

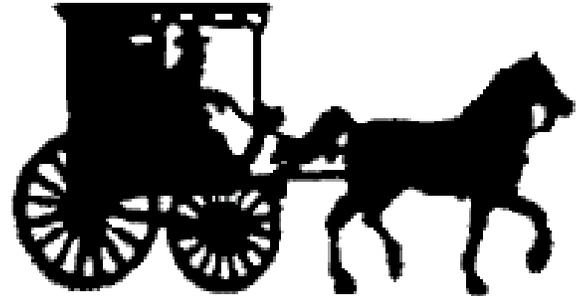
RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 43, No. 8, August 2019

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Traveling in Sobriety

Many sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous have concerns about traveling away from home, where they will be away from their support system, their meetings, and possibly around non-sober people. While these are legitimate concerns, many of us have found that traveling is a great opportunity to embark upon new adventures with A.A. by attending meetings in other cities, states or countries. Whether you are traveling for work, pleasure or to visit friends and family, if you set aside time for meetings, you may find new friends and a greater lifeline awaits you!



While traveling to attend Founders Day, I also attended two meetings in Dayton, Ohio at the Southside Club which is supported, in part, by sober motorcycle clubs (who also own and run sober living facilities). Meetings vary in the way they are run but the common denominator that binds us together is our shared experience, both before and after getting sober. It is this experience that is so profound that it overshadows any cultural or linguistic differences providing the love and support we all have found to be present where two or more may gather, as you will read in the following stories from the AA Grapevine.

Happy Birthday Grapevine:

When I got sober in 1992, I was a traveling salesman. I sold equipment to chemical plants and refineries in southeast Texas.

I told my sponsor that it would be difficult for me to make meetings due to my travel schedule. He said: 1) contact the local intergroup for meetings as soon as I arrive; and 2) get a Grapevine subscription. I followed through on both suggestions, and when I couldn't make a meeting at all, I had my meeting in print! Grapevine really saved my bacon, especially during my first year.

In my 25-plus years of sobriety, I've sponsored several guys in jails and prisons. One man, who now has 11 years of sobriety, is in a prison where there are no AA meetings at all. He gives Grapevine so much praise for his sobriety. AA has given me a life I always wanted. And Grapevine has been such a big part of that. —Tom B. *Galveston, Texas*

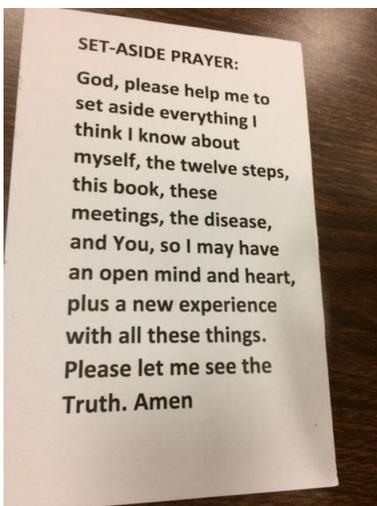
Honeymoon prayers

The year 2004 was one of the best of my life. I got married in May and my wife and I had two years of sobriety. We took a cruise on a beautiful ship bound for Mexico on our honeymoon. Each day we sat by the pool and the waiter would constantly ask us if we needed a drink. It was really getting to me; I began to get crazy! The only thing I could do was pray for an intuitive thought or decision.

An answer came: I would look for AA meetings on the ship. Lo and behold, there were meetings! The sign on the door read "Friends of Bill W." Boy, were we relieved; we were going to be all right. We attended three days in a row, but nobody showed up. So back I went to being crazy—and praying.

Again, an answer came: We bought large non-alcoholic drinks and left them always sitting on our lounging table. For the rest of the cruise, when the waiters came by, they saw we had a full drink. It turned into a

wonderful honeymoon. —Ricky Y., *Santa Fe, Texas*



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

OPENING: Josh S.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Tina K.

MTD is \$805 and YTD is \$2,847, as compared with last year's YTD of \$3,203. Financial Statements are available.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

Central Office: Central Office is running smoothly. After some discussion, the Board voted to exercise Central Office's lease option and remain at our present location for another five years. Please continue to support Central Office by purchasing AA literature from us! *Recovery Times*: Stories of recovery are welcome. Send to Editor Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Sandy R. for Lyn W.

- There were 4 new Intergroup Representatives this month:
 - David A., "Learning to Live," Wednesdays at 7pm in West Hills;
 - Leslie Mc., "Sober Solutions," Saturdays at 10am in Van Nuys;
 - Eric G., "Encino Hills Speaker," Mondays at 8pm in Sherman Oaks; and
 - Brian T., "Feelings & Discussion," Saturdays at 7:30pm in Van Nuys.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- **General Service District 11:** Ernie: Thanks to YPAA for their donation last month! We plan to use the money for workshops.
- **General Service District 1:** Cece: District 1 picnic on 10/12/19 – Save the date!
- **San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee:** Matt for 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:** Josh for Bernard B.: Planning meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7pm, at St. Innocent Church in Tarzana. The 2020 Convention will be held January 31 – February 2, 2020.
- **Santa Clarita Valley 16th Annual AA Convention:** Josh for Bernard B.: Convention will be September 27-29, 2019 at the Valencia Hyatt. This year's theme is "It Will Be Fun!" For more information, visit www.scvaaconvention.org.

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:

- 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" (an event that includes an AA Meeting).

ACKNOWLEDGE BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE: 4 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Don, 2 years on 7/28; and Matt M., 2 years on 7/22.

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

CLOSING: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 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** 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.

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 for info: **(818) 988-3001**

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.

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.

When in need: Visit our website for meeting information and previous copies of Recovery Times: www.sfvaa.org. Update us with your meeting information via email: sfvco@la.twcbc.com, or stop by and pick up your medallions and literature at our Valley office: **SFVCO, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. After hours, we still answer phones for those in need so don't be afraid to refer people to our phone lines.**



Staying Afloat

Recently my wife and I were on a river cruise in Europe. The boat did not have any AA meetings on board, but plenty of drinking was going on. We anchored in Vienna for two days and decided we'd try and locate an AA meeting. We were a little nervous as we didn't speak German, but decided to trust our Higher Power. We got directions from the ship's program director and headed out.

We found the meeting place and walked in. There were 10 people sitting in a circle, each from a different country, yet all spoke broken English. It was a literature meeting and, to my amazement, they were using *As Bill Sees It* from the UK. There were two newcomers present. Both picked up chips and the group circled around to give them support. It felt just like at home.

At the end of the meeting, the basket was passed. I asked the meeting leader how his group's "self-support" was going. He said, "We can't seem to get them to put more than one euro in the basket." I smiled. Just like my home group in Galveston, Texas. We try to get them to put more than one dollar in the basket too! We both got a good laugh. AA is the same wherever we go. —Paul M.

Galveston, Texas

Safe landing

A pilot gets sober and watches her life really take off

I'm a pilot. I got sober while I was teaching flying lessons in small airplanes. I pity my poor students back then. I was a bar and pub drinker. They had to deal with me hung over and reeking of booze and cigarettes. Fortunately, once I got to AA, I was home every night and was able to get to a lot of meetings. It built a strong foundation with excellent sponsorship, digging in and working the Steps, service work and a lot of prayer.



I eventually started flying cargo throughout Canada and the U.S., and I'd go to meetings wherever I had a layover. I also began traveling a lot and made sure I went to meetings wherever I was. At one point I spent three weeks training in Dallas, Texas, where one of the members had his six-week sober sponsee drive me around to local meetings. We helped each other stay sober.

I eventually started flying in Northern Canada as a bush pilot. Then for many years I flew throughout Africa. I was often working in places where there were no meetings, and I was surrounded by a lot of alcohol. Thanks to Intergroup, I joined online AA meetings. Along with reading the literature and keeping in touch with my sponsor, I would let AA in New York know how other AAs could contact me. One time in Sudan, I got a call from a Canadian woman based in South Sudan, and we had meetings over the phone.

I remember one time taking a crazy three-hour bus ride through the hills in Guatemala to get to a meeting. I remember thinking, "This is crazy!" Then I remembered how I once drove five hours in a snowstorm in Canada to get to a party. That's another reason why I need to be willing to go to any lengths for my sobriety. I always get to as many "face to face" meetings as possible. Online meetings are great, but nothing beats direct contact with other recovering alcoholics. (Continued)

When I began to do my Ninth Step amends to the people I owed, I was in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I had to explain why I was calling from so far away, so it was an excellent segue to making the amends.

I always try to look for ways to do service work while traveling. When I was "stationed" in Canada, I was able to have sponsees and participated in PI/CPC (Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community). While I was abroad, I chaired online meetings. While sharing at regular meetings, I was able to twelfth-step a couple of co-workers in Africa who had drinking problems. I also took Grapevines overseas, and when I was done, I left them in strategic places. So if you found a Grapevine in a hotel room in Ethiopia, Uganda or the Democratic Republic of Congo, it was probably me!

After flying throughout Africa for five years, I got stationed in Kandahar, Afghanistan. I was grateful we had three AA meetings a week there. The Sober in the Sand Group saved our sanity. I met some incredible people there, both military and civilian, just trying to deal with life on life's terms. My service position at that meeting involved getting medallions engraved for our birthdays. Very few people in the world have that medallion. I celebrated my 8th and 9th-year anniversaries there.

I remember reading early in my sobriety that as long as we are "spiritually fit," we can go anywhere. I have tested that from the extremes of the jungles of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the deserts of Sudan, to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan. I'm currently traveling in Thailand. After attending a bunch of meetings here, I was asked to tell my story at a meeting in a halfway house. I was grateful to be of service.

I used to talk often about how I was going to travel the world and live an adventurous, non-conformist life. The truth was, I never did anything; I was too busy drinking. Before I came into AA, I'd been to three countries; now I've been to 54. That's a dream come true for me.

I'm so incredibly blessed to be a part of a worldwide fellowship that goes beyond culture, religion, language, sex, social class and race. Wherever I go, I can find a safe place, people who truly understand me, and the Steps and Serenity Prayer in multiple languages.

Thank you AA, for saving my life and being part of a dream come true.

—Nachelle W., Hanover, Ontario



Mary On the Go

She used to hate traveling, but now that she's two years sober, she's hitting the road

I didn't like to take vacations when I was drinking. The TSA rules about liquids in carry-ons, trying to procure alcohol in strange cities and finding a place to drink it the way I liked, having to dispose of the empties at a hotel or at a friend's home, worrying about "evidence" I may have left behind—it was all so much work and all so darn complicated. It was so much easier to just stay home and drink.

Among the many blessings of my journey in recovery now are traveling to new places, meeting new people, seeing new sights, experiencing many tastes and actually remembering where I went and what I did. I don't take any of these things for granted today. Since getting sober two years ago, I can count at least a dozen trips. But there are two that really stand out. Those two times, by the grace of God, I was able to so clearly see how my life was changing and how the Promises were coming true. (Continued)

When I was about five months sober, my husband and I took a special trip to Italy to celebrate his 60th birthday. We had planned it for a long time. So with my Big Book and an international cell phone plan (to call my sponsor), off we went to the land of my favorite beverage—wine.

The first three days or so went just great. While wine was being served everywhere and with every meal, I was so engrossed in the sights and experience of new places that every night I went to bed grateful to be in this amazing place and to be granted just one more day of sobriety.



About the fourth day, we were in a nice restaurant for dinner in Florence. Suddenly, it hit me. Like an out-of-body experience, I felt like I was floating above the scene and everybody was having fun but me. I spoiled our meal by complaining about everything, and my husband finally said quietly, "Let's just go."

"Fine," I said as I stomped back to our hotel. In our room, I proceeded to shout, slam

doors, toss things about and generally throw a temper tantrum because I "couldn't" drink. Not knowing what to do with me in this state, my husband just said, "Do you want me to go buy you a bottle of wine? I will. You can drink it; it's fine. It's your choice; I won't judge you."

At that moment, the clarity of what we call "playing the tape forward" flashed before me. The picture was clear: I'd drink the whole bottle. I'd want more in the morning. I'd have to find a way to get it in a foreign city, have a purse big enough to hide it in, sneak it back to the room, and figure out how to do this for another week in Italy. Then I'd have to endure a nine-hour plane ride. Back home, the whole thing would start again ... except that I didn't want to go back to my old life, ever. So, I stomped my foot and yelled, "No!" Instantly, the desire to drink left me and has never returned to this day.

Fast forward to when I was 15 months sober. I was in Denver visiting my daughter to help plan her wedding, and we had a wonderful mother/daughter time. I was so grateful to really be a mom, doing what moms are supposed to do. On the day of my departure, my daughter took me to the airport in time for my flight (not at the "fake" time I used to make up in order to allow for a few drinks in the bar). I walked past my old bar where I used to drink in the Denver airport, and I just smiled thinking about my new life. When I got to my gate, I discovered that a snowstorm would delay my departure for about three hours. In the old days, that would've been the perfect opportunity to go drink. But now I felt a little disappointment that I could've had three more hours with Lisa. Or I could've been home three hours sooner to be with my husband. It occurred to me that being with the people I love had become more important than finding time to be alone with alcohol.

Sober travel has been a real eye-opener for me, in more ways than I can count. I can go anywhere now, and the world is open for me to explore with a joy, curiosity and enthusiasm I never used to know. Thank you AA, for being there wherever I go. —Mary R., Columbus, Ohio

Got a story to share? Recovery Times is always looking for contributions of stories on your sobriety. Please send to editor Pat K: xnowisthetime@aol.com any stories of 300 – 600 words. Deadline is always the 15th of the month for the next month's issue.

Thought for the Day: Do something good for someone and don't tell anyone.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED