

# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 35, No. 11, Nov. 2011

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

**Note: Central Office will be closed for book sales on Thanksgiving, Nov. 24 & Friday, Nov. 25**

## The Tradition of the Tiara

Human beings have a need for traditions which help us find meaning in life. For those of us who drank in bars it may have been the toasting of good times with our fellow bar mates or the rousing cheers to clanking glasses when our team won a sports event. Through these routines which centered around our drinking, we were able to make connections with others and feel 'a part of.'

Once sober, we find out that we have to let go of these traditions and, for at least a temporary period, it can leave one feeling empty and isolated. Initially, letting go of these traditions may seem counterproductive to our staying sober – but that's where the fellowship of the program of A.A. kicks in.



About seven years ago, a new tradition was born at the Saturday Morning Women's Meeting in Burbank that remains a unique way of celebrating sobriety. It all started when one member of the group, Dawn H., chose to wear a plastic, lighted tiara when taking a cake for 7 years of sobriety. After watching her take the cake, member Nancy A. liked the idea so much that she went out and purchased a rhinestone tiara and scepter to take her cake the following January. She then donated the tiara and scepter to the group so that others could wear it on their birthdays, which continues today.

Group member Di V. refers to this tradition as a way of sharing the mana or spiritual energy of each person who wears the crown. "Human beings need rituals in their lives," she says. "By wearing the birthday tiara, our group has created an important ritual that everyone in the room can share and which reinforces the importance of taking a cake to celebrate every sober birthday.

"When we first get sober, we lose some of the old rituals that surround our drinking. The Big Book talks about recapturing old times as we go forward into our sober life. Being part of a community and developing new rituals that are healthy is very important if we want to stay sober. We have to feel like we belong and that's why our group enjoys this celebration. People need the fellowship of the Program. We can't do this alone."

After starting the ritual with the tiara, Nancy A. moved up to the Frasier Park area but she often visited the group for special anniversaries. Sadly, she passed away suddenly last September but what she started will live on at the Burbank Saturday Women's Meeting. The original tiara eventually broke from all the use, but several group members saved the central piece which they had soldered onto a new crown. The newly-rejuvenated tiara remains a symbol of all those who have taken a cake at that meeting preserving a very important tradition and legacy of sobriety. Pat K.

**November is Gratitude Month: Be as generous as you can when the basket is passed. Your donations help keep the phone lines operating 24/7 at Central Office of the San Fernando Valley.**



## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **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



### **SFV Intergroup: Mon., Dec. 12, 2011**

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

## ***THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE!***

Barney Offield – 23 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: [sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:**

#### **SFV H & I: Mon, Nov. 21, 2011:**

7 p.m. Orientation/8 p.m. Business Meeting,  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana, CA

#### **Gen Service, District 11: Mon, Dec. 5, 2011**

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

#### **Gen Service, District 16: Mon, Mon, Dec. 5, 2011**

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

#### **Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, Mon, Dec. 5, 2011**

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

#### **Gen. Service, District 2: Tues, Tues, Dec. 6, 2011**

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

#### **Gen Service, District 1: Wed., Dec. 7, 2011**

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

#### **SFV Central Office Board Mtg.: Dec. 7, 2011**

6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office

#### **Gen. Service District 7: Sat., Dec. 3, 2011**

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

### **SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE S.F. 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 & speaking 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.

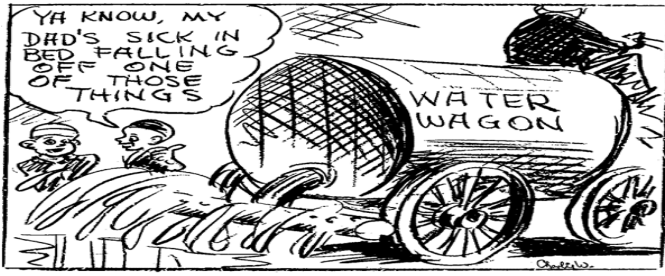
#### **San Fernando Valley Convention Committee:**

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.



### **Fun Fact about A.A.**

cofounder William Griffith Wilson (Nov. 26, 1895 – January 24, 1971), aka Bill Wilson and Bill W.

In 1999 *Time Magazine* listed Bill Wilson in the top 20 of the *Time 100: Heroes and Icons* of the 20th century.

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### **Quotes from our Founders**

*"As we look back, we feel we had gone on drinking many years beyond the point where we could quit on our own will power. If anyone questions whether he has entered this dangerous area, let him try leaving liquor alone for one year. If he is a real alcoholic and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. ... This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it – this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish." (B.B. Pg 34)*

*"If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. (B.B. pg. 28)*

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**Intergroup:** 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, just show up at the meeting.**

### **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:

**Susan P. -16 Years**

**Mary Jane A. – 29 Years**

### **Central Office: IGR Mtg. Notes of October 10, 2011**

**Chairman Tom T.** opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*. **Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion for approval of minutes from September'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** reminded everyone that November is Gratitude Month, the main fundraiser for Central Office. New directories are being printed and should be out soon. The event, Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast, raised \$1,000 for Central Office. Phone volunteers are needed over the holidays, especially for the 9PM-12AM/Sat and 12AM-9AM/Sun shifts. Book sales will be closed at Central Office on Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday (11/24-25) however, the office will remain open and phones will still be answered. Book sales will resume on Saturday, 11/26. Anyone willing to do 12-step work or as a contact person for out-of-town guests, call Central Office.

**H & I meets** 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 to be held Jan. 27-29, 2012 at the Warner Center Marriott. This year there will be no service charge to register online at [www.sfvaaconvention.org](http://www.sfvaaconvention.org).

**General Service District 11:** *John M* noted that Area 93 held a meeting at *Shakers in Glendale* on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss increasing membership/group involvement and a possible re-districting move to Area 5. Gratitude Day at the Archives Repository in Oxnard will be held Thanksgiving weekend on Saturday, 11/26 from 10AM-1PM.

**InterGroup Rep Birthdays:**

Christian – 1 Year  
Tim – 2 Years  
Dave – 5 Years  
Elizabeth – 5  
Years  
Susan – 16 Years  
Ron – 22 Years  
Larry – 24 Years



## Newcomer to A.A. Alcoholism: *How to tell when drinking is becoming a problem*

Alcoholism is a rough word to deal with, yet nobody is too young (or too old) to have trouble with booze. That's because alcoholism is an illness. It can hit anyone; young, old, rich, poor. black, white and it doesn't matter how long you've been drinking or what you've been drinking. It's what drinking does to you that counts. To help you decide whether you might have a problem with your own drinking, we've prepared these 12 questions. The answers are nobody's business but your own. If you can answer yes to any one of these questions, maybe it's time you took a serious look at what your drinking might be doing to you. If you need help or if you'd just like to talk to someone about your drinking, call us at 818 988-3001.

### 12 Question Quiz Designed To Help You Decide

1. Do you drink because you have problems? To face up to stressful situations?
2. Do you drink when you get mad at other people, your friends or parents?
3. Do you often prefer to drink alone, rather than with others?
4. Are you starting to get low marks? Are you skiving off work?
5. Do you ever try to stop or drink less - and fail?
6. Have you begun to drink in the morning, before school or work?
7. Do you gulp your drinks as if to satisfy a great thirst?
8. Do you ever have loss of memory due to your drinking?
9. Do you avoid being honest with others about your drinking?
10. Do you ever get into trouble when you are drinking?
11. Do you often get drunk when you drink, even when you do not mean to?
12. Do you think you're big to be able to hold your drink?

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. Copyright © The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.; Reprinted with permission.



### WHAT DOES CENTRAL OFFICE DO FOR YOU? NOW IN ITS 46<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF OPERATION, CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE S.F. VALLEY:

- Operates a telephone Hot Line 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365 days a year taking calls from alcoholics in need.
- Publishes meeting directories with up to date meeting information.
- Stocks all A.A. literature, chips and medallions and sells it at our cost to A.A.s.
- Distributes our monthly Recovery Times newsletter free to all meetings.
- Operates the website: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) with meeting information updated monthly.
- Offers a Public Information Group always ready to assist the general public with information on our organization through schools, health fairs, hospitals, etc.
- Staffs booths at conventions, round-ups and alcathons to carry the message.
- Acts as a central clearinghouse for group's flyers to promote sober events.

