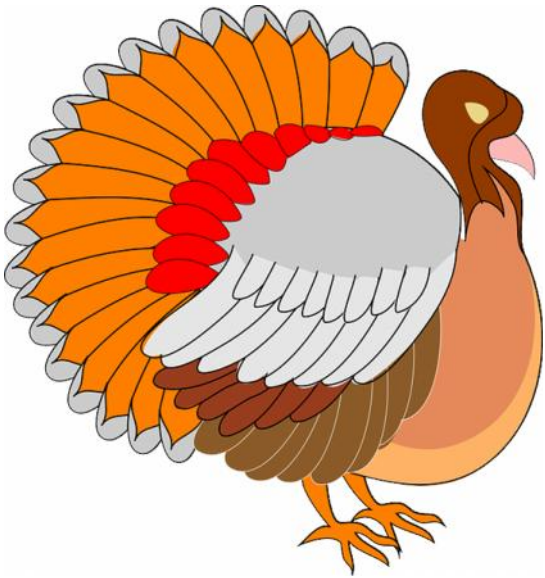


The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

GOING HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: 3 ALCOHOLICS' STORIES



Growing up, I think that holidays were just about presents or my mom making a turkey. It wasn't until I got sober that I got to form a heartfelt meaning of the holidays.

I got released from prison on October 24th - just in time for the Holiday rush to start. I had yet to do my Steps that first holiday season. I did what I knew - I bought more presents for my kids than I could afford and made a turkey. The first miracle was when my sister announced we were having Christmas at her house instead of mom's. I know that she had seen my pattern in the past and decided it would be best to not let our mom be in control. In years past, I always got into a fight, left mad and eventually relapsed. My sister's house was right down the street from an Alano club so I went to a meeting. Even

that made my mom angry. Nothing had happened but I was uncomfortable. My mom thought (and still thinks) that I only go to meetings because I feel like drinking.

That next year, I had nowhere to go. I did my steps and was working with a sponsor who loves helping others so much that she has a non-profit just for kids. And every year they collect donations to bring Christmas to needy families. Well I got to be of service and my children even helped. My family did that for at least four years before we moved to another state. On Thanksgiving, we ate at my sponsor's home with her full and somewhat healthy family. That first year, I was uncomfortable but I knew what to do: be of service was the answer. I washed dishes, helped cook and did what I could to help others. It really worked!

My addiction started early: I started running away from home when I was 13. My holidays then were either on the streets or in jail with my juvenile beliefs of holidays. After doing my Steps and with a few years of helping others, I started to form the right idea about the holidays. I owe a lot to my first sponsor who helped me through the work. In this case it started with an outside job - being of service to others. It wasn't until then that I was able to believe I was worth anything. You see, being of service helped because the people I helped told me what I could not or would not believe about myself. I learned to be loving as I was running from being uncomfortable.

It would creep up during the holidays that my own family did not want me around. It was a sad thing to face. I would talk it over with others and eventually it passed. (Continued, page 5)

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: Jan. 6, 2016 2015, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: Jan. 11, 2016: Orientation for 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): Dec. 21, 2015: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): Jan. 6, 2016: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

General Service Dist. 2: (1st Tues.): Jan. 5, 2016: 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta.

General Service District 7: (2nd Sat.): Jan. 9, 2016, 2015: 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

General Service District 11 (1st Mon.): Jan. 4, 2016: 6 p.m. New GSRs - 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale.

General Service District 16 (1st Mon.): Jan. 4, 2016: 6:00 p.m., 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

General Service District 17 (1st Mon.): Jan. 4, 2016: 6 p.m. Orientation for new GSRs, 6:30 p.m., Business Meeting: 7:00 p.m., 5000 Colfax, NoHo.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

A.A. Central Office maintains 24/7 Phone Service for AAs. Go to: 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. If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, please call Central Office: (818) 988-3001.

Central Office is located at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station) and remains open every day for book sales (including weekends) except for holidays and 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.

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. For more info, call: (818) 988-3001 or check out our website: www.sfvaa.org.

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

SF Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee (H & I): Temporary contacts are needed to pair the alcoholic leaving rehabilitation, treatment or jail with A.A. in their home community. Contact Central Office for info. 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 to meetings. See meeting info above. (SFV H & I).

San Fernando Valley Convention Committee: Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2016 Convention. (See Page 3 for more info under SF Valley AA Convention).

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

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: Central Office holds a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd 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 rep to the monthly Intergroup meetings the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley, 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 during your birthday month and we will list your name and birthday year in the next issue. This month's birthday celebrants are: _____

Deaths (Things We Cannot Change): If you are aware of the passing of a Fellowship member, please call us at (818) 988-3001.

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 with \$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.

THE RECOVERY TIMES would like to hear your story. Please keep it to 500 words and focus on sobriety. Please include your sobriety date and an email or phone number then email Pat at: xnowisthetime@aol.com. Thank you!

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting, November 9, 2015

OPENING: Dawn H.

- Dawn opened the meeting at 7:01 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer
- Pat read "The Twelve Traditions"
- Cheryl A. accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from the October Intergroup meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Josh S.

- Group contributions are \$14,588 ahead but literature sales (\$22,000) are down compared to last year.
- MTD (\$2589) and YTD (\$5381). The missing data for the 58 days have been accounted for and the books are balanced.

CENTRAL OFFICE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

There are 4 new phone volunteers at Central Office. There is a no-dog policy at Central Office and at all Intergroup Meetings. *Recovery Times*: Dawn introduced Pat K., editor of *Recovery Times*. Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month; send to Pat's e mail xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Adrian I. (for Brian H.)

There were 3 new Intergroup Representatives this month:

- Jorge G., *Solutions Group*, Monday, Valley Village
- Larry S., *Vanalden 12&12*, Wednesday, Northridge
- David G., *Winners Attitude Adjustment*, Daily, Valley Village

IGRs were reminded to encourage recruitment from meetings that are not represented. There are currently more than 780 meetings in the San Fernando Valley, but only 50 - 60 represented monthly at IGR. Orientation for new IGRs begins at 6:30 p.m. prior to the meeting.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

- General Service District 11: Tigran: Hosting 12 Concepts Study continuing the 1st Monday of each month Sponsorship Workshop continues into next year at the Windsor Club; working on donating subscription of *The Grapevine* to inmates.

Message

"A coffeepot simmers on the kitchen stove, a hospital sobers the stricken sufferer, general headquarters broadcasts the AA message; our service lifelines span the seven seas. All these symbolize AA in action. For action is the magic word of Alcoholics Anonymous."

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,
November 1951**

"I no longer view the dishes as an unpleasant task. I see them as an opportunity to meditate ... I concentrate on washing the dishes and not on what I'm going to do next. The most important thing is what's in front of me now." Buffalo, NY

"We're not trying to see through you; we're trying to see you through." Anon

*"I wear my recovery like a loose garment because if I was lectured and restricted by it in any way, I would be able to do it."
Anonymous*

"It isn't possible for all of us to be loners."
Lake Worth, Fla.

"If you live in fear of losing something, you don't get to enjoy it." Anon

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- General Service District 1: John: 3rd Annual Literature Workshop in Simi Valley Senior Center 12/6/15 and Area 93 Assembly in Bakersfield this Sunday, see Norm for details
- General Service District 17: Paul: Old Timer's Event was a success.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Nancy: Financials are good. If groups need an H&I donation can please see Nancy. Dawn suggested we have forms to qualify for jail panels available at the IG meetings.

- San Fernando Valley 41st AA Convention: Joel S: Jan.29 - 31, 2016.

NOTE: Convention Registration available online and you will need to **pre-register** for the Saturday Speaker Dinner and Sunday Spiritual Breakfast—tickets for these two events **WILL NOT** be available at the door this year. Golf Tournament is on Friday, January 29th, cost is \$85. Scott, Marathon Meeting Chairperson: There are room for 25 more meeting signups.

OLD BUSINESS

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

NEW BUSINESS

- Attendance certificates will be awarded in January.
- November is Gratitude Month, the main fundraiser for Central Office.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

- Tigran: Windsor Club (Glendale) Dance and Meeting every 3rd Saturday per month, 10pm to 1:30am on 11/21, 12/19, 1/16, and 2/20.
 - Dawn H: 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 NOVEMBER – 54 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

Jorge: 11/4/14, 1 year; Marianna: 11/21/13, 2 years; Dawn: 11/13/95, 20 years, and Larry 11/1/84, 31 years.

VACANCIES ON BOARD: NONE.

CLOSING: Dawn H. a motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned with *The Lord's Prayer* at 7:22 p.m.

Prepared and submitted by: Cheryl A., Recording



Secretary

Going Home for the Holidays, (cont., page 1)

Even without knowing it, God was doing for me what I could not do for myself. God was letting me see what he thought of me while doing some amazing things in my community.

I now today have 8 years sober. I still buy too many gifts for my kids, friends and family. Who knows what motivates that? Maybe I will do a 10th Step on it now that it has come up. I am grateful to that sponsor who God put in my life because today, that same family that didn't invite me to their homes for Christmas has come to my house, two years in a row. My siblings that is - my mom has not yet come over but I have a really strong feeling that after finding her homeless in a park and helping her get a home and feeding her, she will join me this year - God willing. **Nikki W., Las Vegas, NV**

New Year's Eve with the Family



My sobriety started 3,000 miles away from my family. Actually, the worst of my drinking also happened after I moved from New York City to Los Angeles. My family did not know that I drank too much; they knew nothing of the difficulties I had as a result of drinking. My parents actually saw me falling down, puking, sick drunk only twice. The first time, I was only twelve and their denial told them I must have a stomach flu.

The second time was soon after I moved to Los Angeles when my mom and dad came to visit to see my new apartment. I had gone out one night with some people from my new job and gotten so drunk that one of my co-workers had put me in a cab to get home. At that time, I had been drinking for over 14 years in a manner one could never have called "social drinking".

My parents believed it was a one-time thing which happens to most young people. As sick as I was from the drinking I'd done the night before, and because I swore to them (but mainly to myself) that I would never do that again, they were sure there was no problem. You see, I did not come with a family history of alcoholism. That was foreign to all my family. Alcoholics were the bums we saw on streets of the Bowery in lower Manhattan.

I did not see my family often during my L.A. drinking years. But when I was about 9 months sober, I told my parents, with great trepidation, that I was an alcoholic. I expected a huge outpouring of my mother's guilt as there had been, years earlier, when I'd told my parents I was

gay. But this time, all my mother said was "I am glad you're sober." That was the sum total and end of the discussion.

Nine years later, my father died in Florida where my parents had been living for many years. He died on December 30th; that day was also my mother's 77th birthday. My brother, my mother, and I had been there at his bedside for over a week while he lay dying. It would be three days before we could bury him. And so I stayed on in Florida as family members began arriving for the funeral. (Continued, next page)

New Year's Eve with the Family

It was decided that we would have a New Year's Eve gathering. Myra, my sister-in-law's mother, offered her home for the occasion as she lived near my parents. All of the family was invited. As the time of the party approached, I was in a panic. My mind has a way of playing scary tricks on me. I was sure that everyone would wonder why I was not drinking, as that was surely expected for a New Year's Eve celebration.

Worse was my fear of how I would cope with everyone else's drinking. I pictured the champagne flowing and everyone in rowdy merriment. I pictured liquor spilling all over the place and even on me. How would I stay sober in the midst of that? And even if I did manage to abstain, how could I endure an evening with drunken relatives? I called my sponsor who suggested that I did have a good reason to be with my family that night and if I asked God for help, I could stay sober through that event. I was nine years sober and up until the moment of the party, my anxiety level grew steadily by the moment.

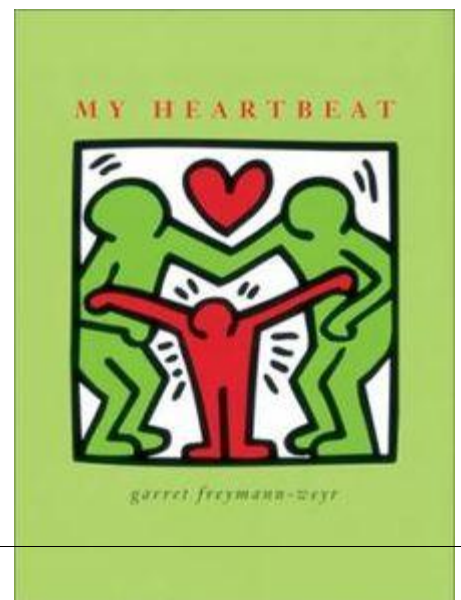
Now, many years later, I do not recall anyone drinking until 11:45 p.m. when everyone was given a glass and the champagne was poured. I had ginger ale; maybe I wasn't the only one but I did not notice. No one seemed to care or even notice that I did not take any alcohol. At midnight, we all made a toast to a better new year.

Some people drank their one glass of champagne. Most drank a few sips and left their glass half full, never to be touched again. I was amazed! I had forgotten what it was like to be with non-alcoholic people at a party. In my self-absorbed way, I had forgotten that my family were not alcoholics. My father, who had Alzheimer's for years, was missed but there was a sense of relief that he finally made his transition. It was a good celebration. I was able to relax and I learned much about my family and myself that night. Carol W., Sylmar, CA

AA is Where My Heart Is

Holidays in my home seemed to always be lively: I remember the year my Mom set her hair on fire after a few drinks of wine as she was leaning over the lit holiday candles.

Then there was the year that I was running late for a holiday dinner with my family. As I sped along a rural road, not a mile from my mother's house, I saw the police cruiser in my rearview



mirror. Knowing that stopping for the officer would add on at least 15 minutes to my arrival, I chose instead to speed up and arrived – to the dismay of my family – with a police escort complete with siren and flashing lights.

What a nice entrance that must have made! My family was so ashamed of me that no one would mention what had happened. As I looked toward the windows of my Mom's house, I saw the curtains stir as different family members peeked through at the scene unfolding. Finally, my dad emerged looking embarrassed and asked politely, "Officer, is there a problem?"

That was a good 20 years before I came to the rooms of A.A. I had to do "more research" and keep "proving to myself" that I was NOT an alcoholic, but in doing so, I condemned myself to a life of misery. And who was I providing this to anyway? No one else seemed concerned about the life I was sabotaging.

The last Holiday I remember as a drunk was one I spent at my brother's home in Wisconsin. He had graciously sent me a plane ticket after I called him crying because I had nowhere to go for the holidays. The first day was a happy one, visiting with my brother's family, but things soon turned to ca-ca as we got into an argument over whose fault it was that the toilet overflowed. I carried that resentment right into the Holiday dinner, refusing to join the family in conversation as I preferred my own company better. Plus, alone in the kitchen, there was no one to monitor my drinking as I went through a bottle of scotch whisky, all the while bemoaning my "terrible fate" of being stuck with my brother and his family for three whole days!

The following day, I left with no gratitude in my heart. I could only think about how glad I was to be going home where I could drink the way I wanted and not have to put up with family!

Well a lot changed when I got sober in A.A. For starters, I was asked to be of service and through service, I became a "joiner" – helping wash dishes at one of my local A.A. Hall's Holiday events. This occupied my time and got me through the dreaded holiday period so I didn't have time to focus on how my life was compared to others'. I stayed away from my family of origin for several holidays, as they continued to drink and it seemed to trigger a lot of my issues that had not been resolved through Step work. (Even after working on my Steps for nearly 12 years, I still prefer holidays at A.A. events or with close friends who respect my sobriety).

As the years progressed, I began to actually enjoy being a part of gatherings of people. Hearing people say "Happy Holidays" and getting hugs from dozens of A.A. friends has made a huge difference in the way I enjoy (or not enjoy) my time during the Holidays. Service, more than anything else, has changed my attitude to one of gratitude. I smile now instead of frowning. I laugh instead of crying. And I have found that happiness is contagious and sharing a kind smile with others makes me feel more loving.

A.A. has been both a life saver and a life-changer for me. Just 13 years ago, I had the worst holiday I can remember and following that, considered ending my life because the Holidays never measured up to my expectations. Now I see it as an opportunity to create happiness for others, especially children, the elderly, and those who don't have families. For me, the Holidays are about taking the time to open my eyes and ears and feel grateful for what God has put in

my life. My sobriety is my most valuable possession today because without it, I would not have a life. Editor



For Our January issue, we are looking for stories about your New Year's Resolutions – Is the New Year a time for change?

Don't Miss: the 41st Annual San Fernando Valley AA Convention taking place at the Warner Center Marriott, Woodland Hills, CA: Jan. 29 - 31, 2016.

Theme: "We are Not a Glum Lot." Get your tickets online at: <http://sfvaaconvention.org>.

Central Office of SFV
16132 Sherman Way
Van Nuys, CA 91406

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED