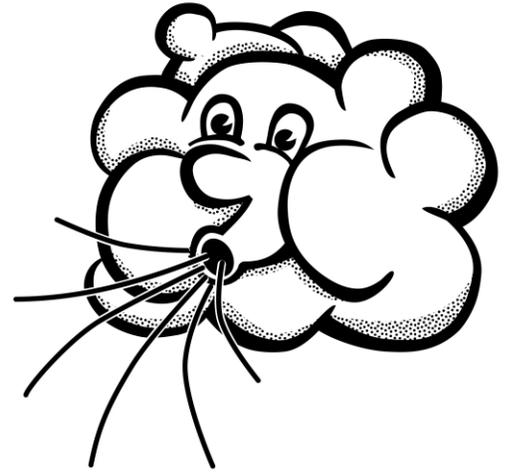


RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 57, No. 11, Nov. 2017

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Something in the Wind

An old school friend visited me and left two books by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick. Too ill to read them, I left them on the bedside table. However at home, I opened one. It told the story of a boy on the coast of Maine in the United States who asked an old sailor: "What is the wind?" The old man scratched his head. "I don't know" he said. "I can't tell you. But I know how to hoist a sail."



Although the old sailor didn't know what the wind was, he had learned how to harness some of its great power.

Wasn't this what many in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous had done? Metaphorically speaking, they had hoisted a sail and caught hold of something and that "something" was doing for them what they previously couldn't do for themselves.

Many called it God – some, their Higher Power, while still others saw it as the strength of the Fellowship. As one man said, "I would be a fool not to want what those people had."

W.H., Sydney, Australia

A SLOB'S GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

What right do I have to expect perfection and efficiency in my spiritual growth when the rest of my life is so full of ups and downs, ins and outs, and backs and forths?

Throughout this whole adventure, the only consistency I have maintained is an absolute and total faith in AA, come what may.

Happiness happens when results exceed expectations. Maybe this is working after all. Deep down, there is also a warm, small ball of faith, always there, never dimmed, unexplainable, asking nothing but giving much. To define it or try to bounce it would distort or destroy it. It just is, that's all.

As St. Augustine said, "God is closer to me than I am to Him." I don't know exactly what that means, but it sure is true. C.H., Fairfield, Connecticut

San Fernando Valley Central Office
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting, October 9, 2017

OPENING: Cheryl A.

- Cheryl opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer.
- Herb read "The Twelve Traditions"
- Sandy R. accepted a motion for approval of the September Intergroup Minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Adrian I.

Central Office is in the red: MTD is <\$4,743> and YTD is <\$8,747>, as compared with last year's YTD which was <\$16,484>. Contributions for September were approximately \$2,000 less than last year.

CENTRAL OFFICE, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

The website is running great. Volunteer status is pretty good. Volunteers are needed to cover 1pm to 5pm phone shifts. Making great progress on financial statement. 2017 Group Contributions are now available.

Recovery Times: Stories of recovery are always welcome. Keep it to 500 – 700 words. Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the previous month. Send to Editor Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Larry S.

2 new Intergroup Representative this month: Roxanne H., "Big Book Study and Discussion," Fridays at 7:30 pm in Reseda and James B., "Just the Black Print," Thursdays at 7:30 pm in Sherman Oaks.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- General Service District 11: Ernie: Clarification: PRAASA attendance is not required for GSA reps, but the business meeting is.
- General Service District 16: Daniel: Everything is going great. Preparing workshops and soliciting topics from Intergroup reps.
- San Fernando Valley 43rd AA Convention: Bernard: Will be held Jan. 26 – 28, 2018, at the Warner Center Marriott. Theme is "I Could Have Missed It All." Planning Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Registration flyers are available and online registration is open at sfvaconvention.org. Pre-registration is now \$25, \$30 at the door.

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: New Directories are coming out soon!

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

- Tina, The Sober Sals Gals: Closed women's participation meeting has moved to the Valley Self Help Center, 6860 Canby Ave., Ste. 110 in Reseda. Same day and time, Wednesdays at 1pm.
- 2017 Thank-A-Thon, Wednesday and Thursday, November 22 and 23 at Unit A, 10641 Burbank Blvd. in North Hollywood.

REMINDERS:

Cheryl A.: 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 OCTOBER – 22 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Dottie, 22 years on 10/21

VACANCIES ON BOARD

Elections were held to fill the vacancy on the board. Don C. and Lynn W. were nominated. Following a vote by the Intergroup Reps, Lynn W. was elected to the Board. Congratulations Lynn!

CLOSING: Cheryl A.: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*. Prepared and submitted by: Tina K. for Sandy R. Recording Secretary

Central Office is located at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys.

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

For more info, visit: www.sfvaa.org or email: sfvco@la.twcbc.com.



We are located in an office building on the southwest corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station) and remain 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.

Please buy your meeting supplies from Central Office of the Valley. In doing so, you are supporting our office and also getting your materials at our cost. (It's always more expensive to buy them from a retail store). Central Office is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$3,000 per year and must be from members of AA, not from outsiders.

To receive a copy of Recovery Times in the mail, please send us your name, address and payment with \$7.00 to cover cost & delivery. Please tell us whether you are ordering a new subscription, are renewing, or if you are enclosing an additional contribution. If moving, please give us your former address. Recovery Times is also available online where you can find the current issue or your favorite back issues. Download a copy for free at: www.sfvaa.org.

Upcoming Calendar of Events:

November 17-19, 2017, Yosemite Summit Conference "Serenity in Yosemite," Yosemite National Park, Half Dome Pavilion (formerly Curry Village), www.serenityyosemite.com.

November 22/23: Unit A., North Hollywood: 2017 Thank-A-Thon, Wednesday and Thursday, Unit A, 10641 Burbank Blvd. in North Hollywood.

FROM THE FOUNDERS

"There is a tendency to label everything that an alcoholic may do as 'alcoholic behavior.' The truth is, it is simply human nature ... Emotional and mental quirks are classified as symptoms of alcoholism merely because alcoholics have them, yet those same quirks can be found among nonalcoholics, too. Actually they are symptoms of mankind." **William Duncan Silkworth, MD,** Jan. 1947
"Slips and Human Nature"

"I have learned how to place principles before personalities, begun to understand that it's okay for me to be wrong, and that it is also all right for me to allow others to be wrong and to make mistakes. Learning to let go is a huge part of service work on all levels." *Cleveland, Ohio, February 2010*

"I was told that sometimes a good sponsor disturbs the comfortable and comforts the disturbed." Dover, Pa., June 1991

"Complaining is not an action step."
Indianapolis, Ind., August 1982

Laughter is one of God's greatest and most beneficent gifts to us. Laugh with him sometimes at yourself." *New York, N.Y., November 1946*

Copyright © 1990 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

AA SERVICE COMMITTEES:

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 Young People in AA: 1st Sunday of the month @ 1 p.m. at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. Regular weekly meeting Monday nights at 8 pm



San Fernando Valley Intergroup: Central Office holds a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. for orientation with the general meeting to follow at 7 p.m. It takes place 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.

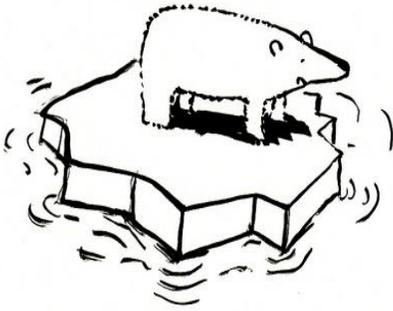
To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call: (818) 988-3001. Please Support Your Central Office by sending a rep to the monthly Intergroup meetings the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley, Tarzana. We would love to have you represent your group in this important function.

Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary? Please consider making a \$1.00 donation to Central Office for each year of your sobriety during your birthday month. **This month, we celebrate the AA anniversaries of Tony S. – 17 Years, Carla R. – 30 Years, and Frank K. – 33 Years.**

We remember: None that we know of.

Has your meeting changed? Please provide meeting updates in writing to: **The SF Valley Central Office**, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. We're open Monday – Friday: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. and weekends: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Literature closed last Fri. of every month for Inventory and on major holidays).

The Lonely Emergencies



"It is only in the lonely emergencies of life that our creed is tested," wrote William James. "The routine maxims fail, and we fall back on our gods." The words say truly and beautifully what people often suppose they mean by that – to me – hateful banality: "There are no atheists in foxholes."

The atheists have been as brave in the foxholes as the conventionally devout, for atheism is itself a creed, or has the force of one in high-mindedness and virtue, and anyone but a bigot will

acknowledge that many an atheist in history was nobler than many a professed man of God.

My dislike of the atheists-in-foxholes bit, apart from the polemical unction it usually goes with, is that it involves fear as the ultimate- indeed the only – religious motive. I have had enough to spare of a religion of fear, and it took the lonely emergency of touching bottom after 25 years as a drunkard to bring me by mystic chance into AA and free me from, among other fears, the fear of the religious big stick waved over my head by the well-intentioned teachers of my youth. I grew up in one of the authoritarian creeds, whose name doesn't matter, since other people may well believe that their childhood religion was the most severe.

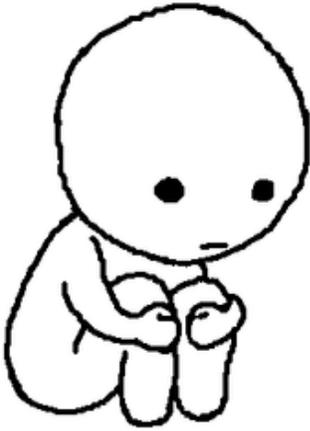
But the bitterness is gone now – most of it. A silt remains, I suppose, as the residue of many another drunken unhappiness rises up in my heart sometimes and washes an uneasiness over my serenity. Then I go to an AA meeting, or find an AA friend; or if neither is possible at the time, I make a meeting for myself with memories of meetings, with the Serenity Prayer and the Twelve Steps.

Touching bottom was for me what, for all I know, it is for everybody: the collapse of pride under the accumulated horrors of the drinking years – the bigger than they had ever been before, the hotter and smellier sweat, the leg cramps no longer bearable; worse than all, the sense of inward disgrace, of humanity ruined past mending.

But here is the mystery: it only seemed the worst, for actually, I had lived on that bottom for years and never made a move to lift myself from it by death (for which I had always more than a half-wish) or by seeking out AA.

I knew sobriety was possible in AA; I ever knew it was possible for me only in AA – and this in spite of the fact that my only acquaintance in the fellowship was a zealous member of the church I had rejected, who proselytized for my return to the church and joining AA as though they were one and the same thing.

The little I knew about AA, in short, was all wrong. I thought of it as something that worked for "religious people" who left me out; yet still I knew sobriety for alcoholics like me (I knew I was one) existed nowhere but in AA. In a way, it seemed hard lines that "superstitious" people could sober up and "enlightened" people like me were trapped in drunkenness.



It was not reason or will that brought me to AA, then: it was, in the phrase already use and now diffidently repeated, "mystic chance." The physical and mental torment were what they had long been, but I saw that I was on a bottom and could not live there. I knew I would be better dead than dead drunk. I was willing to die, without anger, even without sorrow, when a virtual stranger took me to the AA ward in Knickerbocker Hospital.

No act of intellect kept me sober day by day after I left the hospital; no act of will, in any usual sense. I knew no more than I had ever known; and sobriety had not come with some sudden welling from secret reserves of virtue.

The reserves, if they existed at all, had long since been used up. I had no virtue. I had nothing.

But I was sober day after day, and happy to let it go to mystic chance without nagging for explanations. I never knew why I had to drink, and I didn't need to know why I was staying sober. If for "mystic chance" you want to read "dumb luck" that's all right with me. Better people than I am, including a greatly loved friend, had died of their alcoholism; better people than I am are still hooked.

But I never felt my sobriety challenged, except fleetingly and mostly in dreams. Within the day, whatever the day was like otherwise, I knew I would be sober and I had a deep sense that something was working itself out, that another mystic chance was in the making; for by now, in spite of the surface illogic of the term, I look it for granted that logic of a kind beyond my understanding was involved in my sobriety, in the experience of Bill W., and in the whole history of A.A.

Another lonely emergency: serious illness sent me to the hospital from which this is written. AA became richer for me through considerable suffering. I had tried not to bargain, to haggle, to chaffer with life and its creator, or to demand rewards beyond sobriety itself. The appeal of AA, right from the start, had been its very modesty, with no one, at least no one with any sense, promising me anything, even sobriety except, upon imponderable conditions.

My heart grew lighter in the hospital as the days showed me how nothing had changed in my mystic chance that made me sober. I was still living a day at a time, and if a day came when I would no longer be living, what of that? Acceptance of life is also acceptance of death, since life as we know it must always end. The First, Second and Third of the Twelve Steps repeated themselves over and over in my mind through the worst of the illness – in that order - after I had said the Serenity Prayer; later the Eleventh Step joined the procession.

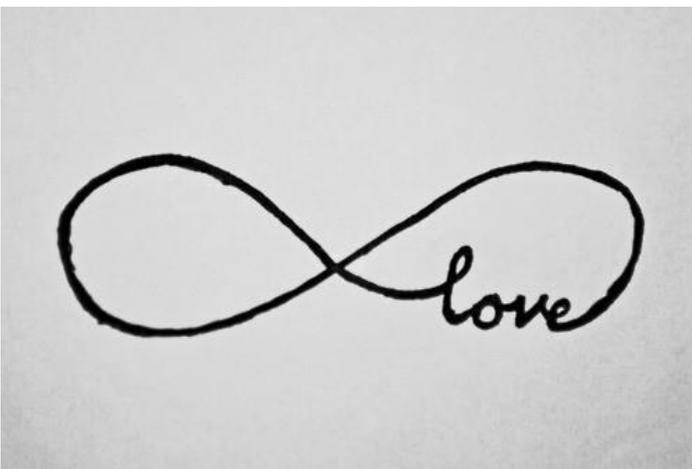
My creed was tested, and the wonder was that I had a creed to test. It was there all right, and there was nothing of fear in it. I was not a terror-stricken convert in a foxhole but a soul willing to go on to whatever might happen next. I don't know that I was any closer to death than I ever am, but death's possibility is more dramatic during an operation; it is perhaps the loneliest emergency of all this side of eternity.

As to the creed: it is a little, maybe a skimpy creed, but it stood up, and skimpy or not, I mean to keep it if I can. It is a belief in a benevolence behind or within creation, an infinity of kindness that encompasses me as its creature. This, I believe, against every doubt of my skeptical mind (and it is skeptical by habit), against every difficulty the evil in the world can hurl against it.

I am content to bide my time, or my eternity, for the explanation of this as of other mysteries. Reality, meanwhile, seems to me to be better than it is bad, and goodness must be served in the face of every demon of distraction. My small creed has no dogma and no canon, but only an intuition of God, shyly held. I can use that contentious word with a full heart, so it be clear, it is God *as I understand him*, with the italics respected. **Joe C., New York, NY, July 1958**

In the Big Book, chapter "We Agnostics," page 46 in the 4th edition, it reads:

"We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.



Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps.

We found God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. "To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men.

When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow, we had to begin somewhere, so we used our own conception, however limited it was."

This is the essence of the **Second Step**: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. And the **11th Step**, "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Central Office of SFV

**16132 Sherman Way
Van Nuys, CA 91406**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED