

# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 36, No. 1, Jan. 2012

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Monthly Newsletter

## OUR HATS ARE OFF TO YOU!



On January 27<sup>th</sup>, the largest A.A. convention of the year takes place for the San Fernando Valley and this year, the theme is “Our Hats Are Off to You,” a line from Chapter 3 in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous (page 31, 4<sup>th</sup> edition).

Editor Pat K. interviewed Irene F., chairperson of this year’s SFV A.A. Convention asking what the theme of this year’s convention means to her:

“To me, ‘Our Hat’s are Off to You’ is in reference to the elders who have shown me the way. I also liked this phrase because I always wear hats! But I feel we should give thanks to the elders who have led the way. If it was not for them, we wouldn’t be here. That’s our way of showing thanks to them.”

**What are some of the highpoints of this year’s convention?** “We’ve lined up great speakers, there will be dances both Friday & Saturday nights, we’ve got the always popular Spiritual Breakfast, the Saturday Evening Banquet with special entertainment, and Marathon Meetings all weekend from Friday, 4 p.m. until Sunday at noon, every hour. To kick it off, The Opening Skit is supposed to be fantastic according to William S., our music composer. Every year, they outdo themselves.”

**Are there any rooms still available at the Marriott?** “Yes, I’m glad you asked. We have a quota to meet of 340 ‘Room Nights’ for the weekend of the convention. I know that times are hard and people are struggling, but we put ourselves in this position to be able to book our event here – the same way we did when we were in Burbank. When the contract was made for the Woodland Hills Marriott, we committed to filling this quota so we encourage anyone who can to book a room as soon as possible so we can fulfill our contract.”

**Are there special rates for A.A. members?** “Yes, the rate is \$124.00 a night. You need to use the code “SFVAA” to get this special room rate.”

**What goes into planning the annual Convention?** “There’s a lot of planning involved starting with our committee meetings which begin in April and meet monthly through December. At our meetings, we choose the theme, the colors and plan fundraisers all year to support the event. This year, we held a Bingo Night at St. Innocent Church in October as well as a yard sale last July.”

**Who is involved in the planning of the Convention?** “This year, I had a fabulous time working with our Al-Anon Chair Cathy L. and our Ala-Teen Chair Johnny P. We shared a lot of dinners trying to brainstorm how to make it a success like it has always been. My co-chair was Steven G. who kept me balanced and did a lot of running around for me; he had my back. Then I reported to a Steering Committee of past chairs who provided guidance on the budget and established guidelines to follow.” (Continued, Page 4)

**37<sup>th</sup> Annual San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention**  
**Fri., Jan. 27 – Sun., Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012**  
**Warner Center Marriott**  
**21850 Oxnard Street,**  
**Woodland Hills, CA**



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **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](http://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: [sfvaaews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sfvaaews@sbcglobal.net)

### **Lois B. – Many Years**

### **SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:**

**SFV H & I: Mon, Jan 16, 2012:** 7 p.m. Orientation/  
8 p.m. Business Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

**Gen Service, District 11: Mon, Feb. 6, 2012**

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

**Gen Service, District 16: Mon, Feb. 6, 2012**

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

**Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, Feb. 6, 2012**

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

**Gen. Service, District 2: Tues, Feb. 7, 2012**

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

**Gen Service, District 1: Wed., Feb. 1, 2012**

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



### **SFV Central Office Board**

**Mtg.: Feb. 8, 2012**  
6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office

### **Gen. Service District 7: Sat., Feb. 4, 2012**

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

### **SFV Intergroup: Mon, Feb. 13, 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](http://www.sfvaa.org)

**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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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.



## **Quotes from our Founders**

### ***Atmosphere of Grace***

“Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food or sunshine. And for the same reason. When we refuse air, light or food, the body suffers. And when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, our emotions and our intuitions of vitally needed support.”

12 & 12, pgs. 97-98

### **The Language of the Heart**

“Why, at this particular point in history, has God chosen to communicate His healing grace to so many of us? Every aspect of this global unfoldment can be related to a single crucial word. The word is ‘communication.’ There has been a lifesaving communication among ourselves, with the world around us, and with God.

From the beginning, communication in A.A. has been no ordinary transmission of helpful ideas and attitudes. Because of our kinship in suffering and because of common means of deliverance are effective for ourselves only when constantly carried to others, our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart.”

AA, Today, pgs. 7 - 8

## **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:

**Bruce – 1 Year, Aaron – 2 Years, Raoul – 2 Years, Liz C. – 6 Years, Gilbert – 10 Years, Anonymous – 11 Years, Dennis B. – 17 Years, Anonymous – 20 Years, Cheryl A. – 29 Years, Ken J. – 32 Years, The Learning to Live Men's Stag – 208 Years**

## **Central Office: IGR Mtg. Notes of December 11, 2011**

- **Chair Tom T.** opened the meeting with *The Serenity Prayer*.
- **Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion for approval of minutes from November's Intergroup Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.
- **Treasurer Brian H.** reported that Central Office is currently in the red <\$1934.77> MTD and in the red <\$3,603.50> YTD. A full Treasurer's Report is available in this *Recovery Times*. Gratitude Month donations are still being tallied. It is believed this will help close the gap for the calendar year.
- **Executive Secretary Bob F** announced Central Office will be holding a monthly “garage sale” of “slightly damaged books” from our inventory. Details will be forthcoming after the first of the year.
- **Vice Chair Cheryl A.** reported everything is going well the website: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) and with Intergroup.
- **H & I meets** the 3rd Monday of the month at St. Innocent. Orientation starts at 7 PM with the meeting to follow.
- **General Service, John M.** announced that General Service will hold a marathon meeting at the Convention on Sat. night 1/29/12.
- **SFV AA Convention Planning:** Joel announced rooms are available for the Convention January 27 – 29, 2012 at the Warner Center Marriott and encouraged everyone to take advantage of reduced rates for the convention weekend.

### **Birthdays:**

- Donna – 7 years on 12/1
- Pat – 8 years on 12/22
- Dennis – 17 years on 12/12
- Di – 18 years on 12/16
- Kathy – 21 years on 12/24
- Bill – 23 years on 12/11
- Cheryl – 29 years on 12/7
- Connie – 32 years on 11/28

Meeting adjourned with *The Lord's Prayer* at 7:23 p.m.

**SFV A.A. Convention, Continued from Page 1**

**Can you tell us who the speakers will be?** "Sorry, we can't reveal that yet, but it will be on the program when you register.

**How much does it cost to attend?** Registration is \$20.00 online or by mail before January 17<sup>th</sup> and \$25.00 at the door.



**What other highlights can be expected?** "We will be having a Golf Classic on Friday morning, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m. at DeBell Golf Course in Burbank (\$80.00), an Al-Anon Luncheon at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup> (\$29.00), the Saturday Night Banquet and Show at 6 p.m. (\$40.00), the Spiritual Breakfast at 9 a.m. Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup> (24.00) plus an Ala-Teen Buffett, meeting and Dance on Saturday 28 (\$25.00/pkg). All in all, it should be a fun-filled weekend!"



To attend, you can register online at: [www.sfvaaconvention.org](http://www.sfvaaconvention.org) or mail in your registration form: 37<sup>th</sup> Annual SFV Convention, P.O. Box 573413, Tarzana, CA 91357-3413. If you would like to be a part of the planning committee for the next Convention, just attend the next planning meeting in April. See our Recovery Times for time, date, and location.

Get your tickets early because most of the events sell out!



**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**

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

If moving, please give us your former address:

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*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](mailto:xnowisthetime@aol.com). Submission does not guarantee acceptance.*

## A Matter of Commitment: 42 Years as Secretary

### Spotlight on Jess C. of the San Fernando Group



For 42 years – on and off – Jess C. has been secretary of the San Fernando Group’s 11<sup>th</sup> Step meeting on Sundays at 2 p.m. As this represents an unusually long term as secretary, the Recovery Times spoke with Jess to find out just why he stayed on that long and what the meeting is all about.