**Consider making an extra donation this month during Gratitude Month to Central Office of the San Fernando Valley. Your donations fund all operations at Central Office allowing us to continue to support A.A. members and groups as the Hub of A.A. in the Valley.**



## Living Rough on the Riverbank

A homeless alcoholic, he didn't believe in God until one morning when he heard from his higher power



"I was living rough on my little riverbank, freezing cold, and the drink wasn't working."

I did not know anything much about spirituality when I got sober. The only spirit I knew came in a bottle. I couldn't see how any power whether higher or whatever had been helping me. I professed to dislike religion and god, yet I was often to be found ranting and raving about the woes of my life at the crucifix that hung from the parish church where I spent a lot of my drinking time in the winter months. I trusted religious buildings as safe

havens but didn't trust the message they had for me.

I was very lucky when I first got sober that people told me the truth about the nature of my malady, and the mental, physical and spiritual effects of my disease. I had no argument against this as I knew that mentally I wasn't doing so well, my body was a mess, and as for spiritually, I knew that the burning hole I felt inside had something to do with that.

I used to watch a video in the early days by Father Martin in which he said, "Alcohol is the best cleaner in the world, it will clean away stains off tables, jobs, marriages ... " I knew this to be true. I felt scoured out. I had used alcohol to fill that big hole, and yet it had been the alcohol that had damaged me in such a way. At the back of my mind, I had always known something of the truth about my drinking and its effect but had never fully admitted that truth to myself.

My first spiritual experience was when the message came through loud and clear, "You are in trouble. You need help." I was living rough on my little riverbank, freezing cold, and the drink wasn't working. I was terrified of being alive and dying both at the same time, And for some reason at that moment in time the message came through loud and clear, up till that point, I had always blamed family or society for my drinking, but right then, I realized that the problem was mine. I ended up in a mental home for three years where I got sober.

I have had many spiritual experiences since then - both in and out of meetings and I find they usually happen when I'm not looking for them. As my old sponsor always said, "If you are so busy looking at the horizon, you are going to miss where your feet are." One of the most powerful of these experiences happened as I was standing outside an AA meeting one Sunday at dinner time. It was just me on my own and I was mulling over what was said in the meeting and how it related to me.

I was going through a period, as I have many times, of being very rigid with my program and my life. In other words, I was stuck in a rut spiritually. I stood outside the meeting and I could see a long line of tall trees along the driveway, and as it was a windy day, I noticed how they were bending to and fro with the wind. It occurred to me that I needed to be like those trees. They had very deeply-bedded roots, which kept them firm and strong and able to grow, but they also needed to be flexible to the world around them or they would, as big as they were, break and die. This had a profound effect on me. I realized that sometimes the message from my higher power is like a soothing breeze, and sometimes it's like a gale. I need to remain flexible by remaining teachable. I no longer feel that I know everything, which is a true blessing. A spiritual experience for me is anything that enables me to see with clarity what is going in my life and what I am to do about it. If I have opened myself up to my higher power today to ask the right questions, listen to the answers and then just plain get on with it, I have a good chance of having many more such experiences.

No spiritual experience is more important than the one that got me sober. It was from my higher power and I'm sure glad I was listening. —*Riverbank John, South Yorkshire, England. (Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine, 2011).*





## A.A. Word Search:

V L H O H E A L T H	<i>SOBRIETY</i>
R K Y T E I R B O S	<i>RECOVERY</i>
E R F M K B L I F E	<i>FRIENDS</i>
C O R O K L T F L R	<i>FAMILY</i>
O P I D S I R V O F	<i>HOPE</i>
V O E E M S G S A U	<i>TIME</i>
E N N E A T N M E H	<i>HEALTH</i>
R Y D R I O I W S R	<i>SPONSOR</i>
Y E S F P L E P G Y	<i>FREEDOM</i>
A B C S Y M H O P E	<i>LIFE</i>

*In recognition of Gratitude Month, November's A.A. Word Search reflects some of the things to be grateful for. Words can be read forward, backward, up, down, or diagonally. Submitted by Susan H.*

### **A STRUGGLE FOR RECOVERY**

There is a time for everything under the sun – this is what they say.  
There is even a time to recover each and every day.  
When alcohol takes over your life it seems your troubles never go away.  
Your problems only get worse. For some, they end up in a hearse.



What could be worse than dying from a drink, cause you couldn't take the time to think,  
and realize that one drink leads to two.  
So when you finally make a choice to stay sober, know it's harder than getting drunk.  
Because it seems like a drink can take all your pain away. But in reality, you make new problems every day.

The Road to Recovery can be long, but when you finally arrive,  
The sober feeling makes you strong, and you begin to see things more clearly.  
But each day can be a struggle not to take that one drink.

So surround yourself with friends that can help you think what you went through,  
and how alcohol truly affects you.  
Then remember when you are all alone and have nothing else to say.

Just bow your head and pray for strength when you are weak.  
For there is a Higher Power above who can teach you to stay sober everyday  
and learn to be happy and live life a brand new way.

So let this journey of recovery make you strong, and never look back and think it might be okay.  
Cause that one drink may lead to your last breath that day.

Lynette L., Pasadena, CA. Reprinted with permission. 11/2011



**A Matter of Time:** An old-timer contemplates the significance of putting together “a few 24s.” “The good news is that anyone can become an old-timer if they’re willing to be willing to change and follow some direction.”

For those of you who don’t know what constitutes an old-timer, theoretically it’s someone with over 30 years of sobriety. Of course, my last sponsor and I used to argue regularly about that. I’ve heard some people say old-timer age is 20, others say 25. The newcomer thinks anyone with more than a year is an old-timer. I know I used to.

But it really isn’t important ... or is it? Those of us in the old-timer category probably spend too much time trying to sound spiritual, acting like we know what we’re talking about. We really don’t know any more than most people, we’ve just had more practice not knowing it.

The other one–liner I’ve gotten to hate is, “If you wanna be an old-timer, don’t drink and don’t die.” I cringe when I hear that one. Getting old is bad enough; I’m not looking forward to dying just yet.

Sometimes, an old-timer might share at a meeting where they’re sober longer than everyone in the room put together. It’s a little awkward. But, believe me when I tell you that I have never forgotten what it felt like to be a newcomer. Yeah, I know, you get up in the morning and you’re a newcomer all over again, kinda sorta, but, not really. We’ve all heard that other gem of a line, “Whoever got up earliest today is sober the longest!” This one sounds good, in theory, but honestly, we don’t always feel that way, do we? Let me just say that’s not what this old-timer feels like. I can’t speak for any others.

Last night, I drove from Menifee, California to Escondido, in San Diego, which was about 100 miles, round trip, to speak at a meeting. Wonder of wonders, no one fell asleep. Over the years, I’ve toned my story down so it’s no more, “Hi ho Silver! It’s the sober Lone Ranger!” stuff. I’m not speaking to impress anyone. I’m just trying to carry the message. I don’t care if you forget where or who you heard it from, as long as it did something for you. I stuck around AA rooms to learn how to get real, be real and stay real. Honest to God, some people find out you’re sober for 36 years, all you can hear is the gasping, oohing and ahing all over the place. It’s embarrassing. I have to remind myself, I didn’t do this alone. I do not like being put on a pedestal, it’s too far to fall.

I try to focus on recovery and stay away from a drunk-a-log. I never plan what I’m going to say. It’s usually pretty easy now, since I’ve been sober long enough to actually discover and remember my story. My story used to change a lot in the first ten to twenty years, because things I had long forgotten kept coming up. I think we call it clearing away the debris of the past, or peeling the onion. The last ten years or so, there haven’t been any forgotten memories that I’ve remembered, thank goodness.

I keep going to AA because there’ll always be newcomers, and I need to hear and see them. My hormones are no longer in overdrive, so I’m not checking out the guys. Okay, okay, once in a great while I do, but mostly just for the fun of it. Also, it’s safe because everyone figures I’m too old to feel anything. Hah! Besides, I’m happily married. But, really, I no longer have to justify what I do. The good news is that anyone can become an old-timer if they’re willing to be willing to change and follow some direction. One thing is for sure: Nothing changes if nothing changes. —Ann S., Menifee, Calif.  
(Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine.)



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