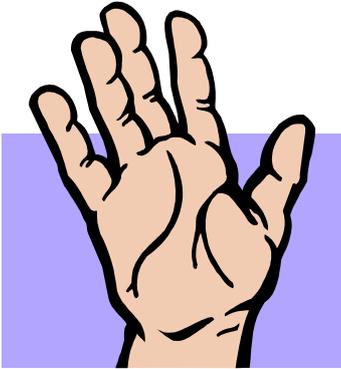


# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 44, No. 1, Jan. 2015

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

## **Being of Service is the Hallmark of A.A.**



When I was new I was told by members of the fellowship that I would attain self-esteem by doing estimable things. This, of course, meant taking commitments at meetings. So over the next few years, I volunteered to serve as a meeting "hostess," I compiled phone lists, collected and disbursed the treasury funds, secretaried meetings, served as both General Service and Intergroup Rep, and at one meeting, as the recycling person. This last commitment involved dragging sticky and wet garbage bags to my car to bring to the recycling facility to raise money for our group.

What I learned from doing these commitments was that I was needed; for a group or meeting to work requires the effort of many different people. And while it might look like those who are being of service are sacrificing their free time, those who are of service are also receiving the greatest gifts: They are learning to be responsible by serving in positions of leadership, which helps them in their own recovery – just as much as it helps the group or meeting that they serve.

Recently, I attended the annual "A.A. at the V.A." holiday event which takes place at the Veterans Administration facility in North Hills in late December. The event is put on by the Monday Night Speakers meeting in North Hills each year to provide an opportunity for A.A.s to give back to the veterans. This year, over 50 people serenaded the veterans living in the terminal ward, bringing a bit of cheer and gratitude to the residents there.



Most of the patients we saw were lying in bed, unable to sit up or move around without assistance. As our ragtag choir sang, bedside, to the veterans, their eyes opened up and many smiled or joined in with us as we sang. Although we weren't always on key, there was passion in our singing and everyone who showed up to be a part of this event walked away smiling.

We were there to bring hope and a spirit of gratitude to these veterans, just like others did when we were newcomers to our first A.A. meetings. I recall that my life as a drunk didn't contain much "holiday cheer" at the end of my drinking. Mostly I was angry or sad and alone. By being part of this event, I received the gift that comes whenever I give back: I feel good about myself because I put out my hand and helped another alcoholic, or in this case, veterans who sacrificed themselves by serving our country.

Being of service is truly one of the most valuable gifts I have received as a member of the A.A. fellowship and suiting up and showing up will always be one of the hallmarks of A.A. Editor, PK.

## SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

**San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting:** Feb. 4, 2015, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406

**San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting:** Feb. 9, 2015: New IGRs: 6:30 p.m., General Meeting: 7 p.m., St. Innocent Church., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

**San Fernando Valley H & I** (3rd Monday): Jan. 19, 2015: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

**General Service Dist. 1:** (1<sup>st</sup> Wed.): Feb. 4, 2015: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

**General Service Dist. 2:** (1<sup>st</sup> Tues.): Feb. 3, 2015: 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta.

**General Service District 7:** (2<sup>nd</sup> Sat.): Feb. 14, 2015: 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

**General Service District 11** (1<sup>st</sup> Monday): Feb.2, 2015: 6 p.m. New GSRs - 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale



**General Service District 16** (1<sup>st</sup> Monday): Feb. 2, 2015: 6:15 p.m. meeting, 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

**General Service District 17** (1<sup>st</sup> Monday): Feb. 2, 2015: 6 p.m. New GSRs, 6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg., 5000 Colfax, NoHo.

### Service Opportunities in the San Fernando Valley

**Central Office** needs telephone volunteers for all shifts (esp. midnight – 9 a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, please **call Central Office: (818) 988-3001**.

**Public Info. Committee** provides info to the public about what A.A. does & doesn't do. Need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs & to speak at schools & businesses.

**SF Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee:** Temporary contacts are needed to pair the alcoholic leaving rehabilitation, treatment or jail with A.A. in their home community. Contact Central Office for information. H & I also needs volunteers to carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. See meeting time/date above (SFV H & I).

**San Fernando Valley Convention Committee:** Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2015 Convention. (See Page 4 for more info under SF Valley AA Convention).