“The meeting was started to give A.A.’s a place where they could talk about ‘God, as they understood Him,’” says Jess C. who has 44 years of sobriety. “Back then, people resented the word ‘God.’ A member of the fellowship, Bob H. wanted to talk about ‘God as you understand him.’ When I told him I didn’t believe in God, he made me the meeting’s coffeemaker. [Being that I didn’t believe in God,] I asked him, ‘What do I tell the newcomer?’ He said,

“Tell people that you don’t believe in God but you’re still sober.’ Back then, [A.A.’s] used to send people to the 11<sup>th</sup> Step Meeting that didn’t understand God.”

Jess describes how he felt back then during that time of his early sobriety: “When I didn’t believe in God, I experienced an emptiness where I wasn’t growing. I never used to take cakes either. Because the meeting was having a hard time surviving and we couldn’t spend the money on cakes. So I decided not to take cakes for my birthdays (not knowing that you could take a cake, symbolically, without actually purchasing a cake.) Now, I take a cake for the newcomer to let them know it can be done.

“Shortly after taking the coffee commitment, I became the secretary. It was hard at that time to find people to be secretary. I didn’t mind because it helped me quite a bit. Over the years, I tried to get newcomers to take the commitment as secretary. I gave the meeting a couple of times to newcomers with six months of sobriety to get them involved but a lot of them went out and drank. One had it for two years but then he moved away so I had to take over again.

“At that time, there were a lot of oldtimers who didn’t like using the word ‘God’ with Step 11, which talks about prayer and meditation. In fact, some people wanted to get rid of the meeting. As secretary, I made it an Open meeting where people could talk about their problems - whatever was bugging them. A lot of newcomers used to come to the meeting because they felt comfortable. The oldtimers were a little more strict back then. They had their own way of thinking. If you disagreed with them, they would get real angry. They didn’t use the word “God” a lot. Now, it’s changed quite a bit. More people are talking about their ‘Higher Power’ or whatever you want to call it.

“It took about 10 years before I started having a better understanding of God. I grew up as a Catholic where my mother believed in miracles. But miracles never happened for our family so I felt there was no God. Then one day, we had been talking about the beauty of trees in a meeting: I never used to see the beauty when I was angry and crazy. But at that meeting, they were talking about the beauty of life. One day, I just noticed the trees were beautiful and that’s when I understood what they were talking about. That’s when I said to myself, ‘There is a God.’

Over the years, Jess says the San Fernando’s Step 11 meeting has evolved as people have become more comfortable with talking about ‘God as You Understand Him’ and sharing about their feelings. Jess recently stepped down as secretary – after 42 years. He hopes his new secretary and those who come after will continue the longstanding tradition San Fernando’s Step 11 meeting.

## The Third Time is the Charm



How can I, a tough girl raised on the south side of Chicago, survivor of an active alcoholic upbringing, single mother of two, bringing home the bacon, frying it up in a pan, be powerless? It did not make sense and it kept me out there long after alcohol stopped working and was the cause of two painful relapses after entering Alcoholics Anonymous.

My alcoholism had progressed to the point that at 31 years old, I did not want to live anymore even though I had everything to live for: two beautiful, healthy children, good physical health, plenty of family, I owned my home and had lots of stuff. Growing up poor, I thought money was the answer, but I was absolutely miserable and could not figure it out. I found myself crying out some nights, while completely sober, "What is wrong with me?"

My bottom began with another night of just going out for a "few." Driving home drunk around 4 a.m., I smashed my new car into a light post after exiting an off-ramp from the expressway. By chance I did not hurt anyone or myself, but the car took a beating. I was in a fairly desolate area about three miles from my home. I managed to get my car over to the side of the road after trying to drive it with the front end jacked up like an accordion, and began to walk home. There I was, walking down a dimly-lit road surrounded by forest preserves and thought to myself, "And you are the mother of two kids."

I had had numerous drunken episodes and nightmarish things happen during my 15 years of drinking, particularly the last half, but this time I was given grace. The next morning as my eyes opened, and last night's memories came rushing in, I knew I couldn't live that way anymore and needed to ask for help. This was solidified moments later when I hazily stumbled out of my bedroom, and my 11-year-old daughter looked up at me with her big brown eyes and in all her innocence asked, "Mommy, where's our car?"

I went to my brother, who had already started recovery, and told him I thought I had a drinking problem and would like a list of meetings. He wanted me to go with him, but in my usual fashion I thought I could handle it all by myself. Surprisingly, it didn't take long for me to realize I was getting nowhere that way and I took him up on his offer.

He took me to his meetings and introduced me to some women. Thanks to an awesome home group and sponsor, I started to learn about the disease of alcoholism. I was so fortunate to be around solid AA and strong teachers. I did not know during my drinking career that I was in the grips of a disease that I was powerless over. I could look back and see my drinking was never normal, but that was all I could understand. I also knew that even though I made several promises to myself to stop, I could never stay stopped. I had no idea, in other words, what I was dealing with.

I was taking a lot of actions in the group but I was still picking and choosing what I would and would not do. I know now that I had not completely surrendered. The time came when my disease started talking to me and told me "You weren't that bad, you can handle it now. Things would be different this time. You have learned so much."

I listened to that insane thinking and started to believe that self-knowledge and will power was the key to managing and controlling my drinking. At 11 months sober, I went back out determined to beat this thing. Within 2 months, I was right back where I left off. Doing the things I swore I wouldn't do again even with all my newfound knowledge. I had lost control over my drinking once again and began withdrawing from my family, and driving drunk, and that hole in my soul was back in full force. I decided that "maybe those AAs were right."

Thank God I had built a support group during the 11 months that I was in AA. I called my friend to complain about my dilemma and she simply told me to meet her at the meeting. It was divine intervention that I said yes as I had no intention of coming back just yet; after all it still wasn't "that bad." Coming back was a bit of a struggle, but after a while, I felt triumphant. "I will never drink again. I get it now," I told friends. "I love AA!"

Turns out you can hit a bottom and then keep on digging. Four months later, I drank again.

I was finally beginning to understand that this disease had me and I was powerless with no defense against it. No matter how strong I was, no matter how much I knew, no matter how much I loved AA, it didn't matter. This time coming back into AA, was extremely difficult. There was no honeymoon and I thought I was losing my mind. Two and a half months into this sobriety, I contemplated killing myself. I started to believe that maybe AA wouldn't work for me. I knew it worked in others because I saw it, but maybe I was one of those people who were "incapable of being honest with themselves."

I felt like I was hanging by a thread through my early sobriety but with the help of my sponsor who kept reminding me to pray and stay in some kind of service, other newcomers and people sharing at meetings, I kept coming back. Today I believe my entire journey was necessary for me to accept in my heart and soul that I was truly powerless over alcohol. I now have respect for the disease of alcoholism. It beat me up and brought me to my knees. Turns out it is OK to be powerless, because if I don't have the power or the answers then I have to seek out one who does and that one is my god, whom I found in Alcoholics Anonymous. My god almost always uses my fellow "trudgers" in the rooms to pass along the message he wants me to receive.

I have also learned that I am also powerless over people, places and things. I still wander into the god zone from time to time trying to take over. When I do, I become frustrated, emotional, and obsessive. There is still a fighter in me, although she does tire much sooner than before.

I don't know why I was chosen but I show my gratitude by putting my hand out to the suffering alcoholic the best I can. Today, I take care of my family and I am there for them. I continue to go to meetings to hear the message and to remember that alone, I am powerless. I still believe that the insanity of that first drink will return if I'm not giving this gift away and staying plugged into Alcoholics Anonymous and a god of my understanding. My sponsor assures me this is a healthy fear and I agree.

I often say to the newbie, "Watch that First Step, it's a doozy!" Most of the time they look at me like I am off my rocker, but that's OK because I know exactly what it means. Step One is the only step I have to do completely and because of that I have not had to pick up a drink since July 6, 1997. —Cheryl B., North Riverside, Ill. (Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine, 2011).

**The 12 Steps through Word Search.** Each month, Recovery Times will feature the Step of the Month. We start the New Year 2012 with Step One: **Find the words to Step One below:**

***"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable."***

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

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