

RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 43, No. 7, July 2019

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter



The FOUNDERS DAY ISSUE

"I get a big thrill out of looking over a vast sea of faces like this with a feeling that possibly some small thing that I did a number of years ago, played an infinitely small part in making this meeting possible." Dr. Bob

Celebrating the 84th Founders Day

I had been hearing about Founders Day for years from Bob F., our General Manager of San Fernando Valley AA Central Office. Bob had been to Founders Day in Akron, Ohio a while ago to celebrate the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous. What I most remember about the story he shared with me was the motorcycle procession to Dr. Bob's grave where an AA meeting was held, followed by someone playing "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes. As our Bob F. put it, "There wasn't a dry eye in the crowd!"

So this year, I decided to make plans to visit Akron myself to attend the 84th Annual Founders Day Celebration of Alcoholics Anonymous. I contacted Akron AA's Central Office and found out that I could get a room in a dorm, fairly cheap, at Akron University where the festivities were being held from June 7th to June 9th. The actual anniversary of Founders Day is June 10th – the one year anniversary of Dr. Bob's sobriety. I had to wait until registration opened up in April to reserve my room. After I did that, I bought my plane ticket and made plans to also visit with a cousin in Dayton, Ohio, who I had been wanting to visit for years.

But as the date approached for Founders Day weekend, I began to have second thoughts: Would I see anyone I knew? I was fairly sure I wouldn't run into anyone I knew, but I figured I would meet people, as I always do when I attend AA conventions, and I would be okay.

Finally June arrived and I flew to Dayton, borrowed my cousin's car and drove to Akron – some 300 miles northeast. It was raining hard that day and I hadn't gotten more than 2 hours of sleep from the flight the night before, but I plodded on through the driving rain and finally made it to Akron.

King School – The Oldest AA Meeting in the World

When I first called Akron AA, someone suggested that I might want to arrive earlier in the week to attend the oldest meeting in Alcoholics Anonymous on Wednesday night at King School in Akron. In fact, this was Dr. Bob's Home Group and it's customary for early arrivals for Founders Day to show up in droves at this meeting. But when I finally arrived to my motel (where I stayed until registration for the event opened on Friday), I was dog tired and really wanted to sleep. Then I remembered my motto when I used to drink which was, "I can always sleep when I'm dead," so I pushed myself back on the road and made it just in time as the King School meeting began. It was held in a crowded auditorium and there were lots of out of towners. We all got a chance to say our names and where we were from at the start of the meeting, and there were well over 100 visitors that night! As far as I know, I was the only AA member that night visiting from Los Angeles. It felt good to get to an AA meeting of such historical importance – and the speaker, Tommy M., - made it very worthwhile. When I returned to my motel, I collapsed into my bed and didn't wake up until about 10 a.m. the next morning.

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SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting
June 10, 2019

OPENING: Josh S.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Bob F. for Tina K.

MTD is (\$5,505) and YTD are \$1,766, as compared with last year's YTD which was \$1,397. May was a slow month for contributions and was a five-week salary month. Financial Statements are available.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

Central Office is running smoothly. There is some new literature available, including a few new pamphlets. The Board is exploring the possibility of moving before our lease option (for another five years) needs to be exercised in August.

Recovery Times: We want your stories about your sobriety! Please email: Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Sandy R. for Lyn W.: No new Intergroup Representatives this month.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- General Service District 11: Ernie: Become a GSR and join us! We meet on the 1st Monday of the month at 6:30 pm (orientation at 6pm) at 315 Vine Street in Glendale.
- General Service District 16: Andy: Attended the Area Assembly on May 19. Submitted a partial report. Full report coming in July.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Marianna: H&I meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at Saint Innocent 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.
- San Fernando Valley 45th Annual AA Convention: Bernard B.: Planning meetings are the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7pm, at St. Innocent Church in Tarzana. The 2020 Convention will be held Jan. 31 – Feb. 2, 2020.
- Santa Clarita Valley 16th Annual AA Convention: Bernard B.: Convention will be September 27-29, 2019 at the Valencia Hyatt. This year's theme is "It Will Be Fun!"

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:

- Dan: The Burbank Group is holding a Comedy Show Event, Saturday, July 27, 8pm, at 3217 Winona Ave., Burbank. \$10 suggested donation. Please stay for the 10pm Candlelight Meeting!
- 27th Annual Foothill Roundup: August 2-4, 2019, at Flintridge Preparatory School, 4543 Crown Ave., La Canada Flintridge. Registration forms available. Go to www.foothillroundup.org for more information.
- 68th Annual Southern California AA Convention: September 27-29, 2019 at the Westin Mission Hills Resort & Spa in Rancho Mirage. Registration forms available. Go to www.aasocal.com for more information.
- Too Young to Die YPAA Meeting has moved to 7625 White Oak Ave., Reseda on Thursdays at 8pm.

