

# RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 43, No. 10, Oct. 2019

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

## A.A. is Bigger Than All of Us

### **Return to Rwanda: with no meetings in his country, he reached out for help. Now he's sharing his hope**

I am the youngest of seven children and I'm Rwandan. When I was growing up, other children were crying for milk and porridge, but me? I was crying for beer. In Rwanda, alcoholic drinks are a traditional symbol used in events of happiness and sadness: weddings, birthdays, funerals. I started drinking when I was 5, but it was under the control and supervision of my parents. When I drank too much, they just put me in bed and fed me milk. But when I woke up, I was looking for beer again.



In the early 1990s, during the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, I lost my father and other family members. That's when I started drinking way too much. I was 12 then. I drank beer to express my independence and maturity. There were no hospitals or doctors or churches or schools then, and alcohol was the only way to take my focus off of what I saw around me.

I soon began to drink without any fear that anyone could stop me. The refrigerator at the house was always full of alcohol. Once I tried to ride my bicycle home drunk and I had a terrible accident. I tore my pants, cut my knee and scratched up my arms. Friends took me home along with my destroyed bicycle, but before I tended to my wounds, I went to the refrigerator for more beer.

In primary school, I drank heavy liquor at night to stop the bad memories and dreams so I could sleep. Then, in the morning, I needed alcohol to avoid the shakes and depression. To "fit in" at school I'd put cans of beer in my school bag, then drink in the bathroom before and after class. At boarding school, I'd come back home each weekend to restock my dorm liquor supply. I drank alone at night while other students were sleeping. If I ran out, I'd sneak out and run down through the river to get to town, returning with wet and muddy clothes.

Soon, my stomach began to give me trouble. I could not talk much in class or with friends. I was full of fear and shame for what I was doing. People began to avoid me. I was so lonely. I looked like a bad person on the outside, but in my heart I was not a bad person. By the time I reached university, my drinking was completely out of control. Despite being a good student, I had no relationship with my family. I was miserable and jealous of others who had less but were happy.

One day, my family broke through my bedroom door and took me to the hospital. Since my university was a very strict religious school, I knew I could be expelled for drinking. So I asked the doctors to stop my intravenous drip and had my brother take me back to school for my exam. When the exam was over, I returned to the hospital. The following day, I did the same. This went on for several weeks until I was finished with detox. Then I began to start fights with my brothers and sometimes I'd stay at a friend's home so I could avoid them calling the police on me. My family could not understand why I was behaving so destructively and immaturely.

I started developing problems with my liver and pancreas. My brothers were so tired of my drinking, they refused to come help me. Finally, my cousin called a taxi to get me to the hospital. I stayed there several weeks and was finally diagnosed with acute pancreatitis. After I was released, the doctors told me not to drink anymore, so I managed to stop drinking for six months but as soon as I resumed drinking, my stomach pain returned.

A family friend recommended that I go away to an addiction clinic for help. I stayed there many days. My doctor there told me about alcoholism and gave me the yellow AA Living Sober book. She also advised me to go to meetings. So I did.

(Continued)

At meetings there, I met many people who taught me about alcoholism. I'll never forget the member named D, who told me that an addicted person can indeed change his behavior and turn his fate around.

Almost no one in my country understands the disease of alcoholism. Besides changing my own life by getting sober, I decided to break the silence in Rwanda about alcoholism and to speak loudly in my country. In 2008, a few others and I started the first AA meeting in my country. It met once a week and was the only meeting in the entire country. It met next to a bar, but we had no other choice for a meeting room. The American who owned the restaurant knew about AA, and said we were welcome to use it.

Sometimes Americans and Europeans came. When they returned to their home countries, I often sat alone in the room, reading my AA books. After awhile I felt sad and lonely with no fellowship and no sponsor. Soon I felt like I could not stay sober. Besides, my church told me that I was a sinner because I drank and I would always be doomed as a sinner. So I packed my AA books and sat up at the bar.

The manager's wife came in and saw me. She asked, "So, Marcellin, you are choosing to drink today instead of the AA meeting?" I told her, "Yes, it is my only choice." She said, "I think it's not a good idea." After she left, I started crying and ordered another bottle. I returned home drunk.

I was now drinking daily and I became very depressed. I kept asking God for help to clear my thinking and guide my life. I kept reading the AA books and began to understand my disease more. But I couldn't understand why I kept relapsing. Then one day, I met an American in recovery who had 25 years, who helped me with understanding the program and the Steps. I got sober again.

The two of us opened another meeting. And with the fellowship of other Rwandans, I stayed sober for nearly three years. The Step work was really hard. I skipped Step Four because it was just so hard and I didn't want to tell my sponsor the truth.

One of the members was a woman named Donna. She was from Boston. She had come to my country more than four years ago when I was trying to get sober and move AA forward in my country. She contacted her home group in Boston and we got literature, sponsors and internet Skype contacts. Now, our country has four meetings a week! Donna, who loves me the same as her biological family, even brought me to visit the United States to meet other AAs. I learned so much there. I was surprised to see so many meetings going on each day with all the lovely people, happy, giving free hugs to each other, sharing coffee and donuts. It was so wonderful. I got to meet people with a lot of experience and knowledge about AA. Donna wanted me to see how AA works so that I could start my life again and bring these ideas back to my country.

Unfortunately, while I was on my trip to the U.S., I relapsed. Instead of an AA meeting, my stupid mind sent me to a bar. I disappointed everyone. I could hear my father's voice saying, "I didn't raise you like this. You know better than this. Why are you drinking again?" I know in my heart I disappointed him too. But the nice people in AA did not judge me when I relapsed. They showed me love and kindness and patience. I got sober again. I felt welcomed unconditionally.

On my trip, I got to see people with many years of recovery. I met someone with 44 years. And I met others with more than 20 years, with families and jobs! And I saw people with many responsibilities who start their day, every day, with AA. And in New York City, I was amazed to see people I had met before in Rwanda who were still staying sober a long time, like M, who helped me by being my first sponsor and D, who first explained AA to me. I was also surprised to see AA members of all ages. Some are very young. I joined in fellowship with them and did many fun things together. Some guys even took me to a baseball game!

D and two other friends took me to GSO Headquarters in New York and showed me the history of AA and all the departments they have working to support AA. The GSO representative there spent a lot of time with me. All the AA information for the entire world comes from that office. Any country, big or small, can receive it. I learned that the AA message can communicate in different languages, all over the world.

We do not have AA literature in my native language, Kinyarwanda. The GSO rep showed me that it is possible to translate the literature into my local language so that people in my country can understand the program. I told him that we translated some materials into Kinyarwanda, such as the Preamble and Serenity Prayer. In Boston, members L and G told me, "We help you because we love you. But remember the purpose is not only for you. Take this information back to your country."

When Donna came back to Rwanda again, she was excited to see that I was there, trying to start a meeting in my own language. She brought with her a lot of literature donated from GSO and her home group. Together we helped Rwandan members get sponsors from Boston with our cyber-sponsor program. We also started a monthly

international Skype meeting where members in Rwanda, Boston and New York got together to have an international meeting.

In Rwanda, people think that if someone stays sober many years, then they are cured of alcoholism. I learned from members in the U.S. with many years of recovery that we must keep going to AA. We should never be too busy for AA. When we make recovery first, then we can have a healthy home where we keep our friends and work healthy and protected, and we can have hope and a future.

I may not be happy to be an alcoholic, but I am so glad that I now understand my disease. My only hope is to be honest to God, to myself, to other people and to the AA program. I now want to help others. This is how my life can change. --

**Marcellin K., Rwanda**

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**A.A. Central Office** of the San Fernando Valley is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$5,000 per year and must be from members of AA, not from outsiders.



**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. After hours we still answer phones for those in need, so don't be afraid to refer people to our phone lines.

**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 to volunteer. (818) 988-3001, or ask your group to volunteer for a shift every month.

**Central Office is 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).

**Visit our website: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org)** for meeting information and copies of Recovery Times.

**Update us with your meeting information via email: [sfvco@la.twcbc.com](mailto: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.

**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](mailto:xnowisthetime@aol.com).** Stories of recovery should be no more than 600 words. Deadline is always the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for the next month's issue.



**SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE**  
**Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting**  
**September 4, 2019**

**OPENING: Josh S.**

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT: Tina K.**

- MTD is (\$3,777) and YTD is (\$559), as compared with last year's YTD which was (\$8,676).
- Financial Statements are available.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.**

Central Office is having phone problems. It's being looked at tomorrow and should be repaired quickly. Otherwise, everything else is running smoothly.

Pat K., *Recovery Times*: We are once again mailing the Recovery Times. The cost is \$15/yr for 12 issues. Reminder: Stories of recovery are welcome. Deadline for submissions is 15<sup>th</sup> of the month; send to Pat K. at [xnowisthetime@aol.com](mailto:xnowisthetime@aol.com).

**MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Lyn W.**

- There were 3 new Intergroup Representatives this month:
  - Sara, "Barefoot Speaker Group," Fridays at 8pm in Burbank;
  - Karen, "Quality of Life," Mondays – Saturdays at 7:30pm, in Van Nuys; and,
  - John M., "Men's BB Study," Thursdays at 7pm in Reseda.

**SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:**

- **Delegate** Jeff G.'s report: 2019 General Service Conference; Area Assembly is on Oct. 20, 2019 in Fillmore.
- **General Service District 1:** Cece: District 1 picnic is on Oct. 12, 2019, 11:30am - 2:00p at Balboa Park.
- **SFV Hospital & Institutions Committee:** Josh S. for Marianna: 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Birthday Dinner & Fundraiser. Tues. Oct. 22, 2019, 6-10pm, at St. Innocent Church in Tarzana. Tickets \$12. Speaker, comedian, 50/50 Raffle and more!
- **H&I** meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://www.sfvhi.org).
- **SFVAA Convention** will be Jan. 31 – Feb. 2, 2020. Theme is "Spiritual Life is Not a Theory." Planning meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7pm, at St. Innocent Church in Tarzana.

**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**

**Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast**, SFV Central Office's annual fundraiser, will be on Oct. 12, 2019 at the Disabled American Veterans Hall in Woodland Hills. Breakfast from 8-10am, followed by a speaker meeting. Tickets are \$15 for one person or 2 for \$25.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:**

- Ernie, Burbank Group: 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Poker Tournament, Oct. 12, 2019, 2:30pm; Stay for the 8pm meeting!
- "Back to the 40's" Meetings (Burbank Group) will take you through the 12 steps over a 5 week period. Saturdays from 4-5pm, beginning Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Dia De Los Muertos Halloween Dance, (Burbank Group) Friday, Nov. 1, 2019: Speaker meeting 8pm, Bob F. speaking, followed by the dance at 10pm. Dance admission is \$10 per person or \$15 per couple.

## FROM THE FOUNDERS

"Great modesty and humility are needed by every AA for his own permanent recovery. If these virtues are such vital needs to the individual, so must they be to AA as a whole."

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,**  
March 1946, "Our Anonymity Is Both Inspiration and Safety", The Language of the Heart

"Concerning any given service, we pose but one question: 'Is this service really needed?' If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who seek AA."

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,**  
July 1955, "What Is the Third Legacy?", The Language of the Heart

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"My Higher Power works incognito, defying definition and requiring faith."  
**State College, PA**

"AA is spiritual, is the eye of the hurricane, is my refuge and my comfort."  
**Oklahoma City, OK**

"Forgiveness seems to depend more on the love of the one who does the forgiving than on the lovability of the one being forgiven."  
**West Henrietta, New York**

"I learned that if I had the capacity to be honest, I would get better."  
**Cornwall, Ontario**

## 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 SEPTEMBER: 77 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Victor F., 2 years on 9/22;
- David A., 5 years on 9/7;
- Brian, 8 years on 9/8;
- Lyn W., 30 years on 9/2; and
- Carla R., 32 years on 9/25.

## VACANCIES ON BOARD

Elections were held to fill a vacancy on the Board. Pat K. nominated Ernie C. who was unanimously elected. Congratulations Ernie!!!

## CLOSING:

- A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*.

Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary

## A SERVICE COMMITTEES CALENDAR: GS Area 93

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

**District 16:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (Central Office) at 6 p.m. for orientation then meeting.

**District 17:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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:** 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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:** Anon – 16 Years, Susan P. – 24 Years, Lyn W. – 30 Years, Ken K. – 30 Years, Carla R. – 32 Years, Frank K. – 35 Years, and Bring Your Own Coffee and Big Book – many years.

**A. A. Deaths:** Joan B. – 23 Years and Ted S. - 54 Years



### **IMPORTANT OCTOBER DATES IN A.A. HISTORY:**

- October 15, 1904: Marty Mann is born in Chicago. Marty founded the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism and authored the best-selling book "A Primer on Alcoholism."
- October 17, 1935: Ebby T., Bill W's boyhood friend who introduced him to the Oxford Group, moves in with him and Lois.
- Oct. 26, 1937: AA meetings are held at Bill W.'s home at 182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, NY. It is the first N.Y. AA group.
- October 7, 1937: Bill W. and Lois W. take that famous trip to Akron by automobile.
- October 22, 1939: Cleveland Plains Dealer publishes a series on AA by Elrick B. Davis which sparks "mass produced" sobriety in Ohio.
- October 30, 1942: Los Angeles Times reports California has 14 AA groups October 3, 1945: The AA Grapevine is adopted as the national publication of AA with 3,000 subscribers.
- October 11, 1945: The Savannah, Georgia group is formed.
- October 18, 1951: The Lasker Award is given to AA by the American Public Health Association in San Francisco.
- October 10, 1970: Lois W. reads Bill W.'s last message in New York. October 5, 1988: Los Wilson, aged 97, dies. Lois was the cofounder of Al-Anon family groups with Dr. Bob's wife, Anne. Her memorial takes place on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> at Stepping Stones with 50 family members and friends present. She is buried next to Bill W.
- Oct. 28, 1994: The National Council on Alcoholism has its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Washington, DC.

### **The Alcoholic Woman, NY Times Online**



A woman is more sensitive to alcohol than a man. She has less water in her body than a man of the same weight so a glass of wine will raise her blood alcohol level more than it will raise a man's. Alcohol also takes longer to leave a woman's body, so the effects of a drink last longer. And when a woman abuses alcohol, she is likely to develop alcoholic liver disease more quickly than a man.

## Important November Dates in AA History:

### November 26, 1895: Bill W. is born in East Dorset, Vermont.

- November 8, 1936: Fitz M. leaves Towns Hospital to become New York's AA #3. Bill D. and Hank P. are the other two.
- November 13, 1939: New York AAs urge Bill W. to stay on as a Fellowship leader and not hunt for a job despite money problems.
- November 21, 1939: First West Coast AA meeting is held in San Francisco.
- November 27, 1939: Cleveland Plains Dealer runs the first in a series of articles on AA. Cleveland soon has more AAs than any other U.S. city.
- November 7, 1940: The first AA Group meeting in San Diego is held in an apartment at 3229 Adams Ave.
- November 18, 1940: The first AA group in Minneapolis is formed.
- November 20, 1941: The Fresno Bee, Calif. Reports 28 newcomers asking for help in the local group's first week.
- November 24, 1942: Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick is the speaker at Manhattan AA group's eighth anniversary dinner. He gave the first positive review of the Big Book.
- November 30, 1943: 800 New York AAs celebrate their 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary with guest speaker Dr. Norman Vincent Peale.
- November 1, 1947: Anchorage, Alaska has the first Alaskan AA group.
- 1947: Keflavik, Iceland reports: "We are now two."
- November 16, 1950: Dr. Bob, AA co-founder, dies of cancer.
- November 15, 1955: First appearance of AA on TV: "One Day at a Time" appeared on ABC TV Tuesday at 9:30 p.m. on the Cavalcade Theater, starring James Daly.
- November 22, 1963: Lois W. attends the Desert Roundup AA Convention in California. Her days as a motorcycle "hobo" won her an honorary membership in the AA Motorcycle Club.
- November 25, 1966: The Big Book is published in paperback.
- November 9, 1975: General Service Board officially opens the GSO AA Archives with a ribbon cutting.



### A Dry Drunk

Here are some destructive patterns and actions that can result from dry-drunk thinking:

1. We become restless and irritable and discontented.
2. We become bored, dissatisfied and easily distracted from productive tasks.
3. Our emotions and feelings get listless and dull, nothing excites us anymore.
4. We start to engage in the euphoric recall that is yearning for the good old days of active using and forgetting the pain and shame of use.
5. We start to engage in 'magical thinking;' we get unrealistic and fanciful expectations and dreams.
6. The last thing we want to do is engage in introspection to improve ourselves.
7. We start to become unfulfilled and have the feeling that nothing will 'ever' satisfy our yearning or fill the hole in our soul.

Anonymous

**Central Office of SFV  
16132 Sherman Way  
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED