



My Brother's Keeper

He came to realize that he was powerless over both his own alcoholism and that of his brother

He collapsed in the parking lot of a shopping mall that spring. "I'm not ready to die," he moaned, as the emergency response team prepared to transport him to a hospital. He died later that day. My brother was only 56 and the cause of death was heart failure.

Two years earlier, he had called me to say he was back in New York City. He arrived broke, with a teenage daughter and son, and a wife with a major disability. I hadn't heard from him in roughly 12 years. He missed many things in those years including our mother's funeral.

When I saw him again, he was changed. He was not only older, but also heavier, by at least one hundred pounds. He walked with slow shuffle and labored to get up from a chair. He was very bloated. When he put down the drink, he had picked up food. His demeanor was different as well. The medicinal herbs he relied upon seemed govern to his emotions. Previously outgoing, he now was withdrawn and uncommunicative. He has come back to die, I thought at the time.

Many years before, when I was 31 and sober in AA for about a month, I visited my brother at a hospital in Queens, N.Y. The progression had left me a chronic alcoholic prone to blackouts and behavior that summoned revulsion in those around me. I watched as Paul dispensed cigarettes from the packs I had brought him to his friends in the detox ward.

"My counselors are really impressed with me. They see how smart I am. They know I'm going to make it."

A feeling of fear came over me that my brother's cockiness would not serve him well. Though I was still struggling to achieve sobriety, having turned to other substances when I let go of the bottle, I had heard in the rooms and read enough of AA literature to understand that self-confidence is not the answer when it comes to alcoholism and that a measure of humility is required to deal with the illness.

For the next few years, Paul was in and out of the program. I learned in this time that sobriety and active alcoholism do not mix. "Your drinking wasn't really that bad," he said, during one phone conversation, as if to coax me back to my old life. Another time he was inappropriately personal with my wife. It was the sort of unsettling behavior I was all too capable of displaying when I was drunk. And there was the time I visited only to find him insanely drunk and listening to old Elvis Presley recordings as his infant son lay in his crib and his two stepchildren and his wife cowered.

One evening, our younger sister had a party. From out of nowhere Paul appeared from another room in the apartment to pinch my cheek and congratulate me on my appearance, which had improved somewhat in the course of my several years of sobriety, as well as the newfound stability in my domestic and work life. His forced gaiety left me sad that his only solution for the world of hurt within him was still the bottle. With each drink his voice seemed to grow louder. That was my last contact with him until his reappearance years later.

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SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: August 3, 2016, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: August 8, 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): July 18, 2016: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): August 3, 2016: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

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

General Service District 7: (2nd Sat.): August 13, 2016, 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

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

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

General Service District 17 (1st Mon.): August 1, 2016. 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 2017 Convention. The meeting is the 3rd Tuesday of the month at St. Innocents, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

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. IGRs share 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. **Thank you everyone for your support!** This month, we received donations from the following: Anonymous – 20 Years, Casey W. – 25 Years, Josh S. – 25 Years, Circle of Women – 33 Years, Sat. Morning Women’s Meeting – 7 Years.

Deaths: We said goodbye to the following AA members: **Arlene – 46 Years (Radford), Jim R. – 9 Years (formerly Dunsmore) and Jody T. – 40 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 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. Central Office apologies for a misprint in the June issue of Recovery Times. The corrected version is available as a free download from: <http://sfvaa.org/RecTimes> (then select June 2016).

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting, June 13, 2016

OPENING: Brian H.: Brian opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer. Lee read “The Twelve Traditions” Sandy R. accepted a motion for approval of the April Intergroup Minutes.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Joel S.

MTD was <\$4,609> and YTD was <\$8,346>, compared with last year’s YTD which was \$6,766. Group donations are down \$6,500 from this time last year. Our rent for the new space is nearly three times the rent we paid in Van Nuys, plus utilities, which were included in the Van Nuys rent.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT: Bob F.

Central Office: Running smoothly and volunteer list is growing. Treasurer’s Report: Joel’s figures are correct, but as of June 13, group contributions are \$11,203 less than they were the same time last year. *Recovery Times*: Deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Cheryl A. New Intergroup Representative: Stephanie, Women’s Discussion Group on Dumetz in Woodland Hills. (cont., next page)

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

- General Service District 1: Norm for Lee: Going to have Unity Day; Area 93 Budget Setting Meeting was held Sunday, June 12, and they are predicting a deficit.
- General Service District 17: Alexis: Seeking more General Service Reps. Out of nearly 150 AA meetings in District 17, only 25 GSRs attend the monthly district meetings.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Danny: Bike 4 Books was held over the weekend. He will have a financial report next month.
- San Fernando Valley 42nd AA Convention: Joel S: Will be held Jan 27, 28, and 29, 2017. Planning meetings held the 3rd Tuesday of every month, 7:00 p.m., at this Church. Next meeting is June 21.
- Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard: 2016 SCVAA Convention will be on October 21, 22, and 23 at the Valencia Hyatt. Website scvaaconvention.org is up and running for registrations.

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 - No new business.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

Bob F.: Foothill Round-Up is taking place July 29, 30 and 31, in La Canada-Flintridge.

Ernie, The San Fernando Group: 3rd Annual 12 Traditions Workshop on Sat, June 18, 2016, 1:00 – 6:00 pm.

Ron, Chatsworth Speaker Meeting: New start time: 7:30 p.m. Fridays, at Mason and Lasson.

Brad, Unit A: Joe and Charlie inspired Big Book Study at Unit A, beginning Saturday, August 6, 2016 at 4:00 p.m., and continuing for 18 weeks.

Diana: The 41st Annual Great Outdoor Beaver Meeting, Thursday, September 1 – Sunday, September 4 in Beaver, Utah.

Niki M., Area 93 Archives Chair: 2nd Annual Historical AA Members Presentation, "Come Meet Charles, Nell, Hank and Marty," Saturday, September 24, at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center.

Brian H.: Save the date October 15, 2016 for Take Your Sponsor To Breakfast. Tickets will be available for sale in August.

Brian 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").

BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE – 85 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Michael, 3 years on 6/29;
- Jill, 4 years on May 20;
- Daniel, 4 years on 6/30;
- Sandy R., 6 years on 6/2;
- Pat, 15 years on 6/3;
- Josh S., 25 years on 6/1;
- Loretta N., 28 years on 6/10

VACANCIES ON BOARD: There are no vacancies on the Board.

CLOSING: Brian H.: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*. Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary.

"Alcoholism is a disease and the alcoholic is a sick person.

The alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping.

This is a public health problem and therefore a public responsibility."

FROM the FOUNDERS

From AA Comes of Age, **Dr. Foster Kennedy** responded to AA co-founder Bill Wilson's speech in 1944 to the NY State Medical Society:

"We have heard a truly moving and eloquent address, moving in its form and in its facts. I have no doubt that a man who has cured himself of the lust for alcohol has a far greater power for curing alcoholism than has a doctor who has never been afflicted by the same curse.

"No matter how sympathetic and patient the doctor may be in the approach to his patient, the patient is sure to either feel, or imagine, condescension to himself or get the notion that he is a being hectored by one of the minor prophets.

"This organization of Alcoholics Anonymous calls on two of the greatest reservoirs of power known to man, religion, and that instinct for association with one's fellows which Trotter has called the "herd instinct." .. This movement furnishes an objective of high emotional driving power in making every cured drunkard a missionary to the sick.

"We physicians, I think, have always had difficulty in finding an occupation for our convalescent patients of sufficient emotional driving power..."

Marty Mann, the "First Lady" of A.A.

CENTRAL OFFICE THANKS ALL THE VOLUNTEERS WHO ANSWER THE PHONES EACH DAY, WEEK & MONTH! WITHOUT YOU, ALCOHOLICS

WHO NEED A FRIEND MIGHT NOT KNOW WHERE TO GO FOR A MEETING. TO BECOME A PHONE VOLUNTEER, PLEASE CONTACT CENTRAL OFFICE. ONE YEAR OF SOBRIETY IS RECOMMENDED. PLEASE CALL: (818) 988-3001.

PLAN YOUR YEAR WITH THESE AA EVENTS:



www.foothillroundup.org

Rafters 42nd Annual Alcathon, 8/5/16 – 8/7/16, Railroad Ave., Newhall, CA

Maad Dog Daze (the 42nd Annual 9th District AA Convention), 8/5- 8/7/16, Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Cathedral City, CA, www.maaddogdaze.org.

38th Annual Ventura County AA Convention, 9/9/16 – 9/11/16, Hyatt, Westlake Village, www.vcaac.org

32nd South Bay Roundup, 9/2/16- 9/5/16, Torrance Marriott, Torrance, CA, www.southbayroundup.org

Amazing Grace Banquet: 20th Annual Inland Empire Women's AA Banquet: 9/24/16, National Orange

Got a birthday or AA anniversary to celebrate? Why not celebrate by making a donation to Central Office for each year of your sobriety. Donations help fund the expenses for running our office 365 days a year and pay for the phones to answer calls from alcoholics seeking help. Next time you need a meeting, remember that your Central Office is the central source of information for meeting and other sober activities for AA in the San Fernando Valley. **Please consider making a donation of whatever you can afford.**



Show, 689 South "E" Street, San Bernardino, CA. Doors open at 5p.m., dinner at 6 p.m., speaker at 7 p.m., \$40.00. RSVP by 9/17/16. 951-809-5135.

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We all want the happy ending: families reunited and couples that live happily ever after. In AA we sometimes hear of generations of family members who have gotten sober. But not always.

As a child, I remember my mother saying, "My only prayer is that we all be in heaven together." And maybe that will be, but we were not so together here on earth, or if some of us were, time and wounds—and alcoholism—served to separate others of us. One of my older sisters committed suicide while in a psychiatric facility. Another sister tried to take her life the day of my mother's burial, and she died some months later.

Alcoholism is a self-diagnosed disease, but both of these sisters, in my estimation, would have

qualified for membership in AA. "Bye," the second of those sisters would say, expelling the word like a bullet when I entered the room. Unable to abide prolonged human contact, she would then leave in order to preserve the isolation in which she lived.

But Paul and I were close, in age and in the connection we had with each other growing up. I have to believe it was the recovery road I took—and which he couldn't stay on—that separated us. The bottle was the thing that came between us.

I would like to say that the barrier was removed with his reemergence, that like the prodigal son, his return was met with rejoicing. But the prevailing emotion in me was fear that he would require heavy financial assistance. He had left AA again, and though he was dry, I still struggled with the feeling I had carried for years that I had to be, in essence, an older brother to my older brother.

The image of him as less than able to care for himself and his family was reinforced the summer afternoon I met with him and his wife and kids on Fifth Avenue's Museum Mile. I arrived during a downpour to find them umbrella-less and drenched to the bone. Hearing judgment in my voice that they had come with no protection against the rain, he simply replied that the sun would reappear and dry them off. Perhaps, it was his way of saying to me as well that I needn't think of myself as his keeper.

The opportunity to cast away fear with love is given us many times, and many, many times have I failed, including with my brother and tormented sisters. But many, many times have I also succeeded. In the years that have passed since their deaths, I have learned more about personal powerlessness and to pray daily that the Higher Power's will, will be done for others as well as for me. The wisdom of the Serenity Prayer has been impressed on me more deeply, especially where we are asked to accept the things we cannot change and the courage to change the things we can.

And it has been ingrained in me to pay this gift of sobriety I have received forward by trying to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers. With hindsight it comes as no surprise that an element of the hope I felt early on in my AA experience came from the sense that I would find here the older siblings that my own couldn't fully be to me, and as I have stayed, the conviction has grown that it is only AA that has spared me, one day at a time, from their same fate. —David S., New York, N.Y.

ODE TO AA CONVENTIONS



I recently attended the Desert Pow Wow in Indian Wells, CA which is one of the oldest AA conventions around (formerly the Palm Springs Roundup). While it was a 2 ½ hour road trip to get there, my visit there involved another AA with whom I got to share some new experiences as we explored, not only the convention, but also another local meeting taking place in the area.

Whenever I take a trip, whether it be for business or pleasure, I always scope out the AA meetings happening in the area because in some areas, there might only be one meeting every few days—and I wouldn't want to miss it! At the Palm Desert meeting, we heard from a grateful alcoholic with two years of sobriety. He carried a good message to others and was very involved in service commitments to his group.

In my experience, service is an important factor in how comfortable one is in their sobriety. Whether you are old or new in the program of AA, being of service always gives you a sense of purpose and keeps you feeling like you are a 'part of' the program and the greater scheme of things in life. As Doctor Kennedy said in his response to Bill Wilson's address in 1944 before the New York Medical Society, **"This movement furnishes an objective of high emotional driving power in making every cured drunkard a missionary to the sick."**

If we choose to carry the message, I hope that message will always be one of gratitude for the life we have today in sobriety and gratefulness for those who came before us to carry the message of hope for the still ailing alcoholic who would have given up and given in to alcohol if someone hadn't been there putting out their hand.

Thank you to those who put on the Desert Pow Wow, The Foothill Roundup (coming up in late July), the San Fernando Valley AA Convention, the Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention, the Ventura County AA Convention, and all the other AA events that we are so fortunate to be able to attend locally.

Today there is hope for anyone who wants a solution to their alcoholism – and it's as close as your local AA meeting. Editor, Pat K.



TRAFFIC SCHOOL

Like many alcoholics, I had waited until the last week to get my traffic school class complete. I had to go far into the hills of Glendale from where I live in Burbank and was very anxious when I realized that I did not know how to get there and I could not find the address. I was lost in so many ways with only the name of the place to go on. Time was running out. If I did not get there by a certain time, I would not be allowed to attend the class. The class and the ticket had cost me \$300. So I kept driving back and forth past where I thought the address had to be. Now I was praying, fervently, but there was no hope. Then, I heard a "still small voice" saying: "You must keep going; you must keep going...keep going...keep going...keep going." like an echo. Then I stopped and it turns out that I was in front of the building where the class was being held. I parked in the back where the sign said "NO PARKING, TOW AWAY." I walked into the classroom and there was a sign-up roster on the desk. The teacher said I had two minutes to sign in and take a seat. It was past the time for my class to start. I quickly breathed a sigh of relief and sat down. My fine would have been much higher than money if I had not made it; I might have gone to jail. My Higher Power seems to prefer tough jobs. I call them "close calls". Thank you HP for assisting me today with getting to traffic school. **Jane B., Burbank**

Central Office of SFV

16132 Sherman Way

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED