

# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 36, No. 4, April 2012

## The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Monthly Newsletter

Recently, I've heard several people ask, "When is the right time to give up a commitment? Why do we need someone new to take on a commitment if the person doing it is already doing a good job? And how much notice should be given to someone when changing a commitment?" So this month, our cover is devoted to the Spirit of Rotation from a story in the June 1996 A.A. Grapevine. Editor

### **The Spirit of Rotation**



One of the most valuable resources of any organization is the experience of those who have gone before. The sharing of what they've done right, and the sharing of the mistakes they've made, become a solid foundation for continued healthy growth. Because of the wise and spiritual principle of rotation, we in Alcoholics Anonymous are blessed with a constantly vital and always growing pool of people whose primary aim is to serve the AA Fellowship. They are willing to share both success and failure in order to preserve what we have been given. How then can we continue to benefit from the experience of those who have rotated?

My understanding of rotation has led me from one service job to another. I don't believe rotation means "I quit." I don't think rotation means "I've done my time, now it's someone else's turn." I do believe rotation means that "I have made my contribution in this capacity. Where can I be of use next?"

I feel a deep need to pass the message on. I have an obligation to the new person to pass on the message of recovery, but my obligation goes beyond today. It extends to those who will come through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous fifty years from now, when I am dead and gone. Part of our message must be how to preserve this precious gift so that those yet to come will have the same chance at recovery and life we had.

From the beginning of AA, the concept of sponsorship has been one of our most important means of passing on experience. My early sponsors lovingly showed me simple and direct steps I could take that would produce very specific results. They demonstrated these results in their lives in such a way that I wanted what they had. I followed their suggestions and got the same results. I began to recover and walk the spiritual path as they did. How nice it was to have someone who had been over the path before to show me the rough spots and to explain the new things that were happening to me. When the time came, my sponsors shared with me about serving the Fellowship. I was to do for the new people what had been done for me. I was to make my time and my experience available.

One of the things I like best about spiritual people is that they are seldom rude. They don't often demand their own way, nor do they seem to be driven by a need to be right all the time. They do seem to be around and available, but usually wait to be asked. As I've gone from service assignment to service assignment, I've found that those who preceded me were always willing to share with me, but they also allowed me to make my own mistakes. They told me what they had done, what had worked and what had not. Often when I would go to my service sponsors, they listened, then said, "Let's see what the manual says" or "How does that idea fit the Concepts?"

A "loving invitation" always seems to work with me. So perhaps one of the best ways for us to continue to benefit from our rotated servants would be to request that they put on a workshop at an assembly or be on a panel with others who share their experience. I once heard that the condition of "bleeding deaconism" was caused by service people who got out of service. I don't need a title, but I do need to be involved. I love the action of service. I love service people. I would be less if I couldn't participate. If this is so for me, then perhaps it is so for others. I need to ask them to continue to be part of my service life so that their precious learning is not lost. When I'm allowed to help plan a function, I try always to give out those "loving invitations." I need, and have, service sponsors. I call on the phone or stop by and visit.

**(Continued, Page 4)**

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **31<sup>st</sup> Annual So. CA H & I Conference**

April 13 – 15, 2012  
Bahia Resort, San Diego  
[www.socalhandi.org](http://www.socalhandi.org)



### **28<sup>th</sup> Tri-State Annual Round-up**

May 17 – 20, 2012  
Riverside Resort Hotel & Casino  
Laughlin, NV  
[www.tristate-roundup.com](http://www.tristate-roundup.com)

### **2012 International Men's Conference**

April 19 – 22, 2012 Orleans Hotel & Casino  
Las Vegas, NC  
[www.laamclasvegas.org](http://www.laamclasvegas.org)

### **A.A. Desert Pow Wow**

June 7 – 10, 2012  
Indian Wells, CA

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Mountain High Conference**

May 11-13, 2012  
Lake Arrowhead, CA  
[www.mountainhighconf.com](http://www.mountainhighconf.com)

### **Freedom to Soar**

22<sup>nd</sup> Annual June Lake Kampvention  
June 22-24, 2012  
Fish Loop  
[www.kampventionjunelake.org](http://www.kampventionjunelake.org)

## **Service Opportunities**

**Central Office Board Mtg: Wed., May 9, 2012,** Central Office, 7417 Van Nuys Blvd., Ste. E., Van Nuys, 6:30 p.m.

**Phone Shifts:** 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 online: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) 818) 988-3001.

**SFV Intergroup: Mon, May 14, 2011:** 6:30 Orientation, 7 p.m. Business Meeting, St. Innocent Ch., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana The SFV Central Office coordinates this monthly meeting for all **SFV** Intergroup on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month.

**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. For info: (818) 988-3001.

**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. 7:00 Orientation, 8 p.m. Business Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

**San Fernando Valley Young People in AA:** Committee Meeting is held the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month **Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>,** Unit A., 10641 Burbank, N. Hollywood

**Gen Service, District 1: Wed., May 2, 2012,** 6:30 p.m. Business Meeting, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

**Gen. Service, District 2: Tues, May 1, 2012,** 6:30 p.m. Business Meeting, 4011 Dunsmore Ave., La Crescenta

**Gen. Service District 7: Sat., May 5, 2012,** 9 a.m. Bus. Mtg, Agua Dulce Women's Club, 33210 Agua Dulce Cyn. Rd.

**Gen Service, District 11: Mon, May 7, 2012,** 6 p.m. New GSRs/6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale, CA

**Gen Service, District 16: Mon, May 7, 2012,** 6:15 p.m. meeting, 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills

**Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, May 7, 2012,** 6 p.m. New GSRs. /6:30 p.m. Bus. Meeting, 5000 Colfax, N. Hollywood

## **THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE:**

**Steve O. – 27 Years**

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

## Quotes from our Founders

"A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them properly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values." **A.A., Pg. 64**

"Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves." **A.A. Pg. 58**

### Willingness if the Key

*"No matter how much one wishes to try, exactly how can he turn his own will and his own life over to the care of whatever God he thinks there is? A beginning, even the smallest, is all that is needed.*

*Once we have placed the key of willingness in the lock and have the door ever so slightly open, we find that we can always open it some more.*

*Though self will may slam it shut again, as it frequently does, it will always respond the moment we again pick up the key of willingness."*

**12 & 12, Pg. 35**

## CENTRAL OFFICE NEWS:

**HAVING A BIRTHDAY?** Celebrate it with A.A. by sending a donation to Central Office. We will post your birthday here, below. 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 birthday celebrants are: **Belinda T. – 7 Years, Maggie M. – 10 Years, Greg I. – 11 Years, Ariel B. – 13 Years, Rick A. – 16 Years, & Bonne H. – 21 Years, Tony M. – 25 Years**

**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.

### Central Office: IGR Mtg. Notes of February 13, 2011

**IGR Chair Cheryl A.** opened the meeting with *The Serenity Prayer*.

**Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion for approval of the minutes from February's Intergroup Meeting. The minutes were approved with minor corrections.

**Treasurer Brian H.** reported that Central Office is currently in the red \$1,337.89 MTD and in the black \$1,842.92 YTD. A full Treasurer's Report is available in this month's *Recovery Times*.

**Executive Secretary Bob F reported** Everything is fine with the Internet site at [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org). Central Office is running fine. A slightly-used book sale will take place at C.O. on March 17 & 18, 2012.

**Andre W.** said there were no new IGRs this month, which is why it is even more important to encourage groups to get IGRs to represent their meetings. There are 300+ groups in the S.F. Valley but only 50-60 IGR reps.

**H & I** needs sober alcoholics to take panels into the L.A. County jails. Jail clearance is required and those who are interested were encouraged to attend the upcoming H&I meeting the 3rd Monday of the month at St. Innocent. Orientation: 7PM, meeting: 8PM.

General Service District 11: *John M. invited everyone to the AA Archives Repository's 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, Saturday, 3/31 in Oxnard.*

General Service District 1: *Wayne said Area 93 is hosting a Delegate's Opinion Poll Workshop on 3/31 at Radford Hall in Van Nuys with Area 93 delegate, Ken S., collecting feedback for the GSO conference in April in New York.*

General Service District 17: *Michele (on behalf of Luke) said Area 93 was to host a Pre-Conference Workshop on 3/18 in Solvang [www.AAarea93.com](http://www.AAarea93.com)*

**Group News: Di V:** The 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Woman to Woman Sober Weekend Retreat takes place June 1-3 at Mount Saint Mary's. Cost for the weekend is \$190, including food, lodging, and all workshops. [www.womantowomanla.org](http://www.womantowomanla.org)

**Dawn H:** The Toluca Lake Women in Conscious Contact Big Book Study is looking for support. This closed women's stag meets Mondays at 7:30, at Cahuenga/Whipple in Toluca Lake.

**Eileen:** The San Fernando Group is starting an early morning meeting, weekdays from 6-7AM. All are welcome.

### **Intergroup Rep. Birthdays:**

Lorene 1 Year  
Susan 4 Yrs  
Elizabeth 6 Yr

Mary Jo – 9 years  
John – 16 years  
Nolan – 20 years  
Cheryl – 26 years



The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 7:26 p.m.

**Continued, page 1      The Spirit of Rotation**    I don't always agree with my sponsors, but I always listen.

But there will be nothing to listen to if I don't ask. As is usually the case, the answer to most of my questions is in the question itself. "How can we continue to benefit from the experience of those who have rotated?" The best way I can think of to benefit from *their* experience is to be certain that they are a part of *mine*. Don P., Aurora, Colorado, **June 1996**  
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**Sitting in a bar having drinks with a friend... I casually pointed to two old drunks sitting across the bar from us and said, "That's us in ten years." My friend replied, "That's a mirror, idiot!"**



**A.A. Around the World: Worldwide Conventions**

*No matter where you go, you can stay sober.*

The following list was taken off of the A.A. Grapevine site under "Calendar" (<http://www.aagrapevine.org/calendar/2012-04>).

- March 29 -April 1: 2012 Barbados Convention
- March 30-April 1: 5<sup>th</sup> International Big Book Step Study Convention, St. Augustine, FL
- April 6-8: 41<sup>st</sup> North Shore Roundup, Vancouver, British Columbia
- April 13-15, 31<sup>st</sup> So CA H & I Conference, San Diego, CA
- April 13-15, 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Area 70 Vermont Convention
- April 13-15, Carolinas Spring Fling
- April 13-15, Reno Spring Festival
- April 13-15, Lake Area Roundup, Lake Charles, Louisiana
- April 19-22: 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Springtime in the Ozarks
- April 19 -22, 25<sup>th</sup> Men's International Conference, Las Vegas, NV
- April 20-22, 18<sup>th</sup> Sunlight of the Spirit, Fairmont, Minnesota
- April 20-22, 37<sup>th</sup> Spring into Spring, Erie Area Spring Conference
- April 20-22, 62<sup>nd</sup> Dauphin Welcome Group Roundup, Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada
- April 20-22, 56<sup>th</sup> Trinidad and Tobago National Convention
- April 20-22, Spirit of the Pines, Lake Livingston, Texas
- April 20-22, 50<sup>th</sup> District 3 Roundup, Bonnyville, Alberta, Canada
- April 20-22, Big Island Bash, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii
- April 20-22, Spring into Sobriety Women's Conference, Sarasota, Florida
- April 27-28, 35<sup>th</sup> TWTW Celebration of Sobriety, Manhattan, Kansas
- April 27-29, 24<sup>th</sup> Indian Wells Valley Roundup, Ridgecrest, CA
- April 28 - May 1, Alicante International Convention, Alicante, Spain
- April 27-29, 25<sup>th</sup> Heartland Roundup, Omaha, Nebraska
- April 27-29, Sober and Free, San Jose, CA
- April 27-29, 32<sup>nd</sup> N.E. Indiana Convention, Fort Wayne, Indiana
- April 27-29, 5<sup>th</sup> Carrollton Group Men's Retreat, Glen Rose, Texas
- April 27-29, South Okanagan Roundup, Oliver, British Columbia, Canada
- April 27-29, Chipley Country Roundup, Chipley, Florida



**Heard at Meetings: Resentments.**

"Every minute I spend resenting you I DEPRIVE myself of 60 seconds of happiness!!!"

Anonymous

## Hey, Why the Dress Code?

A member expresses his opinion about "rules" in AA, while holding fast to the Third Tradition

***TRADITION Three: The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.***

Of late I've been noticing there are, so to speak, not just one but two distinct AAs—two movements, each claiming to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Recently the group that's been my AA home for more than a decade began requiring some people not to wear certain clothing (shoes, let's say) during our weekly meetings. The group's reason for its dress code is to show respect for AA and the meeting. To be fair, the group didn't call its new rule a dress code—I do. "Dress code" is my name for any rule that says what must or mustn't be worn in a given situation.

AA tradition provides group autonomy, leaving such an issue up to the group—not me—to decide. So for now I accept my home group's rule, setting aside my disagreement with it. Of course I'm free to keep trying to convince other group members that the rule should be dropped. Or I can look for a new home group, if the issue is really that important to me. For today, it isn't that important. But the dress code has led me to consider the two AAs.

One is an AA that seeks to protect Alcoholics Anonymous from misguided actions of individual alcoholics, by instructing them and regulating their behavior. Thus a group adopts a dress code, directing individuals to show respect by their attire. Some practice "blue cardism," requiring members to confine sharing to certain kinds of experiences only, leaving out some other experiences lest AA be "diluted" by somebody sharing honestly about the wrong stuff. This is an AA in which newcomers—for their own good, of course—are apt to hear lectures specifying actions old-timers have determined new members absolutely must take or they will surely drink again. It's an AA where an individual may be abruptly and loudly called to account should she or he fail to self-identify in an acceptable manner. It is an AA in which people with less continuous sober time than deemed sufficient may be declared ineligible for service positions. And so on. In their variety, what such prescriptions have in common is a behavior-control conception of what AA is.

The other AA is an Alcoholics Anonymous of acceptance, honesty, humility and tolerance, where leaders serve, not govern. It's an AA where I have the right and the obligation to try to honestly share my own experience and to stay within the bounds of that experience. I believe I owe it to my AA to try very hard to curb my impulse to elevate myself from my pupil's role to that of a teacher, to resist that imperious urge to pronounce my opinions and prescriptions so others will know what they need to do. No, my job is simply to reveal, as honestly as I have the capacity to do on this day, what I did and what happened to me when I did it.

Mine is an AA having little, if any, need to be protected from or by anything or anyone. It is an AA without rules. It's an AA where my respect for another person or group is mine alone to develop, mine alone to display (or to decline to display) in whatever way I see fit.

The only requirement to belong to my AA is a desire not to drink. In my AA everything—including anything in any of the Twelve Steps—is but suggested. So it's an AA in which every single person is free to take what she or he chooses and leave the rest. It is an AA in which more will be revealed; and one in which, in the meantime, I, and my home group, have the inalienable right to be wrong.—Patrick M., Cleveland Heights, Ohio



## Just how long should you grieve a divorce? My name is Kevin, I'm an Alcoholic

When I first started drinking, I don't think I noticed the effect until I was well and truly drunk. At first it had a lot to do with being one of the crowd. The difference was, my friends could relax without drinking, but I wasn't relaxed until I had a drink, or to put it another way, I wanted to feel how those other people looked. My father was alcoholic and I swore I would never end up like him. If he tried really hard he could stay off the booze for short spells, but he had to avoid it completely. I decided that if I ever started drinking like that I would stay away from alcohol altogether. There was nothing wrong with the way I drank though. I had it under control. I could take it or leave it. I worked hard and was entitled to unwind in the company of like-minded friends, I enjoyed a good night out.



My wife complained that I was always going up the pub and didn't spend enough time with her. So I said "come with me then, you don't have to sit indoors all the time." I explained that I have to meet people there and I get a lot of my work that way. It would usually lead to an argument and I would storm out and get drunk. That's how I "solved" all my problems. The trouble is I never really solved anything. My wife divorced me in the end for unreasonable behaviour, which I thought was unfair. I tried to be a good husband but I just couldn't cope with all the pressure.

Anyway, now I was on my own, I had the perfect excuse to drink the whole day through, and nobody blamed me at first. I had always mixed with hard drinkers and I was great company for them. I got into trouble with the law a few times, but I was able to blame my actions on the divorce. It's amazing how easy it is to gain sympathy from the police when you break down and tell them your wife just took the kids and ran off with your best friend. After a couple years though, I got worse instead of better. I was still drinking to blot everything out even though I'd had plenty of time to get over the divorce.

By now I was drinking in the morning just to face the day. My fair-weather friends had started avoiding me. Occasionally someone would suggest I do something about my drinking, and mostly because I was so ill. I decided to drink less, but that didn't work. So I tried to stop altogether. I was amazed at how difficult it was to stop completely. The longest I ever managed was three weeks without a drink. It seems stupid now but I started drinking again because I thought I had learned how to control it. The next time I tried to stop I found I couldn't stop at all. They say alcohol is a great remover; how true! I lost everything and was now homeless. Every penny I could lay my hands on went on cheap white cider. Sometimes I couldn't even afford that so I began to steal small amounts of money out of coat pockets, and that only made me feel worse.

I became desperate to do something about my drinking, I got the shakes and sweats if I couldn't get my drink, but I hated it. I was so miserable I just wanted to end it all. I didn't care how, I just wanted it to stop. That's when I asked for help at my local Drug and Alcohol Team unit. I was amazed that they understood exactly what I had been going through. I had to spend ten days in hospital to detox me, where the doctor explained to me very simply that I was one of those people that was "allergic" to alcohol, that for me alcohol is poison, that I will never be able to control alcohol as long as I live.

That's where being a member of AA comes in. People that are not "alcoholic" just don't understand. In AA I don't feel like I'm different any more, I have something to belong to, I have found new meaningful friendships. I am also reminded if I ever start to think I can drink like "normal" people, I will end up right back where I came from. Best of all, I found that by following a few simple suggestions on a daily basis, the desire to drink alcohol has completely disappeared. I have discovered that I can solve, or at least cope with, any problem that comes along today by using the tools I found in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. The people in AA really care about what happens to me and I have a life way beyond my dreams. I have been able to get my life back on track and make up for a lot of things I felt guilty about in the past. My one small regret is that I enjoy my life so much today that I wish I had done something about my drinking problem a little bit earlier.

Kevin – Bournemouth, © General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited (re-printed with permission from Roundabout)

**The 12 Steps through Word Search.** Each month, Recovery Times features the Step of the Month. This month, April, we are featuring Step Four. **Find the words to Step Four below:**

**"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."**

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



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