**San Fernando Valley Young People in AA:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month @ 1 p.m. at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. (Regular weekly meeting: Monday night at 8 p.m. at Unit A).

**San Fernando Valley Intergroup:** Central Office holds 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. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group by sharing information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. **To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call: (818) 988-3001.**

**Please Support Your Central Office** by sending a representative to the Intergroup monthly meetings. We meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month at **St. Innocent Church at 5657 Lindley in Tarzana**. We would love to see you!



**Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary?** Please consider making a \$1.00 donation for each year of your sobriety and we will list your name and birthday year in the month of your sobriety. Please send your donation during your birthday month. **For Dec. 2014, we celebrate: Jerry W. – 4 Years, Anonymous – 24 Years, Laurel C. – 42 Years, & Learning to Live Men’s Stag: 15 men/193 Years.**



**Deaths (Things We Cannot Change):** If you are aware of the passing of a Fellowship member, please call us at (818) 988-3001 or email obituary to: sfvaa.org. **Dave “Buzzard” M. – 25 Years**

**Has your meeting changed?** Please provide meeting updates in writing to: **The Valley Central Office**, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times**, please send us your name, address and payment for \$7.00 to cover cost & delivery. Also include information on whether you want a new subscription, are renewing, or if you are enclosing an additional contribution. If moving, please give us your former address.

**A.A. Central Office maintains 24/7 Phone Service** for AAs: **(818) 988-3001**. Go to: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) to find meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, or download a copy of Recovery Times. **Want to be of service?** We are always in need of volunteers to answer phones, especially on weekends and holidays.

#### **MINUTES FROM INTERGROUP REP MEETING, Dec. 8, 2014**

**OPENING: Bill S.** opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*. Jim C. read “*The Twelve Traditions*.” Dawn H., Recording Secretary, accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from November’s Intergroup Meeting; the minutes were approved as submitted.

**TREASURER’S REPORT: Brian H.** - The Treasurer’s Report was waived as all the records were waiting to be unpacked from Central Office’s move. A full report will be available at the January meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT: Bob F.** - Everything is running smoothly at Central Office, and we are up and running in our new location: **16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, 91406**. Bob invited everyone to stop by and take a tour. The volunteers who showed up over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend to help move did a phenomenal job. Bob offered a special thanks to the Intergroup Board of Directors, and to Brian H. in particular, for helping to facilitate the move in such an effective and expeditious manner.

Directories with all the new information will be available in mid-January. In the meantime, all pertinent information is available on the website at [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org). **Recovery Times** - Everything is terrific with the newsletter.



## **MEETING RELATED BUSINESS:**

Introduction of New Intergroup Representatives – Neva S. welcomed one new IGR this month: Julie E. representing the Women in Conscious Contact Big Book & Step Study in North Hollywood. IGRs were reminded to encourage recruitment of IGRs from meetings that are not currently represented. There are currently 791 meetings & 300+ groups in the San Fernando Valley, but only 50-60 meetings represented at IGR. Orientation for new IGRs starts at 6:30 p.m. before monthly IGR meetings.

# **Be of Service, We Need You!**

## **SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES**

**San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee:** Daniel - A full H&I Literature report was available on the back table.

**San Fernando Valley AA Convention:** Joel S. - Dates for the convention are 1/30-31 and 2/1, and will be held at the Warner Center Marriott in Woodland Hills. Our theme this year is "Attitude of Gratitude" and our colors are blue and yellow. Ted R. reminded everyone to register for the convention tennis tournament, which will be held on Saturday, 1/31/15, and Dawn H. reminded everyone to be sure and register early for the luncheon, banquet and breakfast.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Literature Sales are CLOSED the last Friday of each month. Central Office doors remain open; phones are still answered. Reminder for groups to report upcoming group events, and remove expired Group event flyers from literature tables. Continue to send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

**NEW BUSINESS:** No attendance certificates were awarded.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:**

Bill S.: Reminder that groups should bring at least 350 flyers for upcoming events so that each meeting can have at least 5 copies. Flyers must be for "AA-related events" (defined as "an event that includes an AA Meeting as part of the event").

## **ACKNOWLEDGE BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER – 96 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!**



Lynn – 1 year, Norm – 6 years, Daniel – 11 years, Dennis B. – 20 years, Bill S. – 26 years, Cheryl A. – 32 years.

**FILLING OF BOARD VACANCIES:** Director at Large, a 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate. Volunteers for these positions, respectively, were Loretta N., Tina K., and Adrian I.

**CLOSING:** Bill S. wished everyone a very happy holiday, and then a motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned with *The Lord's Prayer* at 7:22 p.m. As always, Recording Secretary Dawn Huber took the minutes for the meeting.

## Message

"One may say that anonymity is the spiritual base, the sure key to all the rest of our Traditions. It has come to stand for prudence and, most importantly, for self-effacement."

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W.**, November 1948,  
"Tradition Twelve."

*"A.A. gives you the pause time between what someone says and your reaction."* Anon

"I've never had a regret when I've shut up." Anon

"I'm working to do things differently; and that's my spirituality."  
Anonymous

"My miracle occurred when I became willing to go to any lengths to take action. Like the trapeze artist, it wasn't the knowledge of it being there -- it was the action of letting go." Lexington, Ky., April 2002

"Today's sobriety cannot be chugalugged. It has to be sipped, one taste at a time, so that each drop of serenity can be fully savored." NoHo, Calif., August 1982

## **Remember: Central Office Has Moved:**

Central Office of the San Fernando Valley has completed its move to the new location at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. Our new office is a two-story office suite centrally located for both the East and West Valleys on the southwest corner of Woodley and Sherman Way by the Mobile Station. For more info, you can call: (818) 988-3001 or check out our website: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org).

## **San Fernando Valley 2015 A.A. Convention**

Once again, the A.A. San Fernando Valley Convention will be held **1/30 - 2/1 at the Warner Center Marriott** in Woodland Hills. This year's theme is "Attitude of Gratitude."

If you want to register for the biggest event of the year in the San Fernando Valley, you can do so online at: [www.sfvaaconvention.org](http://www.sfvaaconvention.org). Special discounted rates are available at the Warner Center Marriott. For more details, call the convention hotline at: (818) 734-0383 or email us at: [info@sfvaaconvention.org](mailto:info@sfvaaconvention.org).



## **Angst and Wine** (sung to the tune of "Old Lang Syne")

A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

There was a time I'd lose my car,  
Now all of that's behind,  
Farewell to jails and lawyers' fees  
And days of angst and wine

Chorus: Those days of angst

and wine, my friend

I almost lost my mind,  
Let's raise our cups of coffee, and  
Good-bye to angst and wine. (Poem by Leslie Z.)

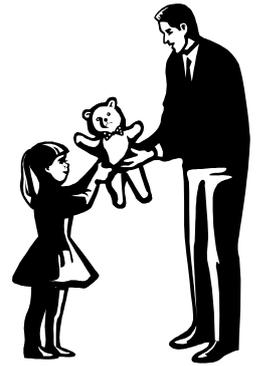
The staff at Central Office in the San Fernando Valley & Recovery Times wishes everyone a happy and sober New Year. Thank you for your support of our recent move to our new, centrally-located headquarters where we look forward to serving all of your literature needs. Many people don't realize that Central Office is open every day (Monday - Sunday) except for holidays for sales of books. However, we are closed the last Friday of the month for inventory. Our large warehouse has all of the A.A. approved literature and pamphlets that your group needs, plus medallions and chips. Please come visit us and say 'hi.' Central Office is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$3,000 per year and must be from members of alcoholics anonymous, not from outsiders. Wishing you a safe and sober 2015!



## A Tale of Two Saturdays

*The difference between the two was the world--and one drink*

I spent last Saturday afternoon with a close family relative as he struggled through his tears to say goodbye to his father at a memorial service. His father drank himself to death after decades of unchecked and untreated alcohol abuse.



The following Saturday I spent with him again and this time, listened to his laughter as we celebrated his birthday by telling stories of the happy times we have had together over the 25 years our family has been blessed to have him in our midst. The stark contrast of just one week in time between the north and south poles of emotion in someone I love was profound. It gave me a lot to contemplate during my daily meditation.

His father was quite a nice guy, really. He was far more successful in his professional life than most, including me. But despite years of damage to his family and his health, despite countless pledges and attempts to moderate or stop altogether, he could never quite cross the chasm to total abstinence.