REMINDERS: Josh S.: 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 MAY: 120 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Kelsey K., 2 years on 6/12;
- Sandy R., 9 years on 6/2;
- Diane T., 11 years on 6/20;
- Josh S., 28 years on 6/1;
- Loretta N., 31 years on 6/10; and,
- Diane D., 39 years on 6/3.

ALSO, HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, 84 YEARS OLD ON 6/10/1935!

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

CLOSING: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 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 the A.A. approved literature and pamphlets 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: **SFVCO, 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:

Happy Campers: AA meeting and fellowship, Lake Piru, 3rd Saturday of each month from March – October. Meeting at 8 p.m. or come early for fellowship. \$5 per car at the gate. Meeting held at Day Use area.

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

16th Annual Mountain AA Conference: August 15 – 18, 2019, Big Bear Performing Arts Center, Big Bear, CA www.mountainaaconference.com

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.

68th So CA AA Convention, Sept. 27 – 29, 2019: Rancho Mirage, CA (Palm Springs), www.aasocal.com

Celebrating the 84th Founders Day (continued from page 1)

Akron AA Central Office

The next day, after drinking several cups of strong coffee, I headed for Akron Intergroup/AA Archives at 775 N. Main Street, where I spent the next hour and a half fully immersed in the history of our fellowship. The office is huge and made up of an archives, a bookstore, a small meeting room and several offices. The sheer volume of historical documents blew me away!

I was fortunate to arrive at the time a docent was giving a tour and I'm glad I did because he explained the timelines of different important dates in AA's history. He showed us original letters in showcases written by Bill W. and Dr. Bob, and talked about the evolution of AA through the years.

Of particular interest was the huge stained glass window of "the man on the bed" which covers the large glass window facing Main Street. This artwork was not only beautifully made, but it was adorned with the medallions of AAs who funded this project. If you look closely, there are sobriety medallions all along the borders of the stained glass portrait. This special feature chronicles some of the many people whose lives were touched by this program. Before I left, I asked one of the office staff if they could suggest other important places to visit around Akron, and out came a brochure with all the historical locations relevant to AA's history with a map and detailed information about each. That was a god-send.



Historic Sites to See in Akron

Among the sites suggested for my visit were:

Dr. Bob's house at 55 Ardmore Ave. where Bill W. and Dr. Bob held their early meetings with alcoholics (while Anne Smith founded Al-Anon in their kitchen).

St. Thomas Hospital at 444 N. Main Street, the 1st alcoholic ward in the USA where Dr. Bob and Sister Ignacia worked to help over 5,000 alcoholics.

Reverend Tunk's Rectory at Casterton Ave. and Edgeton Road. Reverend Tunks was responsible for Bill meeting society matron Henrietta Seiberling.

The Seiberling Gatehouse at 714 N. Portage Path,

where Henrietta Seiberling brought Bill W. together with Dr. Bob for their very first meeting.

Mayflower Hotel at 263 S. Main Street where Bill W. made his famous first phone calls to Reverend Tunks and Henrietta Seiberling from the phone outside the bar in the lobby.

Dr. Bob & Anne Smith's graves at Mt. Peace Cemetery, 183 Aquaduct Street, Sec. 21, Lot 65, Grave 7.

Bill D.'s grave at Greenlawn Cemetery, 2580 Romig Road, Sec. F, Lot 517 – Officially known as the third member of A.A. after Bill W. and Dr. Bob, Bill Dobson was "the man on the bed" in the historical portrait seen in most every A.A. meeting.

By touring these sites in Akron the day before Founders Day Weekend, I was able to avoid the crowds, for the most part. Most of the time, there were only a few other people visiting at that time of day. While there were bus tours taking people to some of these sites during the convention, the lines were long and it required lots of patience and time if you wanted to get off the bus, as you would then have to wait until another bus had room for you to ride back to campus. (Continued, next page)



Mayflower Hotel

I visited the Mayflower Hotel on Thursday early in the afternoon. When I arrived, there was a couple looking around and an elderly resident who was kind enough to show us around. (The Mayflower Hotel was converted to a senior living high-rise in the early 1970s but many of the artifacts still remain).

The Mayflower is an ornate hotel with décor dating back to the 1930s. The bars that Bill W. spoke about in the Big Book no longer exist in the lobby but you can walk around and still imagine the gilded age and the high society who frequented this place. The lady who showed me around was in her 80s and was sober. She told us that she holds meetings there in the lobby with its polished brass elevator doors, hardwood paneling and wrought iron work that lines the grand staircase.

The original phone that Bill W. used still hangs on the wall but the receiver is gone. Still, you get the essence of this place and just knowing what took place here, there's an aura that you can feel if you are open to that sort of thing.

