

RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 71, No. 5, May 2019

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Take a Bow, AA: Sober since 1969, a man in Connecticut recalls his long, rocky, wonderful AA journey



Booze, ego and I were allies; together we made my self-image glow. I was introduced to AA in the spring of 1969, and booze left us. That's when ego said, "Don't worry, I'll take up the slack." I believed him.

My first sponsor, Charlie, had three whole months. We bonded immediately. Our egos clicked and began to collaborate. Recall might make me blush because we practiced our own "pink cloud" version of the AA program with bluster and tomfoolery. But since it was the beginning of my sober journey, I feel no shame. Charlie may have been the catalyst that gave me hope and a reason to try this Fellowship brand of sobriety. Who knows? On my own I could

stop drinking, but I could not stay sober. Charlie was my age. He relapsed, his liver failed, and he was soon dead. I survived the loss without picking up a drink.

Back then there was only one AA group in my city. The same people met twice a week and the repetition began to bore me. I anticipated just what Joe, Harry and Sue were going to say—again my enthusiasm began to fade. My main incentive to keep coming was fear; I was afraid not to come. I didn't want to drink, and meetings gave me a sense of security.

My willingness was tested to a frazzle before I attempted prayer. I heard folks proclaim the goodness of getting on their knees in the morning and asking their Higher Power to help them through the day. At night, they said they knelt to give thanks. This was certainly not my practice, but in a state of desperation, I put aside my skepticism and gave it a try. I felt foolish and told myself it was only a test. I closed the door to my room and pulled the shades. No one must see this, I thought. Surprisingly, it did not hurt; in fact, I felt a sense of relief and decided to give it a 10-day trial. Almost immediately, meetings became bearable, my anxiety lifted and my fellows became fellows. A seed was planted assuring me that I was not alone. What a relief.

Yet, after many more years, I was still without a sponsor. Over time, I had asked as many as six men and one woman; no relationship ever jelled. Finally, against my ego's advice, I joined a Step meeting group. After many turns around the Twelve Steps saying, "I haven't done it yet," I wrote my Fourth Step and shared it with my pastor. I felt it was a good choice because we had a 20-year history in the church my family and I attend. Sadly, the feedback was nil. Jokingly, I claimed I left him speechless. If there is a next time, I thought, I'll pick a program person with more than three months.

Some time later, our group was reading Step Six and I had an epiphany: Suddenly I felt more than willing to let all my defects go. I went home with a feeling of certainty that I had broken through a major barrier and expected to be completely cleansed. And so it goes. I don't know how many times I thought I was on my way to sainthood. The following week, Step Seven

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SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting
April 8, 2019

OPENING: Josh S.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Brian H. for Tina K.

MTD is <\$828> and YTD are \$7,927, as compared with last year's YTD which was \$5,610. Thanks to everyone for their generous contributions. Please keep up the good work. Financial statement is available upon request.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Josh S. for Bob F.

Central Office: New printed Directories available mid-April. Central Office is running smoothly. We are now selling sobriety birthday cards, which have been very popular!

Recovery Times: Stories of recovery are always welcome. Send to Editor Pat. K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Lyn W.

There was 1 new Intergroup Rep., Carolyn W., "Layers of the Onion," Tuesdays at 6:30pm, North Hills.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- General Service District 11: Ernie: Happy to announce the number of GSRs is increasing.
- General Service District 16: Lee: We meet the 1st Monday of the month at 6pm in Van Nuys.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Marianna: 29th Annual Bike N 4 Books on June 8th, at Woodley Park in Van Nuys. Save the date! H&I meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at Saint Innocent's Church in Tarzana. New member orientation at 7pm, business meeting starts at 8pm. Volunteers are needed for jail panels. For more information, visit www.sfvhi.org.
- Santa Clarita Valley 16th Annual AA Convention: Bernard B.: Convention will be September 27-29, 2019. This year's theme is "It Will Be Fun!" Also, join us for the Blue Jeans Ball fundraiser on May 18, beginning at 4pm, at Jack Bones Equestrian Center. There will be a BBQ dinner, speaker meeting, country line dancing and more! For more information, see www.scvaaconvention.org.

OLD BUSINESS

- There is no literature sold on holidays and 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 event flyers from literature tables.
- Continue to send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

Sandy R., Woman to Woman: Join us May 31 – June 2, 2019 at beautiful Mount St. Mary's University for workshops and fellowship. Registration forms are available or register online at womantowomanla.org.
AA Desert Pow Wow: June 6-9, 2019 in Indian Wells, California.

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 APRIL: 97 YEARS OF SOBRIETY

Casey, 15 years Neil, 21 years Bernard B., 25 years and Diana N., 36 years

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

CLOSING:

A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*.

Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary

INFO FROM A.A. CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE SF VALLEY

AA Central Office maintains a 24 hour phone line for alcoholics in need, hosted by volunteers. Call: 818 988-3001 anytime to speak to a "live" person on the phones.

We are located at **16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys** and maintain 24/7 free phone service for AAs in need. Our office is in an office building on the SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station. Our large warehouse has chips, medallions and all of the A.A. approved literature and pamphlets that your group needs.

Please buy your meeting supplies from AA Central Office of the Valley. By doing so, you are supporting our office. (It's always more expensive to buy them from a retail store). 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). Central Office is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$5,000 per year and must be from members of AA, not from outsiders.

Our website, www.sfvaa.org, provides meeting info, upcoming events and service meeting info. You can also download a copy of Recovery Times (and previous issues) for free. To receive a printed copy of Recovery Times, send us your name and address with payment of \$7.00 to cover a year's worth of mailings. Also let us know if this is for a new subscription or if you have simply changed your address.

Has your meeting changed? Please provide meeting updates to: **SFVAA Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.** Call: **(818) 988-3001.** 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** or email: sfvco@la.twcbc.com.

Upcoming Events:

29th Annual Bike 'N 4 Books, June 8th, at Woodley Park in Van Nuys: www.sfvhi.org.

84th Founders Day Celebration: June 7 - 9, 2019, University of Akron; Akron, Ohio
<https://foundersday.org>

35th Annual Sunshine of the Spirit High Desert Convention, June 7-9, 2019, Victorville, CA,
<https://www.sunshineofthespirit-highdesertconvention.com/>

A.A. Desert Pow Wow, June 6 - 9, 2019, Indian Wells, CA, <http://desertpowwow.com/>

2019 Foothill Roundup, August 2 - 4, 2019, Flintridge Prep, La Canada, CA: www.foothillroundup.org

Southwest Convention of Young People, August 15 - 18, 2019, www.swacypaa.org

44th Great Outdoor Beaver Meeting, August 29 - September 1, 2019, Beaver, Utah:
www.thegreatoutdoorbeavermeeting.com

16th Santa Clarita Valley Annual AA Convention, September 27 - 29, 2019. Information forthcoming.



FROM THE FOUNDERS

"I learned ... that I was a sick man emotionally and physically. As every AA today knows, this knowledge can be an enormous relief. I no longer needed to consider myself essentially a fool or a weakling."

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,
July 1960**

"Sponsorship is a bridge to trusting the human race, the very race we once resigned from. In learning to trust, we are strengthening our sobriety."

Grand Island, Nebraska

"As I trudge the Road of Happy Destiny, AA holds my left hand, God holds my right, and I have no hands left to pick up a drink."

Albuquerque, New Mexico

"I used to think that having a pint was the only way to have fun; now I know that, for me, it's the only way to destroy the fun that I'm having!"

Toronto, Ontario

"We are called to unity, not uniformity."

Oak Harbor, Washington

"In AA, we discover that it is impossible to give without receiving, or receive without giving."

North Hollywood

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AA SERVICE COMMITTEES CALENDAR: GS Area 93

District 1: Meets 1st Wednesday of the month at 7552 Remmet Street, Canoga Park, CA at 6 p.m. orientation; 6:30 for general meeting.

District 11: Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 123 W. Windsor Road, Glendale, CA at 6:30 orientation; 7 p.m. general meeting.

District 16: Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (Central Office) at 6 p.m. for both orientation and meeting.

District 17: Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 5000 Colfax Ave., North Hollywood at 6 p.m. orientation; 6:30 p.m. general meeting.

For more info, refer to your District Committee Member (DCM).

OTHER AA COMMITTEES:

Public Information 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. To volunteer call Central Office: **(818) 988-3001**.

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. Meets 3rd Monday of the month at 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana (St. Innocent) at 7 p.m. for orientation/ 8 p.m. for the general business meeting.

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 at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. (6:30 p.m. for orientation; 7 p.m. for business meeting). Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group. IGRs share information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. Support Central Office by sending a rep to the monthly Intergroup meeting. 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: Henry B. – 4 Years, Linda T. – 14 Years, Tom C. – 21 Years, Miah M. – 27 Years, Francis C. – 29 Years, Eleanor D. – 36 Years, Jack L. – 38 Year, Mike E. – 38 Years, and Bob F. – 38 Years.

And we remember: Holly S. - 29 Years of sobriety.

Mad Man

A newcomer gets a job with a boozy ad agency, selling liquor. What could possibly go wrong?

I arrived at my first AA meeting unemployed and unemployable. I had last worked in a San Francisco advertising agency. After getting fired, I found every door in town closed to me.

About a week into sobriety, I got a call out of the blue from an ad agency desperate to hire. I had worked with one of their executives early in my career, when my benders were confined to weekends and holidays. She set up some interviews for me. I got hired. They were, after all, desperate.

I started work at this agency almost immediately. I was assigned to the agency's liquor account, a brand name I was well acquainted with as a consumer.

It did not occur to me to ask anyone in my AA meetings if accepting this job was a good idea. That was something I had not yet learned to do. I did wonder how I would handle "product tastings" and client entertainment. I was sure that at some point I would be fired. Drinking was part of the job, or so I thought.

My new employer had the quintessential 1980s vibe, especially when it came to drinking and drug use. Each afternoon, there was an open bar in the office. A copywriter I worked with disappeared from the set of a commercial shoot, lost on a weeklong bender that did not affect his employment. An art director overdosed and died in the mailroom. And this was during my first 90 days—at the agency and in AA!

I did attend AA meetings in the evenings, although I had my "newcomer priorities": work always came first. I simply did not take anyone in AA seriously who suggested that a meeting might take priority over work.

At six weeks, dry, if not especially sober, I got a call from the VP of Agency Operations. She served as enforcer for our hotheaded CEO. She spoke with a jarring directness. We called her the Dragon Lady.

I had no sooner sat down across from her than she held out a letter. With a flick of her wrist, she made the paper crack like a whip: "Explain!"



The letter had come from bankruptcy court, asking for confirmation of my employment and salary. Yes, I arrived in AA a financial wreck too. I somehow thought I could go through bankruptcy without my employer ever finding out.

I had to give the Dragon Lady an answer—and fast. Any other day, I would have come up with some convoluted explanation, delivered with conviction. Some people are skilled at reading spreadsheets. I excelled at creating confusion.

Instead, I simply burst into tears and confessed: "I'm an alcoholic and I'm in AA and I have 42 days. Am I going to get fired over this?!"

She passed me a box of tissues: "In light of what you've just told me, your job is definitely in jeopardy," she said. "The agency is leery of putting alcoholics with money problems in positions of authority."

She started quizzing me on where I went to meetings. I told her I went almost every night to Trinity Church, and afterward out for pie and coffee at Miss Brown's Feed Bag. "I understand what you're going through," she said, her voice softening. "You see I'm an alcoholic myself. I have 10 years of sobriety and I too am a member of AA." Then she folded up the letter from the court and put it in a file on her desk. "Fortunately," she added with a slight smile, "I'm an officer of the company and can take care of this, no one here needs to know." I sat there, stunned.

"I go to a meeting every day at lunch," she continued. "You should join me." From that moment on, I didn't think of her as the Dragon Lady. I called her by her name, which I'll abbreviate as "H."

Every day, unless a work obligation got in the way (a real one), we went to what we called "micro meetings" because they lasted 40 minutes. We'd grab a sandwich at a nearby shop, then dash to the AA meeting.

One day, I heard a speaker named John. He referred to himself as a "madman." I thought I knew what he meant. He turned out to be the owner of a rival ad agency. He knew my employer and the crazy environment I worked in. He became a kind of "work sponsor." Whatever I was stressing about, he understood in a way people outside the business did not. And he had so much experience that helped me stay sober.

At 90 days, I had "no choice" but to attend my client's annual sales convention in Phoenix. I'd been told to expect the booze to flow. Sales guys in this industry had well-earned "reputations." Nothing H. or John said convinced me not to go. My irrational fear of being fired all the time got the better of me yet again. I went.

The sales convention quickly reached a level of drunken debauchery. By the end of the first day, I felt crazy. I felt on the outside, a freak. I expected not to have a job by the end of the night.

I felt the urge to drink roar back. It scared the hell out of me. I walked to the street and hailed a taxi. With the Phoenix meeting directory in my pocket, off I went to find a meeting. I ultimately ended up at another hotel, where an AA convention was underway. I slipped into the back of the banquet room as the speaker was introduced. It was Bill A. from San Francisco, a man I knew from meetings at home.

I joined the receiving line after Bill spoke. He immediately recognized me. I told him I wanted to go through the Steps. I also asked him if he would be my sponsor. He said yes. Ten years of sobriety later, I was an executive at the same ad agency, working on a Napa Valley winery account. I had never tasted the client's products. They liked my work and didn't seem to mind. In fact, they asked me to be their Director of Marketing! Go figure. This time I did ask my fellow AA members for help. And I ended up turning down the job.

Today, I have over 30 years of sobriety. When I look back on that first year, I feel such gratitude. Regardless of the situation I found myself in, an AA seemed to jump into my path. I just had to do my part: not drink and ask for help. Of course, in those days, that was major. **Anon, NYC, NY**



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reminded me that I'm powerless; I need to ask my Higher Power for help.

Retiring the booze and leaving my drinking buddies behind was quick and easy for me. But the life lessons that AA gives so willingly sometimes whiz right by me. I'd like to blame my upbringing, for I am the son of two educators and my first resentment was education. Damned if I was going to study the Big Book. However, I've learned that I cannot blame others for my shortcomings.

After 12 years in the program, my wife Jo was struggling with a bout of depression and she asked me to stay home instead of going to so many meetings. I did and was certain that my motives were justified. Wasn't taking care of family sober-guy stuff? Soon my "isms" returned as if they'd never left, and that's when I realized the power of meetings. Anger had been a lifelong problem and alcohol kicked it up a notch. I was afraid of my own temper; once it got started, I was out of control. In AA, my anger subsided and my temper got in check. After a month without meetings, I was ready to attack my wife; my insecurity was in charge again. Without hesitation, I ran back to AA. Each time I left the house, Jo would cry and beg me not to go. Even though I didn't drink, it felt strange coming back to meetings. It took a while to feel like I belonged.

Early on I did a lot of speaking, and ego made me do it. For a while it brought me great joy. I thought I was a stand-up comic. Gradually, I came to realize that my motives were not for the good of AA. I wanted to make the audience laugh more than I wanted to carry the message. So I retired from the "circuit" to tell my story to drunks in the hospital detox ward. There, if anyone paid attention, it was rarely acknowledged, and my reason for being there was to insure my own sobriety.

A moment of gratitude for AA came soon after my mother died. She was a redheaded Irish lassie and we had dueling egos. During the final years of her life our relationship did a 180. Our egos backed off, and there was peace between us. My sense of gratitude continues, and for this AA can take a bow. No doubt my Higher Power played a role here. I suspect AA and HP are in cahoots when it comes to doing things right.

By the time my 10-day prayer trial expired it had become a habit that I've continued. This practice led the way to other spiritual endeavors. Step Two has become very meaningful and, when (like the other Steps) it is the topic of a meeting, it seems brand new. My spirituality is not dull; it does not stand still. It ebbs and flows, questions and doubts. It lures me on.

Making meetings a priority was a good move for both my wife and me. Things worked out: she got counseling, and my meetings restored some of my sanity. Last Valentine's Day we celebrated 52 years of marriage.

Ever since my test prayers were answered, I've not been to a bad meeting. Perhaps I've become teachable. I was 37 when I came in, and at 80, I feel better now than I did at 50. AA is healing my attitude one day at a time. Exercise is my positive addiction. And when I attend the university, education doesn't scare me as it once did.

The blessings keep coming. - Anonymous ~ Keep Coming Back

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

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