. 14 – 16, 2011  
Hilton Hotel, San Bernardino, CA  
[www.ieaac.org](http://www.ieaac.org)

### **8<sup>TH</sup> Annual Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention**

Oct. 21- 23, 2011  
Hyatt Valencia, Valencia, CA  
[www.scvaaconvention.org](http://www.scvaaconvention.org)

### **Hole in the Sky Halloween Marathon**

OCT. 28 – 31, 2011  
Spaghetti dinner – Fri. 6 p.m.,  
Speaker Mtg. and dance, Sat. 8 p.m. – 1 a.m.  
21044 Sherman Way, Canoga Park, CA

### **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Area 93 Archives Gratitude Day**

November 26, 2011, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Presentations on early A.A. & snacks.  
3031 West 5th Street, Oxnard, CA 93030

## ***THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE.***

Nancy Allen – 8 years  
Jan Levy – 24 years  
Leo Sullivan – 30 years  
Gene Webster – 48+

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, Oct. 17,  
2011:** 7 p.m. Orientation/8  
p.m. Business Meeting,  
5657 Lindley Ave.,  
Tarzana, CA



### **Gen Service, District 11: Mon, Nov 7, 2011**

6 p.m. New GSR orientation/ 6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg.  
315 W. Vine Street, Glendale, CA

### **Gen Service, District 16: Mon, Nov 7, 2011**

6:15 p.m. meeting  
15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills

### **Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, Nov 7, 2011**

6 p.m. New GSRs. /6:30 p.m. Bus. Meeting  
5000 Colfax, N. Hollywood

### **Gen. Service, District 2: Tues, Nov. 1, 2011**

6:30 p.m. Business Meeting  
4011 Dunsmore Ave., La Crescenta

### **Gen Service, District 1: Wed., Nov. 2, 2011**

6:30 p.m. Business Meeting  
7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

### **SFV Central Office Board Mtg.: Nov. 9, 2011**

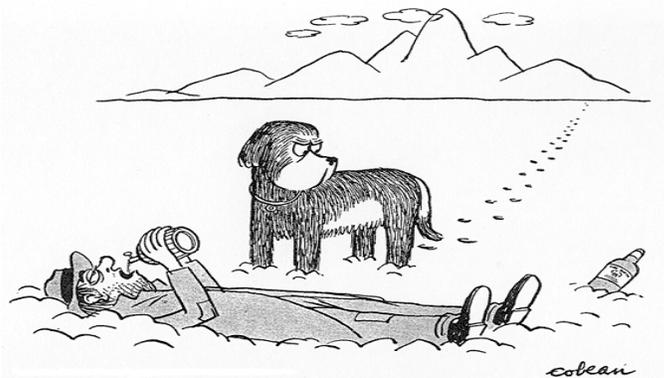
6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office

### **Gen. Service District 7: Sat., Nov. 5, 2011**

9 a.m. Business Meeting  
Agua Dulce Women's Club  
33210 Agua Dulce Canyon Road

### **SFV Intergroup: Mon., Nov. 14, 2011**

6:30 Orientation, 7 p.m. Business Meeting  
St. Innocent Ch., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana



### **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?**

Celebrate it with A.A. by sending a donation to Central Office. We will post your birthday here in

the Recovery Times. Please consider making a \$1.00 donation for each year of your sobriety. You'll be helping Central Office reach alcoholics over the phone lines, 24-hours a day/7-days a week. This month's sober birthday celebrants are:

**Anonymous – 15 years, Marlene B. – 16 years, K.S. – 25 years, Linda S. – 26 years, Nancy M. – 36 years**

#### **PUTTING A BUCK IN THE BASKET**

At a recent A.A. meeting focused on Gratitude, I found myself sitting next to a young lady with less than a year of sobriety. When it



was time for the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition, which states that each A.A. group is self supporting, she handed me the basket without making a deposit.

Now I know that times are tough all over. But I remember in early sobriety someone said, "How much did you spend on a drink? Of course the answer was \$3.00 - \$5.00 per drink – and I never had any problem parting with that cash. "Then a dollar or two should not be a problem," said the oldtimer."

I thought about suggesting to this young A.A. the importance of making a donation in the basket, especially since she was drinking coffee and eating a piece of cake, purchased with donations from others in the group.

But before I could say anything, the person leading the meeting started his pitch by asking, "How many of you smoke cigarettes?" After a show of hands he continued, "How much does a pack of cigarettes cost today?" The girl next to me, a smoker, said "About \$5.00."

The speaker continued, "And how many of you smokers donated to the basket when it came around?" There were several grunts and groans, including the girl next to me. "If you are willing to spend \$5.00 a pack on 'coffin

nails,' then you can certainly afford to donate to the program that is saving your life.”

Once again, God took care of things on his own.

**Anonymous, Los Angeles**



### Heard Around AA:

"An alcoholic is someone who drinks to find spirituality."

"A.A. stands for attitude & action."

"Inspiration without action is delusion."

"Isolation is the darkroom that exposes our negatives."

### Quotes from our

**Founders:** "Those of us who have spent much time in the world of spiritual make-believe have eventually seen the childishness of it. This dream world has been replaced by a great sense of purpose, accompanied by a growing consciousness of the power of God in our lives. We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our work must be done. These are the realities for us. We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness." (B.B. Pg 130)

## Central Office: IGR Mtg. Notes of Sept. 12, 2011

**Chairman Tom T.** opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*. April read "*The Twelve Traditions*". **Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion for approval of minutes from August's Intergroup Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Treasurer Brian H.** gave an updated financial report. A full Treasurer's Report is available in this *Recovery Times*.

**Executive Secretary Bob F** said it's important for Groups with changes to their meeting schedule to let Central Office know so that changes can be made, both to the printed meeting directory and the online directory. Other than that, everything is running smoothly at Central Office and our A.A. website: [www.SFVAA.org](http://www.SFVAA.org).

Phone volunteers are always needed to answer calls from A.A.'s in distress and especially during evenings and weekends. Anyone willing to do 12-step work including being a contact person for out-of-town guests, please call Central Office.

**H & I:** The annual Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser for H&I talks place at St. Innocent Church on October 27. Donations are \$10.00. H & I needs A.A. members to speak on panels at area jails. For more info, attend the next H&I meeting the 3rd Monday of the month at St. Innocent. Orientation starts at 7PM with the meeting to follow.

**San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention Committee** meets monthly at St. Innocent to plan the 2012 A.A. Convention: Jan. 27-29, 2012 at the Warner Center Marriott. Anyone can attend.

**Gen. Service District 1:** Wayne announced the Oct. 1 Unity Day event.

### IGR

- Marlene – 16 years
- Terry – 39 years

### Birthdays:



## Workplace Enablers: Excuses Keep Us Sick

Yesterday someone in AA was sharing about a 'slipper' she is trying to help. After going missing for some weeks, the problem-drinker-slipper called our friend to announce, "I've been in the hospital with pleurisy."

This brought back to me some of my own experience which occurred whilst I was unaware of 'me' being an alcoholic. In the early 1980s I came-to in the hospital; no-one there would tell me 'why'. My boss at the oil terminal visited me. He informed me I had, 'pleurisy'. He told me our oil company, back then, covered up employees' problem drinking with diagnosed-pleurisy. Oh! BTW, the MD was employed by the Company. He too was a problem drinker and self-diagnosed whenever he was in a drinking-bout.

Ten days or so later I was released from the hospital. On the drive home my brain told me I hadn't had a drink for 10 centuries. No guesses as to what happened next. I bought me a bottle of "pleurisy" and drank it. And the crazy cycle went on and on until A.A. taught me in '87 how to spell 'pleurisy':'...a-l-c-o-h-o-l-i-c. Alex, Glasgow, Scotland. Reprinted with permission, 9/2011.

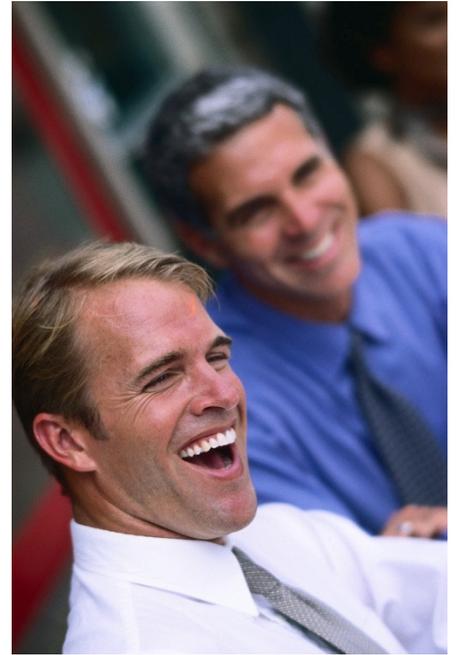


# The Laugh-Out-Loud List

**A newcomer and her friend come up with a perfect idea to keep themselves in stitches.**

I was just over a year sober, and Nicole and I were lying on the floor of my living room. The first year of my sobriety was propelled by me getting really involved, doing the steps and going to a lot of meetings. I was good. I was living sobriety and breathing in a new way.

So we lay there on the floor with paper and pen, because I had just gotten the wild idea that we should make this list. Let's call it the Laugh Out Loud List, I told her. We'll make a list of all of the things that make us laugh out loud when we think about them. This way, if we're ever in a depressing place, in a bind, stuck in indecision, we can have this on the refrigerator, take a look at it, and break out laughing.



What a higher power-inspired idea. As we made our lists, we were cracking up and busting a gut, just by remembering things that were funny. As the weeks and months went on, we added to our lists. We referenced our lists. On the phone with each other, after sharing a particularly funny incident, one of us would demand that it go on the list.

It was on a piece of notebook paper, and through adding to it over time the list became wrinkled and faded. But the idea prospered. I made a new one. I made another one. I made one for work too, and at the end of the work year, I typed it up for my department and we had a get-together where we went over it and kept cracking up.

I can't relay any blinding light experiences that came from this, but this "spiritual experience of the educational variety" has made it a readily available option for me to stop in a bad moment, think of something hilarious, and change my thought. My understanding is that this is what being truly sober is about: changing my thinking through divine inspiration. —Ginny M., Lehigh Acres, Fla., Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine.



## **Newsletter Subscriptions:**

If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times** mailed to you, please send 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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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

**(Please circle): New or Renewal**  **Additional Contribution:** \_\_\_\_\_. Moving? Please send us your former address: \_\_\_\_\_

## A Prayer to God Sent him to Prison, But it Also Set Him Free

"Lacking the courage to face the truth entirely, I gave myself over to other obsessions."

I took my last drink on May 5, 1996, and it was a doozy. The fallout from that episode was enough to open a window of opportunity and thrust me into the welcoming arms of AA. I had newfound hope, compassion, good humor, and a much-needed sense of belonging. Sadly, this would not be the end of my destructive living.

Getting in the swing of things wasn't hard. Home group, sponsor, Step and service work all became a staple part of my life. This made for a wonderful start, with the sky as my limit. On the surface, everything seemed well-rounded and balanced.



But certain parts of my experience, especially with regards to sex, had been deeply troublesome. Fear had a solid foothold, and when taking the Fourth and Fifth Steps, these secrets remained largely shielded and uncovered. Half-truths and outright omissions added up to half-measures. And as the Big Book promised, that availed me nothing. Unhealthy cycles, older than the drink habit, began to reassert themselves. I hadn't truly cleaned up the past; instead, some of it was swept under a new rug—the AA fellowship.

One old-timer was fond of saying, "What's really scary is when you find out what you're capable of without a drink." That was enough to make me cringe whenever he shared it at meetings. For it had become my dark mantra. Free from the debilitating effects of alcohol, but lacking the courage to face the truth entirely, I gave myself over to other obsessions.

The fellowship became a double-edged sword. I desperately needed it to get straight. But the fear of being found out kept me from utilizing it properly. Establishing an increasing network of AA friends as a means to cope with the secrets, only added to fear, guilt, anxiety, and shame. God would not allow me a drink to numb the pain. So I chose sex. Newly divorced and without the ability to form healthy relationships, things were spiraling out of control.

God's inspiration for me had been consistent and clear: make yourself accountable. One day an honest prayer left my lips: "God, I'm too terrified to do as you ask, please make it so I have no other choice." My life, seeming to get worse, was then headed for an encounter with mercy.

Marriage, the second time around, was an attempt to reinvent myself. We were both AA's, and I had the delusion that our family wouldn't be bothered by my secret past. Everything was normal for a while. Then self-centeredness came back, perhaps never having left. The stress of deceiving my wife was beginning to require a coping mechanism.

God chose this time to make good on my prayer. Someone I was unwilling to make amends with called, expressing their anger and need for help; help that would require my being held accountable. The moment had arrived. Fear made one final attempt to suffocate what I now believe had been my last chance.

After almost 10 years without a drink and three days wrestling with willingness, the Third Step finally became a reality in my life. Bringing the inside out into the light would be the only way to truly recover. Another simple prayer came: "God, I don't care what it costs anymore. I'm ready to follow you." Within five minutes, fully expecting to lose her, I told my wife whom she had actually married. The next day we went to the police, where I began to set the past right. (Continued, next page)

## A Prayer to God Sent Him to Prison, Cont. Pg. 6.

Today I'm in prison and will be for many more to come but I don't like to think myself a prisoner. Because of the AA's who found the guts to show up and clean up, I was eventually able to do the same. They proved that freedom is state of mind, available to anyone, even a guy like me.

Everything is different now. My wife and I share a finer intimacy than either of us has ever known. Self-worth and dignity are intrinsic values that are revealed by God, not to be sought after in the spotlight. Respect, compassion, and altruism are a fluid aspect of my being, instead of things to be imitated. I see God's grace in life's every detail. There is pain, and there are still shortcomings. But today my feet are on the path. I can finally live AA, rather than just talk about it.

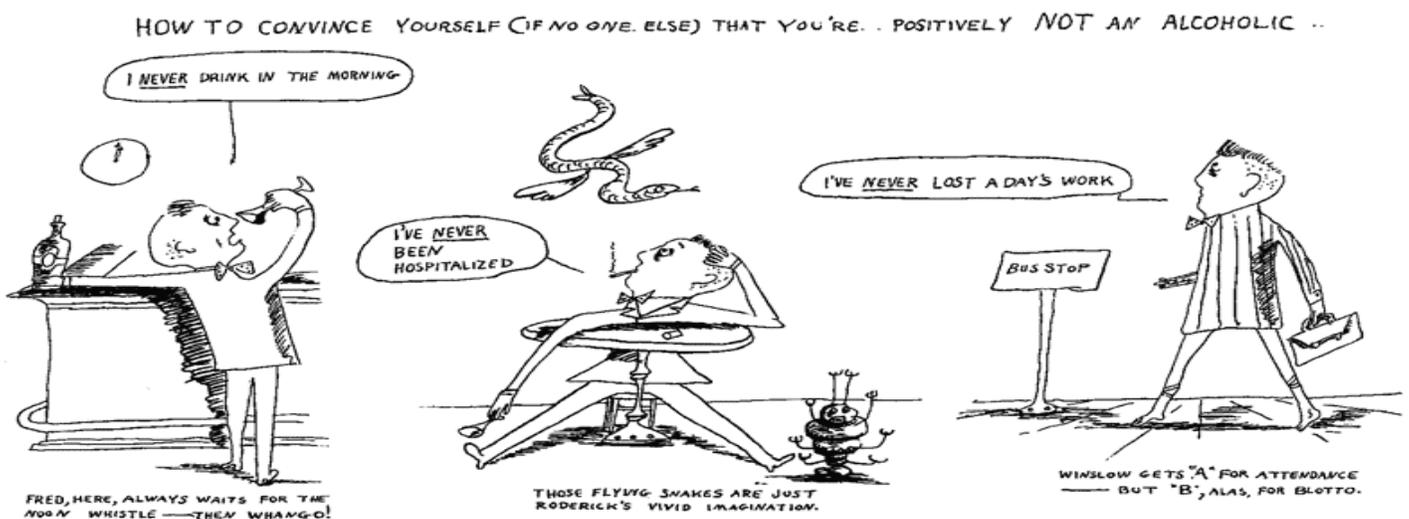
—Scott M., CampHill, Penn. Reprinted with permission from *The Grapevine*.

### A.A. Word Search #10: Find the A.A.-related words. Words can be read forward, backward, up, down, or diagonally.

S P E T S E V L E W T L  
 R U S E F U L N E S S I  
 I T D G P O E C B C L E  
 R E T D O D F N R L O X  
 P G S O L U T I O N L P  
 K A H D W R V H A L D E  
 L S C B E J O O D I T R  
 O S W L I P P Y H R I I  
 N E T R E R R Y I Y M E  
 A M U S E A P T G O E N  
 L S I B G A C W H G R C  
 C K O I S N G Y W F S E  
 O S H I M G O T A E A D  
 N J L U N F D H Y V H C  
 H T G N E R T S E A L D

TWELVE STEPS  
 MESSAGE  
 EXPERIENCE  
 STRENGTH  
 HOPE  
 SOBER  
 OLDTIMERS  
 BROAD HIGHWAY  
 USEFULNESS  
 SOLUTION

(Submitted by Susan H.)



**San Fernando Valley Central Office**

**7417-E. Van Nuys Boulevard**

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