

RECOVERY TIMES

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The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Note: Central Office will be open on Dec. 25 & 26 and Jan. 1 & 2 but closed for book sales. Dec. 24th and Dec. 31st Central Office will close at 1 p.m.

A.A. AT THE V.A.: SATURDAY, DEC. 17, 2011 @ 5:00 P.M. AT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, NORTH HILLS-- A HOLIDAY TRADITION THAT STARTED WITH CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE S.F. VALLEY

“A.A. at the V.A. (Veterans’ Administration) is a way to thank the hospital and its crew for the ability to have a meeting there every week and a way to bring happiness to those who live in Building 99,” says Bob Fisher, General Manager of Central Office of the San Fernando Valley of Alcoholics Anonymous.



Editor Pat K. interviewed Bob F. asking him how the tradition of A.A. at the V.A. began:

“We had always done Christmas caroling at my house, even before I got sober. In the old days – back in 1962 - we would all have coffee cups and we would go door to door wherever we were living (Virginia, New York, and here) and we wouldn’t sing until people filled the cup with liquor. Once I got sober, I told some A.A.s what I used to do and people liked the idea and that’s how it began.

“We’ve been doing Christmas Caroling there since 1981 when a bunch of us from a Monday night meeting, that is no longer in existence, made our first trip there. We all met at somebody’s home then we rented a bus to take us to a couple of hospitals and recovery houses before going up to the VA. That plan changed after the third year though, when our bus driver showed up drunk. We were all praying that he wouldn’t hit somebody! Because the bus driver got out of hand, we decided to be stationary at the V.A. in the years that followed.

“We used to go up to some of the buildings and the lockdown wards for the veterans and sing Christmas Carols at the Old Soldiers’ Home, (aka: Building 99). That first year, we had about 15 A.A.s. We had decided to have a potluck but because no one was organizing it, we ended up with about 200 cans of soda and five bags of potato chips. So the second year, we invited Al-Anon and we ended up with breaded pork and lots of salads. From then on, it’s always been an A.A./Al-Anon affair and that’s the reason we eat so well. Later, the Veterans Group decided that we should allocate people to cook hams and turkeys so we can have a dinner. We never know how many we will get but it always works out well. The event is now open to anyone who wants to join us -- including families and kids.

“A few years into the event, we were up to 75 people. One year, at our mini Gratitude Meeting, five guys came over at the end of the meeting and asked if we could take them back to Building 5. It turns out that they were residents who were having so much fun that they tagged along with us and to walk around singing. But then they realized they might get in trouble for leaving the building so they needed help from us to go back.

“The ‘94 earthquake wiped out a lot of the buildings but we still held it that year because Building 99 was intact. Buildings 5 and 6, which were for detoxing and rehabbing veterans, got wiped out and are still closed. Those buildings acted as a recovery house for vets whereas, Building 99 is more of a hospice for veterans.

“We still have the same rule to join the event: You either have to be know the songs and be able to sing or you don’t have to know the songs and don’t have to sing well. The whole idea is to bring some joy to ourselves first, then to those down in Building 99. We have people who come every year as well as those who come when they don’t have other parties. In 2010, there were about 300 people, including parents and kids. We even had a young lady on a violin who accompanied us last year. It was really great! “One year, we were asked to sing at the Northridge Hospital Psych Ward; there were about 30 of us. When we arrived, the noise in the Psych Ward was absolutely terrible – there was a battle going on.

(Continued Pg. 4)



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A.A. at the V.A. (dinner & XMAS caroling: open to everyone)

5:00 p.m., December 17, 2011
16111 Plummer Ave, Building 22
North Hills, CA 91343

San Fernando Group New Years' Alcañon

Dec. 30 – Jan. 1, 2012
13245 Hubbard Street, Sylmar, CA

2012 San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention

January 27-29, 2012
Marriott Warner Center
21850 Oxnard Street, Woodland Hills, CA
<http://www.sfvaaconvention.org>

All California Young People in A.A.

March 15 – 18, 2012
Ontario Convention Center
2000 E. Convention Center Way, Ontario, CA
Acypaa2012.org

THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE!

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

Normie B. – 22 Years

SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:

SFV H & I: Mon, Dec. 21, 2011: 7 p.m. Orientation/
8 p.m. Business Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

Gen Service, District 11: Mon, Jan. 2, 2012

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

Gen Service, District 16: Mon, Jan. 2, 2012

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

Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, Jan. 2, 2012

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

Gen. Service, District 2: Tues, Jan. 3, 2012

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



Gen Service, District 1: Wed., Jan. 4, 2012

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

SFV Central Office Board Mtg.: Jan.4, 2012

6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office

Gen. Service District 7: Sat., Jan. 9, 2012

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

SFV Intergroup: Mon., Dec. 12, 2011

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

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

Public Information Committee: Provides info to the general public about what A.A. does. 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 Jan. 27 – 29, 2012. The Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. The theme of the 2012 Convention is: "Our Hats Are Off to You."

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA:

Committee Meeting is held the 1st Sunday of each month at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., NoHo.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: The SFV Central Office coordinates a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd Monday of each month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. New Intergroup reps should arrive at 6:30 p.m. for orientation.

Heard Around A.A.

"In prayer, it's better to have a heart without words, than words without heart."

"I don't know what my future holds, but I know who holds my future."

"My 'mess' has become my 'message'."

"To live with God, we have endless hope."

To live without God, we have a hopeless end."

Quotes from our Founders

"Indeed, the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of A.A.'s Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all." (Twelve & Twelve, Pg.70)

"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 head in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our fellow travelers are, and that is where our work must be done."

(Big Book, Pg. 130).

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 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:

David H. – 21 Years, Sarah M. – 24 Years and Anonymous – 21 Years.

Central Office: IGR Mtg. Notes of November 14, 2011

Vice Chair Cheryl opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*. **Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion for approval of minutes from October's Intergroup Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer Brian H. reported that Central Office is currently in the red <\$233.34> MTD and in the red <\$1,668.73> YTD. A full Treasurer's Report is available in this *Recovery Times*.

Dawn gave Executive Secretary Bob F's announcements. Phone volunteers are needed around the Holidays to answer calls from A.A.'s in distress, especially during evenings and weekends. Anyone willing to do 12-step work or serving as a contact person for out-of-town guests, please call Central Office.

H & I meets the 3rd Monday of the month at St. Innocent. Orientation starts at 7 PM 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. Marathon meetings are still available for group participation.

IGR

Whitney – 8 Years
Katie – 15 Years
Dawn – 16 Years
Glenn – 17 Years
John – 23 Years

Birthdays:



Recovery Times is published monthly, 12 months a year, by the Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous of the San Fernando Valley (SFVAA). The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of A.A. Please send any announcements, stories with an A.A. message or sober jokes to Editor Pat K. at: xnowisthetime@aol.com. Submission does not guarantee acceptance.

A.A. AT THE V.A. (Continued, pg. 1)

We knocked on the door and a nurse told us that there was no way we could sing because there was a fight going on. But when she saw the looks on our faces, she told us that she would let five people in to sing. So I picked the five people with the best voices and they were let inside, protected by two nurses. By the end of the first song, the noise had quieted down and as they continued to sing, there was total peace on the ward. The rest of the 25 of us were amazed as we listened from the other side of the door – and the nurses were really grateful.



Another time, Eddie E. and his son were singing for the first time at Northridge Hospital. They used to have a rotunda in the lobby of the hospital where we would sing. It was actually the only place that we sounded good. Well while we were singing, a guard came down and asked who was in charge. I was pointed out. I thought we were going to be thrown out but instead, the guard asked if we could sing for the patients in the cancer ward. So we went up the elevator to the cancer ward and as we were singing room to room, Eddie spotted a neighbor of his who he hadn't seen in a few weeks. It was a tearful reunion; I'll never forget it. Eddie is now dead but his son is alive and he has tried to carry on this tradition of Christmas Caroling where he lives in Virginia."

Finally, how did the tradition of wearing a top hat come into being?

Says Bob, "That tradition came about because nobody could find the leader to follow me. So I donned the hat – which is the Mad Hatter's hat from Disneyland; I just put some Christmas ribbon around it. This way, people could find me and follow me through the tunnels. Some people still drive over and meet us at Building 99, but most people take the underground tunnels. There are probably 200 buildings at the V.A. and they are all connected by underground tunnels. Having a procession through the underground tunnel system is part of the fun of the event, especially when there are several hundred people walking through the tunnels singing. It echoes off the walls and the vets can hear us coming. It's a very happy event that so many people look forward to – particularly those who don't have any visitors. After 30 years, it's still growing strong and gaining momentum because it feels good to give back."



Recovery Times 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**

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip code: _____

(Please circle): New or Renewal **Additional Contribution:** _____.

If moving, please give us your former address:

Finding my life again: My name is George, I'm an Alcoholic

At fifteen I was a big lad and hung around with a bunch of big guys. So, on a busy Saturday night, it wasn't difficult to pass the scrutiny of the overworked barman and buy my first 'real' drink. I was shaking inside and had a lot of regret later. I discovered that I was the guy in our group who could get drunk on the least amount of beer. Two pints and I was well gone, three and I would be legless and totally out of it. As you can imagine, I was the source of a bunch of jokes for a lot of years.

I served an apprenticeship as a manufacturing engineer, married, and with my wife's help, bought a house in Aberdeen. We then had a couple of kids. At forty, my life seemed okay, but money was always tight so it was hard to afford booze. Boy, was I lucky? I discovered home brew (homemade alcohol) and, better than that, I started to get a 'taste' for drink. Out of all my home brewing attempts, I discovered that the lager was drinkable. I was now able to consume a 'ration' of four pints a night while my wife was out and I was left to baby-sit.

The answer to my prayers seemed to come in 1978. Oil had been discovered in the North Sea in the late '60s and by '78 the oil industry was screaming out for qualified guys like me. So I joined an American service company in April 1978 and it was then that my drinking career really took off. I joined this small company just the right time because, as it expanded, so did the number of job titles I had. Starting as a simple instrument technician, I went on to work offshore, then back onshore to become an operations supervisor, marketing rep., trouble shooter, international operations supervisor and lastly, training manager. In each of these positions drink played its part, from the heavy sessions with the boys when we came ashore, through the drinking with clients as we entertained them while looking for work, to my favourite excuse for a glass -STRESS - that wonderful excuse that just about everyone could understand.

I could write pages and pages of my drinkalog, but it would probably be the same as every other alcoholic's tale. I drank, on a daily basis, what I felt to be enough alcohol to survive. My life was one hundred percent dominated by alcohol. I had to drink all the time, even though it now gave me no 'kick'. By this time, even I realised that I had to stop - but hadn't I tried dozens of times - and failed? I couldn't stay sober and fell off the wagon quickly. Worse, on a few occasions when I had tried, I suffered badly with DT's. My best attempt was in December of 2000. The dates are hazy, but I stopped drinking early in the month and had a bad case of DT's. I was talking to the furniture, thought it was raining inside the house, saw flowers revolving and heard them talking to me and I was presenting a play with the window sill as the stage!

Fortunately, this was observed by my doctor and I was admitted to hospital. I got out on Christmas Eve and stayed sober until January the ninth, my birthday. I felt that, for my efforts, I deserved a drink on my birthday. Nobody agreed, so I stormed off to the pub where I got absolutely paralytic. I got home from there and fell asleep. When I awoke, I knew I was beaten. So, I emptied our bottle of vodka into a glass and drank it, knowing that it might be my last drink for a very long time. I was beaten and agreed to go in to a detox. unit the next day.



Mag signed me into the clinic, which was thirty or so miles from Aberdeen. I was to join a class just about to undergo a six week long detox. session. In the first week I was fed Librium to help me stop shaking and suffering DT's. Over the next six weeks we were introduced to A.A. meetings, which we attended three times a week. As well as attending meetings, we studied and attempted to do the first five steps of the A.A. recovery program.

Six weeks after entering the clinic I was let out. Mag picked me up and took me home, but had to leave shortly afterward to go back to work. So, there I was, alone, scared, sober (at least, having no alcohol in my bloodstream) and thinking that this was one of the most important moments of my life. I wasn't in pain now, so wouldn't it be alright if I just took a wee drink? Or should I take this sobriety business seriously and give the 'no drinking policy' a chance?

I chose the sobriety route and started to attend A.A. regularly. I have to be honest and say that the first year was hard, but, year on year, my life has changed for the better. I've been sober for just over six years now and can honestly say that I've got back most of what drink took away from me - except that flipping job. Never mind, I got another job. Although not as well paid, it suited me much better for, as well as enjoying my days work, I could go home without any worries flying around in my head. This, in itself, was worth a few quid. Money, or should I say, the pursuit of money, was always high on my list of priorities when I was drinking. I thought that, without it, happiness would be difficult to find. However, over the six years of my sobriety, I've gained things in my life that no amount of money could buy. Things like:-

I've won back the love and trust of my family, who, at one time, would have been glad to see the end of me. I have a little two year old grandson who loves to play with toy cars with his granddad, especially in the toy garage that Granddad had great fun making. He also thinks that Granddad is the best person to head for if he needs comforting after a fall or wants a comfy pair of arms to fall asleep in. I have a seven year old granddaughter whom, when I was performing, I was banned from seeing alone in case I dropped or hurt her. Now, I'm a trusted babysitter and one of the best at telling stories, although Gran is still her favourite.

Now I have real friends around me. During all the time I drank and worked, my head never seemed to stop calculating all the things that could go wrong. In fact, I can safely say that I worried for Scotland. I was that guy who would worry if he didn't have something to worry about. Now, I can honestly say that I have found true peace of mind because I have a better understanding of what's important in life.

Readers, my life is good now because, thanks to the help that A.A. has given me, I am now able to face it with courage. One day at a time. George, Aberdeen *LOL is internet shorthand for *Laughing Out Loud*.

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A.A. Word Search #12:

Find the A.A.-related words in the puzzle.

Words can be read forward, backward, up, down, or diagonally.

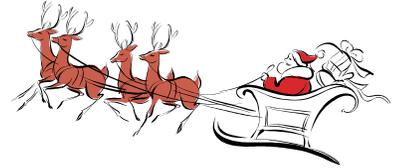
O	F	E	T	W	E	L	V	E	S	T	E	P	S
G	A	R	S	V	P	N	O	S	R	F	L	H	K
Y	P	N	I	P	O	I	J	D	Z	K	E	R	E
T	E	U	O	E	I	W	R	G	S	L	S	N	E
I	I	J	B	Y	N	R	F	H	P	W	T	C	P
L	W	T	D	G	J	D	I	C	L	A	W	A	I
A	P	S	W	E	N	I	S	T	G	N	E	M	T
E	O	U	L	O	T	N	V	H	B	K	F	P	S
R	I	N	S	C	R	E	M	O	I	B	O	S	I
T	C	L	A	W	J	K	K	M	N	P	R	U	M
A	D	I	Y	B	P	C	S	C	T	H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

JOYOUS
SPIRIT
KEEP IT SIMPLE
SUNLIGHT
FRIENDSHIP
TWELVE STEPS
ROCKETED
GREAT REALITY
LEST WE FORGET
IT WORKS

(Submitted by Susan H.)

A.A.'s Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, we were all in the club,
Enjoying a meeting, instead of a pub.
The ashtrays were clean, and the coffee was made,
The Big Books were out and then we all prayed.



When out in the lot, there arose such a clatter,
We all jumped up to see what was the matter.
The Chair with his Big Book, and I with my smokes,
Headed outside to find these two blokes.

They came inside and sat at a table;
And said that they'd chair, as soon as they're able.
To start with, they said, "It's more than not drinking;
It's doing your best to have God fix your thinking."

"First Things First!" and the slogans we used,
Help keep the newcomer from getting confused.
Step 1 is a start, they said we should know,
But after Step 2, we'll be all aglow.

We make a decision when we got to Step 3,
Step 4 was a bit tough, we all could agree.
Step 5 is the one where we let it all out,
And after Step 6 and 7, we're left with no doubt.

When we got to Step 8, we made our full list;
And then with Step 9, we have to persist.
After Step 9, more promises ring true;
We didn't just make that up, right out of the blue.



After that, it's on with the rest;
The things we must do, to be our best.
They put on their coats and got ready to leave;
A very good end, for this Christmas Eve.

As to their names, we only could guess;
Must have been Bill W. and Dr. Bob S.
The two men hopped into a '35 Ford,
And as they pulled out, one of them roared:

"We leave this message, for our sisters and brothers:
Trust God, clean house, and be of service to others.
And for all of you people, I just want to say:
Have a nice holiday, and don't drink today!"

Anonymous

San Fernando Valley Central Office

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