Dr. Bob's Home

When I arrived at Dr. Bob's home there were people milling around on the stone wall in front as well as on the porch. I walked up to the door and inside it was well preserved to depict the beginning of A.A. – somewhere around 1935. Dr. Bob's hat hung on the coat rack, there were Big Books and bibles on the table and in the kitchen, the old stove and kettle were poised to serve the next group of wives coffee as their husbands met with Bill and Dr. Bob in the parlor. It was like a step back in time with the original furniture, everyday personal items, and even a bottle hidden in a man's glove – laid out on the balcony (where Dr. Bob apparently hid some of his liquor). There was even a display of concoctions that Dr. Bob used to sober up wet drunks!

Walking around, I could visualize the early days when drunks would be sobering up in armchairs around a table as Bill and Dr. Bob shared their stories with them. And in the kitchen, there was Anne Smith laying the groundwork for what would later become Al-Anon, lending yet another level of support to struggling drunks in their early days and weeks of sobriety.

Since there weren't many people the day that I was visiting, I was allowed to go upstairs where you could listen to recordings of Anne and Bob Smith talking and see their personal items in the bedrooms, as well as the rooms in which their son and daughter were raised. It was different the following day when crowds of people descended on the house, forcing the docents to close off the upstairs to visitors. I was told that the wait to get into the home was two hours long and that visits were limited to just a few minutes, per person.

Dr. Bob's Grave

Next, I visited Dr. Bob's grave where I found myself alone in the cemetery (other than the maintenance workers). Dr. Bob's family plot was well marked and I was able to walk right up to his gravesite and thank him for the sacrifices he and Bill W. made so that I could find this great fellowship of ours. I quietly meditated for a few minutes, just listening to the sounds of nature, then I placed my favorite medallion on his headstone – the one I purchased at AA Central Office in Honolulu, Hawaii – and left with gratitude in my heart.



The Seiberling Gatehouse Lastly, I visited Henrietta Seiberling's gatehouse where I got to sit in a chair that had been used by Dr. Bob or Bill W. when they met. There were just a few others there when I arrived late in the day. After walking around and reading some of the signage, I came back to the sitting room and closed my eyes as I listened to a recording of Henrietta Seiberling talking about that historic day by the fireside. A few



minutes later, my thoughts were interrupted by a docent who came to tell me they were locking up for the evening. I was the last visitor that day and the only one there at the time. This somewhat small house is located on a very large estate – the Seiberling’s estate – and is at the front end of the large property close to the road, just behind a large iron gate. I highly recommend visitors see this unique English-style cottage where AA came to life.

The Event

The 84th Annual Founders Day event began the following day, and over the next three days, there was a whirlwind of activity going on.

There were twelve, one-hour panels, each on a different step. There were speaker meetings several times a day, including an Old Timer’s Panel, and a large meeting in the football stadium on Saturday evening. There was also a musical show, a play called “A Song and a Coffee Pot,” a Saturday night dance and an Alcañon that went late into the night.

The History of Our Big Book: One of the most fascinating presentations was Gail L.’s History of Our Big Book which involved a clever interactive question and answer session with archived footage of Bill W. I learned so much about the work Bill W. and Dr. Bob did, the personal sacrifices they made to get the Big Book printed and the lack of support they had at that time. When it seemed like hope was lost, they soldiered on because of their faith and refused to quit when the odds were down. I walked away with renewed appreciation and awe at what they were able to accomplish with so little. I hope you get to see Gail L.’s presentation at some point. It was remarkable.

The Big Meeting: On Saturday evening, as I was taking the elevator up to my dorm room to get ready for the big outdoor meeting, I found myself with a group of women who were talking about their plans for the evening. What was unusual was that I recognized their accent as being from my home state of Massachusetts. When I asked them where they were from, lo and behold, they were from my home town! What was even more remarkable was that I recognized one of the women as one of my drinking buddies from high school! When we realized that we knew one another there was much rejoicing and, of course, I spent the next few hours catching up on old times. So for all of my worries about not knowing anyone, God had a plan for me after all! Debbie and I hadn’t seen each other for 45 years – since we were 16 or 17. And now, she’s working in the field of recovery with 28 years sober. What a gift to run into her!

Motorcade to the Cemetery: The following morning was the much anticipated motorcade to Dr. Bob’s grave and again, fate intervened and I got to ride with one of the bikers as part of this great event. There were between 1,500 and 2,000 sober men and women riding two abreast along the 4.5 mile route to Dr. Bob’s grave at Mt. Peace Cemetery.

Along the way, lines of people waved and smiled (pretty unusual at 7:30 a.m.) as we rode through red lights and intersections blocked off by the police. As we neared the cemetery, my friend Debbie ran forward to shake my hand and again, I felt blessed to be a part of this great tribute!



Once everyone arrived, the AA meeting began with Harmon V. giving a rousing tribute in memory of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith. When it was over, the bagpiper, Joey H., stepped forward to play a touching rendition of Amazing Grace. As people joined in to sing along, I stood there watching and noticed there wasn’t a dry eye in the crowd, and I felt very, very grateful.

Pat K., Sunland, CA

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

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