By contrast, his son has never seen me take a drink in the more than 25 years he has been part of our family. I say that with humility because I know beyond any doubt that a power greater than I gave me the grace to finally put down my last drink and get sober starting with my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous on July 31, 1982.

I am sure that there is nothing that his father may have done in his drinking career that I did not do as well during mine. The only difference really between us was that AA gave me a way to live my life without alcohol once I was ready to accept it. I know that over the years, my relative tried to encourage his father to give the program a try.

At the same time, I think my sobriety sometimes made him angry that his own father wasn't able to go down the path I had by getting sober. To the bitter end he held on to the belief that his dad could get sober if he just made up his mind to do so.

I understood that but was powerless to change it. My relative had never seen me even take a single drink. So how could he conceive of me as the stumbling, obnoxious drunk driver I had become towards the end of my drinking? He could not imagine me waking my children up in the middle of the night crying drunken tears and promising them that I would never drink again.

I tried a couple of times to explain to my relative the unconditional surrender that is a prerequisite of getting sober. It involves a total smashing of the alcoholic ego. As the literature describes, we have to become as willing as only the dying can be, to do anything to lift the merciless obsession. I offered to be of service any way I could but his father was never interested. As things worsened, I began to indirectly warn the son that his father might eventually fall victim to one or more of the alcoholic triad: death, institutions, or incarceration.

I don't think the son had ever fully grasped the power of the obsession, the utter inability of the alcoholic to summon enough will power to stop for good. He also wasn't one of us. When his younger days of partying, drinking and sowing his wild oats were over, he simply put down the drink and moved on. Because I was sober, he figured I had done the same thing, just a bit later.

So why couldn't his father?



He wasn't there that night in very early sobriety when I sat on the edge of my bed sobbing until there were no tears left in me. I grieved the loss of the person I thought I had been. It was at that moment of utter defeat that I first knew in my heart that I was an alcoholic and that my life had become unmanageable. I remember the feelings of that moment as vividly as if it were yesterday.

So many times I had pledged to my wife and family that this time I would stop for good. And so many times I failed. They could not understand why in the world I would ever pick up another drink. Neither could I. It wasn't until I gave

AA a try that I found out about the cunning, baffling and powerful nature of the disease.

Over the years, I saw myself in his father as I watched him slip further and further into alcoholism. His descent was a stark reminder to me of what the 25 years of my own alcoholic life had been like: the ruined family occasions, the broken promises, the anguish I caused those who loved me and the personal disgrace that drunkenness brought to my life.

In some ways, I also began to understand at a deeper level than ever before just how my drinking had emotionally affected the people who loved me. I had thought I really understood that aspect of my drinking. But now I experienced vicariously the frustration, anger, disappointment, bewilderment, despair and betrayal that my wife and family endured because of my drinking.

It also gave me pause for reflection on just what kind of legacy I will leave for my children and grandchildren.

What will my daughters and grandkids most remember of me should I die tomorrow? Will it be the drunk who wreaked havoc, unhappiness and sadness in the first 20 years of our family life? Or by the grace of my higher power and the AA program, will it be the man I have become in the three decades since my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting?

I pray it will be the latter, but I also take no chances. That's why I still go to four meetings a week, still have a sponsor, still work the Steps and still try to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. My second chance at life has produced in me an enormous feeling of gratitude for what has been so freely given to me by the AA program and my fellow alcoholics. It's a debt I know I will never be able to fully pay.

It truly pains my heart that my relative's father never found sobriety. My years in the program have shown me over and over what awaits for those who cannot put down the drink. But this was the closest the stark reality of someone else's alcoholism had ever come to my own family. I find perspective in something my sponsee says: "I am a fortunate survivor of the disease of alcoholism."

So this Saturday, I crawled into my bed and gratefully thanked my higher power for another day of sobriety. And I also asked that my relative and his family find some degree of comfort in their lives and that they gain a measure of acceptance and forgiveness for their lost loved one.



I also thought about the other casualties of our disease whom I have known over the years. It made me wonder for a moment why I found AA and sobriety and they didn't. Then, just before I closed my eyes, I understood exactly why this wonderful Saturday with my relative and our families had been different than the Saturday of sadness just one week earlier. It was the first drink that I don't take -- no matter what.

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**San Fernando Valley Central Office**

16132 Sherman Way

Van Nuys, CA 91406

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**