

RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 49, No. 8, August 2016

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

SOBER VACATIONS: THE PAIN IN SPAIN FALLS MAINLY ON THE BRAIN



At the beginning of March 1998, my husband called me at work with exciting news. "We've been invited to go on the company trip to Spain," he said elatedly. I was not as excited to hear this news as he was to give it. Being early in sobriety, I was scared of a trip to a foreign country with 90 people I didn't know and didn't think I had anything in common with. I told him I needed some time to think; we could talk about it later. I got in my car to go home and immediately started crying. My mind was racing with the thoughts of 3 other short but extremely uncomfortable vacations I'd taken in my 15 months of sobriety. I thought about how inadequate I'd felt at Bill's work functions. I hadn't yet learned the art of sober small talk.

The fears I had about this vacation were immense. Vacations were the time when my alcoholism became full blown, when my love affair with the drink became intensified. To me, a vacation was an uninterrupted break from reality in which drinking was not only acceptable, but encouraged. I furthered that break from reality by maintaining a constant state of drunkenness throughout each vacation. A vacation in Spain meant the romanticism of lying by the Mediterranean Sea with a glass of Spanish red wine in my hand. In my mind, a vacation without drinking was like ice-skating without ice -- it couldn't be done.

As I was driving around after work pondering all of this, I decided that I'd better put in a call to my sponsor, Mary. Mary asked me to meet her at a nearby coffee shop. I was grateful that she was able to help me so quickly. We spent a couple of hours writing out all of the pros and cons of the Spain trip and discussing my options: to go to Spain and be happy; to go to Spain and be miserable; or not to go and be happy or miserable! Throughout this process, Mary taught me a lesson in living in the solution rather than the problem. I went home and laid out all my notes, played some soft music, and prayed to God to help me make the right decision. I decided to go to Spain and be happy. I sat down later with my husband and reviewed my list of pros and cons. I was honest with him in revealing all of my fears, rational and irrational. We discussed ways that I could prepare myself. We also discussed ways that he could be supportive, and I set boundaries for myself which I made clear to him. After that, I put the trip out of my mind and focused on my sobriety, my work, and my spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

I attended several meetings during the week prior to the trip in which I talked about my fears. My fellow alcoholics were extremely supportive. The Wednesday before the trip, my fears brought me to tears in a meeting. The people in the meeting provided me with ideas for action. They shared their experiences and told me--**specifically**--how they had handled their fears. Mary made me a "Meeting in a Bag" full of tapes and a meditation book. One man pointed out a call in the Grapevine for articles about traveling, and I was excited about the opportunity to share my adventure through writing. Through the group that night, I found the strength to turn my entire trip over to the care of my Higher Power, God. And it was then and only then that my fears left me. I asked God simply to help me and he did. It was the Third Step in action. I will always be grateful for the people in the meeting that night and for all of the words of wisdom from Mary.

The day of the trip arrived, and I asked God to help me stay in the moment. God did for me what I could not do for myself. He kept me focused on the moment at hand throughout the trip. I began meeting people and attempting small talk, and I found people to be very friendly. I also found that I could be a good listener.

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SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: Sept. 7, 2016, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: Sept. 12, 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): Aug. 15, 2016: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): Sept. 7, 2016: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

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

General Service District 7: (2nd Sat.): Sept. 10, 2016, 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

General Service District 11 (1st Mon.): Sept. 5, 2016: New GSRs – 6:00 p.m, general meeting 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale.

General Service District 16 (1st Mon.): Sept. 5, 2016: 6:00 p.m., 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

General Service District 17 (1st Mon.): Sept. 5, 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: Liz K. – 1 Year, Barbara G. – 1 Year, Dawn J. – 3 Years, Mike B. – 4 Years, Terri S. – 4 Years, David S. – 5 Years, Linda S. – 8 Years, Holly C. – 9 Years, Debbie S. – 10 Years, Nakieta H. – 11 Years, Bob C. – 17 Years, Dominica H. – 23 Years, Anon – 23 Years, David W. – 28 Years, Walter H. – 29 Years, Lana T. – 29 Years, Gloria A. – 31 Years, Linda S. – 31 Years, Denise M. – 33 Years, and Learning to Live Men’s Stag (12 men) – 162 Years. (Thank you Reseda Big Book Study and Discussion for 16 of these birthday contributions!).

Deaths: We said goodbye to the following AA members: **Ray G. – 39 Years & Chuck B. – 26 Years (Dunsmore).**

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.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting, July 11, 2016

OPENING: Brian H.

- Brian opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer
- Scott read “The Twelve Traditions”
- Sandy R. accepted a motion for approval of the June Intergroup Minutes.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Joel S.

- MTD was <\$3,633> and YTD was <\$11,733>, compared with last year’s YTD which was \$4,357. Group donations are still down significantly from this time last year. Central Office’s current expense for rent plus utilities is more than the old location. Joel reminded everyone that personal donations to Central Office are capped at \$3,000 per year and are tax deductible.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY’S REPORT: Bob F.

- Central Office:
 - Running smoothly and volunteer list is growing.
 - Personal contributions to Central Office must be made by alcoholics only in keeping with the 7th Tradition that we are self-supporting.
 - Re Sponsor Breakfast: Ticket prices this year are \$15 for 1 person, \$25 for 2. Since virtually all tickets are bought in pairs, this amounts to an increase of only \$2.50 per person, and the first increase in 5 years.

Our rent was raised at the site, and expenses for food, etc., have also gone up.

▪ **Recovery Times:**

- **Reminder: Deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.**

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Cheryl A.

- 5 new Intergroup Representative this month:
 - Martha B., We Are Responsible, daily, in North Hollywood;
 - Jose J., Mason and Lassen meeting in Chatsworth;
 - David C., Shakers, daily, in Glendale;
 - Nancy S., Q & A Panel Women's Meeting, Friday, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m., in Canoga Park;
 - Donna K., Women's Sober Solutions, Saturday, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., in Van Nuys.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

- General Service District 16: Daniel for Ernie - everything is going well.
- General Service District 1: Lee: Organizing Unity Day and they are accepting topic ideas for workshops.
- General Service District 17: Alexis: Putting together a Financial Workshop.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Danny: The financial report for Bike-N-4-Books should be available 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 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.
- Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard: Registration forms are now available. Can also register online at scvaaconvention.org. The Convention will be held on October 21, 22, and 23 at the Valencia Hyatt.

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:

- 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. Phenomenal BBQ!
- Lynn, God's In Charge Book Study:
 - A closed women's meeting held on Wednesdays, 6:30 – 7:30 in Canoga Park.
- Jim, Pacoima Group:
 - The Pacoima Group 61st Anniversary Alcahthon, August 12-14, 2016, at 12502 Van Nuys Boulevard.
- 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").

ACKNOWLEDGE BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY – 43 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Martha B., 5 years on 7/1; Joel S., 10 years on 7/30; MaryAnn, 28 years on 7/25.

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*.

**FROM THE
FOUNDERS**

"Life's formidable array of pains and problems will require many different degrees of acceptance ... Sometimes, we have to find the right kind of acceptance for each day. Sometimes, we need to develop acceptance for what may come to pass tomorrow and, yet again, we shall have to accept a condition that may never change. Then, too, there frequently has to be a right and realistic acceptance of grievous flaws within ourselves and serious faults within those about us - defects that may not be fully remedied for years, if ever."
AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,
March 1962

Heard at Meetings:

"I finally view myself as my own friend." Anon

"Happiness is a byproduct of your actions." Anon

"Neither God nor AA can help us if we are not open to help." *Forest Hills, N.Y., January 1967*

"The simple act of getting in touch with AA that first time washed out in an instant the dark loneliness that had encompassed my life." *New York, N.Y., November 1969*

"When you've been lost, lonely, forgotten, rejected, it's the most important thing in the world to have somebody shake your hand." *Santa Fe, N.M., May 1972*

**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:

Happy Campers: Lake Piru Campfire Meeting, Lake Piru, CA. – 3rd Saturday of the month @ 8 p.m. (March – October)

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, 3635 Fashion Way, Torrance, CA, www.southbayroundup.org

Area 93's 2nd Annual Historical A.A. Members Presentation: Come Meet Charles, Nell, Hank & Marty: 9/24/16, 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Oxnard Performing Arts Center, 800 Hobson Way, Oxnard, CA, Tickets: \$12.00 includes lunch.

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



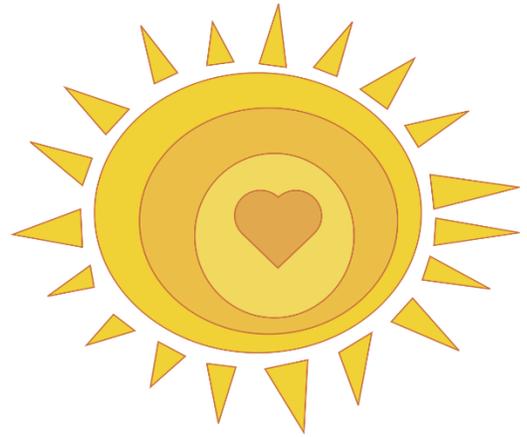
Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast: 10/15/16, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.; Speaker Meeting follows at 10:30 a.m. Disabled American Veterans Hall, Woodland Hills, CA. This is a fundraiser for Central Office of the SFV. Tickets are required: \$15.00/\$25.00 for 2. See your Intergroup Rep (IGR) or call Central Office for tickets.

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 w can afford.**



The Pain In Spain Falls Mainly On the Brain, Cont., page 1

In the course of the three plane changes and the bus ride to the hotel, I met one family in particular that I was drawn to. It was a man named Tom (not his real name) and his wife, their son, and grandson. I knew they were established and successful, but there was something so genuine and charitable about them. They were all warm, funny, spirited, and kindhearted. I couldn't get enough of this family! They shared about their lives and listened attentively when I shared about mine.



When we arrived at our hotel in Spain, I felt good. I tried the whole trip to "stay in the middle," not too high and not too low: to remain a five on a scale from one to ten, as a close friend in AA had taught me. I asked God to help me get out of myself and to just give love to others as I am called to do. Through the gracious nature of the people I traveled with and the support of my husband, I was able to see God's hand at work. I enjoyed talking with people. I felt a sense of peace and self-confidence that I couldn't remember feeling in the past. My irrational fears were lifted from me one by one. I have no explanation for these occurrences other than the fact that when I get out of the way, God can do some amazing things.

One night, I was talking to Tom as we enjoyed the wonderful view of a Spanish harbor. Tom took a handful of change out of his pocket and held it in his outstretched hand for his grandson. One of the coins was a silver dollar with a hole in it. I asked him what the coin with the hole was. He said, "Well, I've been a member of Alcoholics Anonymous for nineteen years. This coin is one I carry to remind me that if I ever want to buy a drink, I should use this coin because I must have a hole in my head to ever get to that point." I let out a loud shriek and threw my arms around him. His wife heard us and later said that she immediately knew what was going on. I had someone I could turn to, someone who understood--what an incredible gift from God.

My new friend continued to be a gift each day. It was tough not drinking Spanish red wine by the sea, tough creating a new way of vacationing that didn't involve drinking. But all it took was a conversation with my friend to play the rest of the tape out and realize where that first drink would lead. Then I was not only able to get out of the situation, I was able to be okay with the situation and accept it.

One night I was at the hotel bar where we all met each evening and many people overindulged. I felt uncomfortable and knew I had to leave. Instead of going back to my room and taking part in a pity party, I had an inspirational talk with my friend Tom and he said just what I needed to hear. He told me, among other things, that I was setting up building blocks and laying a strong foundation in which to live my new life. I went back to my room and sat out on the balcony, looking at the stars and listening to the Mediterranean, reflecting on how grateful I was and how numerous were the blessings from God.

The most miraculous aspect of the trip was the calmness and inner confidence I felt. I received compliments from people--I was actually more fun to be around. My husband and I got along tremendously well. I enjoyed meeting new people and learning about their lives. I had so much energy. I was able to take long walks, run along the water, and play tennis. I was able to see God in each stunning sight. I found my laugh again--my genuine from-the-heart laugh. And I cannot take any credit for this. My actions were unknown to the Laura of the past. My close friend in AA had said to have faith because God would take care of me--I just didn't know how well.

Tom's son told me toward the end of the trip that nothing in God's world happens by accident. I believe that is true. God gave me the gift of Tom and his family so he could show me firsthand how life could be happy, joyous, and free. I will hold this spiritual experience in my heart for a lifetime. -- **Laura R., Cincinnati, Ohio**

Feeling Your Feelings!



The difficult part of early sobriety is all the emotions that pop up. It's like opening up a Pandora's Box. I drank and used in order to feel in control of my emotions and to suppress them. To all the world – I looked like the happy-go-lucky girl. Toward the end of my drinking days, I was crying at night when I got home from the bar.

When I first got sober, I thought it was going to be a piece of cake. I wasn't physically addicted and didn't realize that the hard part was the psychological withdrawal from the buzz. I was suddenly feeling antsy, and moody. If you asked me how I felt – I couldn't identify what was going on. My soul was on fire and I had nothing to douse out the flames. I was married at the time and we got sober together. I was overreactive and defensive when he would say anything.

It was as if I had multiple personalities and at times reacted like the demon in 'The Exorcist.' Years later, I heard the leader of a meeting share that in her first seven years of sobriety, she felt like there was an axe murderer living inside of her. Many heads were nodding in agreement.

What do I do with all of these new and uncomfortable sensations? It's so important for all of us to know – feelings won't kill you! The more I just accepted I would feel uncomfortable in my own skin, the sooner the feelings would diminish. Those program clichés really helped. I heard over and over, "This too shall pass. Easy does it. One day at a time. Your mind is a bad neighborhood, you can't go in to it alone. You can't save your ass and your face at the same time. Don't drink no matter what."



After squishing feelings for so long, it took practice to allow them and quit fighting them. I began to identify them: sadness, happiness, anger. I prefer the phrase 'being in a funk' rather than saying 'I'm depressed.' I learned by identifying my feelings, I could communicate in a responsible way. When I was angry before, I went into attack mode. Now when I'm angry, I can say, "I'm angry."

It's all a journey. It takes time and practice to change old ways and old habits to replace them with healthier ways of dealing with life events and stress. I think it's important for the newcomer to know that the feelings can be overwhelming and uncomfortable and it's ok to sit with them. The old timer needs to remember that some days are crummy and it doesn't mean they are working a bad program. Sobriety doesn't mean life will feel wonderful every day. I do suggest, if you are able to – go for a walk and focus on the beauty around you. Sometimes physical exercise helps. **Carrie S.**

We Share Our Pain: In 1994, after 15 years sober, I received a phone call from the NYPD that my youngest son, Brendan, had been hit by a car on his way to school and died instantly. At his wake, a fellow AA shared that he had lost two children in their early 20s to cancer. He assured me that I would be OK, which has turned out to be true.

This year, on the anniversary of Brendan's death, I picked up my Grapevine as I do each morning, and the first article I saw was Carol K's "Turning Points" (Feb. 2016). The story begins with these words: "I have empathy for a man I know in A.A. whose son died far too soon as mine did. Both his son and mine were young and full of promise." I shared this warm coincidence at my home group meeting that morning. Thank you, Grapevine, for providing a forum where we can share our sober experiences – good and bad – and the power of our program. David P., Buffalo, NY (Reprinted with permission from AA Grapevine: The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, www.aagrapevine.org.)

Central Office of SFV

16132 Sherman Way

Van Nuys, CA 91406

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED