

RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 44, No. 5, May 2020

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

SOBRIETY IN VIENNA DURING THE PANDEMIC



Living in Vienna during spring is a special kind of beautiful. Tulips grow strong and colorful, trees and bushes bloom, and half the city starts sneezing and cleaning their noses – again. Yes it is also allergy time and I’m one of the fortunate ones! But this year it’s special - not because it’s hitting stronger but because of the pandemic.

Everyone looks at you in a judgmental way, changing their seats on public transports or walking away from you on the sidewalk. This reminds me of back in the day, when I may have caused similar reactions due to my “aura.”

It somehow seems funny to me when I think about the wording “back in the day.” I have now been in AA for five years and it struck me when I announced my 5th anniversary, last January, that a woman who had been sober for some 20 years said, “Good for you! Now you are no longer a newcomer!”

WHAT!? Me a newcomer? I laughed but...ouch! That was a Van Damme side-kick to my ego.

Last week, I attended for the first time an LA meeting via Zoom. My sponsor told me it was the meeting where she had first gotten sober. She often says, “One day, we’re going to go and you will know LA-recovery.” I just replied, “Sure, one day, why not?” Thanks Zoom! It absolutely blew my mind! I’ve never seen 73 (of course I counted, I’m alcoholic!) women at one meeting having such a dynamic and strong meeting.

Compared to that, our community in Vienna is very small – but our country is small too. Most of the meetings are in the capital and are very needed. Recovery in Austria, in general, is not so easy because there is a lot of prejudice towards alcoholism - and even more – toward recovery in AA. For many, it is the last option – and so it was for me too.

If you have been in Europe, you would know that it is an openly alcoholic society that we live in. People DO drink essentially because of the effect produced by the alcohol, but here, we sugarcoat it. The normal “reasons” like different weather conditions or work situations cause people to gather and enjoy their drinks. I never understood the concept of drinking one drink only or leaving it unfinished. Summertime is hard because for many it’s so connected with this romantic view of spending a nice summer afternoon sitting somewhere with a drink and having “nice conversations.” (I was a philosopher with a carpentry degree!).

Then comes Christmas-time when it’s really hard to stay sober. The city is full of little street markets with hot wine stands. The odor is incredibly strong and it’s everywhere, literally. I have a huge respect for anyone who is able to get sober during those occasions. Vienna’s AA community has shown me the essence of the first tradition. Our strong desire to have meetings, the willingness to recover and reach out to those still suffering - that’s the unity of A.A. I have never seen this as clearly as I do now. Within a few days of the pandemic, we set up daily meetings and they work fine! It is a huge help for our recently - sober members as they need us as much as the oldtimer needs the newcomer.

When those people celebrate their anniversary in the future, we will hear, “I got sober online during coronavirus-times.” On a personal level, I am grateful for these calmer days. Yes, sometimes they are full of uncertainty or sad news, but by being of service, I can also spend more time with the person I used to run away from: myself. **Cristina R., Vienna, Austria**

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting

For the first time in A.A. San Fernando Valley Central Office history, no IGR meeting was held last month out of respect for the social distancing rules that went into effect in early March 2020. Central Office remains open for business for anyone needing meeting information, guidance to A.A. services, or help in finding an online meeting. You can also purchase books, pamphlets and medallions at our office – please wear a face mask when engaging in business. We look forward to seeing you again soon, possibly in June, for a meeting. Stay tuned!

The 7th Tradition States That We Are Self Supporting

Consider setting up a mailbox or Venmo (or other app) system to collect the 7th Tradition. Your group will still need to purchase supplies and you may still be obligated to pay rent. If you are able to make a contribution to the different entities that comprise Alcoholics Anonymous, please do so.

AA Never Shuts Down: Many meetings are temporarily hosting interactive/online meetings as the locations where they normally meet are closed for safety reasons. To find an online meeting in the San Fernando Valley, call Central Office at: (818) 988-3001 or go to: sfvaa.org. You can also look up meeting schedules on Group websites or Facebook pages, or go to this online directory: www.LAAOnlineMeetings.org and <http://aa-intergroup.org>.

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. **SFV 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.



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.



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).

Update us with your meeting information via email: sfvco@la.twcbc.com, or stop by and pick up your medallions and literature at SFVCO, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

Visit our website: www.sfvaa.org for meeting information and copies of Recovery Times.

AA SERVICE COMMITTEES CALENDAR: GS Area 93

FROM THE FOUNDERS

"In great measure, we AAs have really found peace. However haltingly, we have managed to attain an increasing humility whose dividends have been serenity and legitimate joy."

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., June 1961, "Humility for Today," The Language of the Heart

"I've found a life I never knew existed. I'm so overwhelmed with gratitude that there's no room for a bad day." **Costa Mesa, California**

"I inevitably find that when I'm able to stay focused on my primary purpose, my 'secondary purposes' (school, jobs, relationships) work themselves out quite satisfactorily." **San Diego, California**

"The process of one alcoholic confiding in another has without a doubt saved my life. Nowhere else have I ever found such devotion and understanding as with AA sponsoring." **Maspeth, New York**

"I'm not so quick to judge others. If I'm critical of you, it's often because I'm trying to ignore that quality in myself." **Renton, Washington**

"Nothing is so bad that a drink won't make worse." **Arlington, Texas**
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All or some of the following meetings are temporarily on hold during the pandemic. Please consult the leadership of your district for further information.

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 orientation then 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.

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 and 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, sharing info on upcoming AA events in the Valley. Support Central Office by sending a rep from your group to the monthly Intergroup meeting.

Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary? ☆* ♥*☆* ♥*☆* ♥☆☆ ☆~`♥`
☆☆~`♥`☆☆~`♥`☆☆~`♥`

(`·´) [H][A][P][P][Y][B][I][R][T][H][D][A][Y]!! ~`♥` Francis C. – 30
Years, Jack L. – 39 Years, Mike "Shamu" – 39 Years, and
Bob F. – 39 Years. `···` ☆~`♥`☆☆~`♥`☆☆~`♥`☆☆~`♥`

Consider making a \$1.00 donation to Central Office for each year of your sobriety during your birthday month.

Bequests/Contributions: The maximum dollar amount of individual bequests by A.A.s is reviewed every two years at the General Service Conference. In 2019, at the 69th General Service Conference, the maximum amount of an individual bequest by members to A.A. was raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000. This is a one-time contribution and is not in perpetuity.



We also remember (A. A. Deaths): Chuck V. – 45 Years

MYSTERIOUS WAYS

I learned a valuable lesson during my early years in recovery: I was not responsible for anyone getting drunk or sober. At that time, the men I tried to help all continued to drink. I began to think something was wrong with me. The experience shared with me by seasoned AA members was that I could only plant a seed and offer the alcoholic a spiritual kit of AA tools. The alcoholic would need to allow the seed to sprout and use those tools.



One day, I arrived early for the noon meeting at my home group. A middle-aged man, Jim, arrived and said he was looking for Larry. Larry used to work at a local detox and was also my sponsor. I told Jim that Larry was my sponsor and asked him if I could help. Jim said he was looking for a sponsor. I told him that I'd be willing to help him and he accepted my offer.

At that time, Jim was living in a weed patch near the county hospital. He picked that spot because he suffered with bouts of pancreatitis. When the pancreatitis flared up, he was already near the hospital. Jim would panhandle daily for alcohol. But now he'd had enough.

Jim stopped drinking and stayed stopped until the day he died five years later. There's more to this story than a successful Twelfth Step, however. Before Jim quit, he used to drink with a man named Deano, who was chronically drunk and would show up at AA meetings to ask for money to buy more booze. Nearly everyone I knew believed Deano was a hopeless case and would never get sober. When Deano saw that Jim was sober, he began to think that maybe he could stop too. Deano asked Jim to sponsor him and, after just one slip, Deano took hold of the AA program and he recently celebrated 12 years of sobriety.

God works in mysterious ways. A chance meeting before a meeting changed the lives of three alcoholics: Jim, Deano and me. I often share in meetings that you never know when an opportunity to carry the message will come. A little prayer to make myself fit to be of maximum service is always a good way to start my day.

WOODY R. | STOCKTON, CALIF.

I Laughed, He Laughed: He took him to events, got him into service and even helped him take out the “garbage.” That was Delmar’s way



Delmar had a Southern Georgia drawl like nobody else. He used to say, “alky-holic.” He was a big man with a big smile and a mischievous twinkle in his eye, along with a hearty laugh. He loved AA and he did as much Twelfth Step work as anyone I have known in the program. As he put it, he was “out chasing drunks most nights.” In addition to his day job as a construction engineer, he ran an aftercare program for a large treatment outfit. His energy was boundless.

Delmar was my first sponsor. He sponsored a lot of men. I asked him to help me because he was friendly and always laughing and he was one of the regulars of my group. He just smiled when I asked him and said, “Call me tomorrow.”

I did. And I quickly learned that he was serious about the Steps and serious about service work. At the same time, he did not push. If I was serious, fine. If I did not follow his “suggestions,” that was fine too. He had other men to work with and other things to do.

At the end of the meeting after I asked him to sponsor me, he said, “We’re going to wash ashtrays.” Cigarette smoke used to hang in layers at our meetings. There were a lot of ashtrays to collect off the tables, wash and put up. As we did that nasty chore, we talked. Sometimes I talked and he listened. Sometimes I asked questions I was too shy to bring up in the meeting and he answered. Sometimes we just talked. That was precious time.

The end of the month rolled around and Delmar said, “We’re going to the district GSR breakfast this Sunday.” That’s where I met folks from our area. Then when January came, he announced, “We’re going to the state assembly next Saturday and Sunday.”

I was one bewildered member in that sea of faces, but I began to learn how this thing we call AA is put together. At the end of what seemed an interminable stretch of time, I finally got my 90-day chip. That’s when Delmar’s directions changed. “You’re going to chair the meetings next month,” he told me. But he was right there at my elbow to help me out.

Delmar taught me the most important lesson about being married that a few marriage therapists missed: “One person cannot have an argument.” That was, and still is, absolutely profound.

He taught me about prayer. Early on, I heard him speak at our group. He shared about coming home early from work and finding his wife on her knees in their living room praying. He was shocked. “What if our neighbors saw you like that?” he asked. Her response was to the point. “What better way would I want them to see me than on my knees praying?”

I was praying by that time. Still, it took me a while longer to hit my knees. “Boy, the only thing you need to know about God is that there is one and you ain’t him,” Delmar would say. Later, when I complained and complained some more about my job and my boss and my life, he told me, “Turn in your ‘God card.’” He had to tell me that several times. Surrender was a hard concept for me.

The first time I heard Delmar's story was at our home group. He grew up very poor and he had been through some difficult experiences. Despite that, he had gotten an education and he was married and had two sons. Then his oldest was killed in a car wreck late one night. Many of us in the room had no idea what he had gone through and what he lived with daily. Here was an affable, friendly man who was always smiling and laughing and telling stories, generous with his time and his help. He did not seem to have a problem in the world.



Today, I know that every alcoholic who makes it to AA has seen some heartache, but I was stunned when I heard Delmar speak that night. He knew about pain. He understood.

Delmar called the Fourth Step "taking out the garbage." I was five months into sobriety before I was willing to do one. He gave me instructions and I went home and prayed and wrote. I did that each day after work for about a week. Finally, when I was done, I called him and went over to his house. We sat in his back yard under the trees. After we prayed together, I read him that mess, every bit of it. It took a while, but he did me the

favor of staying awake. And he did not throw me out of his yard.

I heard a speaker at an AA Roundup one time tell the crowd that a Fourth Step was "not a list of filthy, nasty things." My first one was a list of filthy, nasty things. But Delmar was unfazed. He shared a few things himself and we even laughed a little. Then he sent me home to think about what I had just done for the past hour. Was I relieved, but spiritually lightened? No, I was just glad it was over. But something in me had changed that afternoon under the trees in his yard.

Delmar also taught me the importance of sticking with it. At almost five years sober, I was doing well. Life was good and busy. My family loved me, my job was good, and I was sober. I just didn't come around my home group or the meetings very much. I had not seen Delmar in weeks. Then one morning, as I got ready for work, I realized that I hated everything and everyone. I was "restless, irritable, and discontented" for no good reason whatsoever. I called Delmar.

He met me for lunch at a fried chicken joint on the southside of town. He was sitting over on the side. When I got my tray and came over, he did not even give me time enough to sit down. "How many meetings are you making each week?" he asked. "And when was the last time you did a Fourth and Fifth Step?" I laughed sheepishly, and he laughed, and I sat down and ate my chicken. Then I rejoined the AA program and became involved with my home group. I wrote a second Fourth Step and saw Delmar for the Fifth again.

Not long after that, Delmar retired from working road construction for the state and moved to another town. I still saw him at workshops, Intergroup, the state assembly and our annual Roundup, which he helped start. Eventually I got another sponsor. Delmar had developed breathing problems from all the road work he supervised. He stayed as active as he could for as long as he could. The last time I saw Delmar was at his AA birthday. A friend called and asked me to speak. I was honored and scared I would say something stupid.

In that small clubhouse, Delmar sat at a table so close to the front I literally reached across and shook his hand when I got up to speak. I have no idea, of course, what I said, but even on oxygen, he laughed a lot.

When I finished, he hugged me, and I told him that I loved him. I still do. He died a few months later.

What do you owe your sponsor? What do I owe mine? In a very real sense, my life. Because of that man my life has been a very good one. **TOM L. | ALBANY, GA.**

Do you have a story about how your A.A. program has changed with the coronavirus restrictions? Are you experiencing online meetings and if so, have you been to other cities or countries to be a part of Alcoholics Anonymous there? Please send your short story to:

**Editor Pat K. for consideration of being published in Recovery Times at:
Knowisthetime@aol.com.**

I'M TRAVELING AROUND THE NATION AND I HAVEN'T EVEN LEFT MY OFFICE

Last week, I attended a meeting at Cape Cod, Massachusetts at the request of an A.A. friend who I met several years ago at the Bass River meeting. I've been wanting to go back there for a while but with the current restrictions on travel, I decided to travel the reasonable way – using Zoom.

That meeting was a noon meeting and I loved seeing people walking around on the beach while sharing their stories. It reminded me that no matter what accent we come into AA with, no matter what country we are from, and no matter what religious or spiritual belief we have or don't have, we all share the same problem with alcohol and we also share the same solution.

Another meeting that I really enjoyed was held by the Peninsula Club in Oxnard, a place where I've attended meetings for the past 13 or 14 years. I love the Peninsula Club because it's right on the water and you can look through the windows at the club house and watch the sun set into the ocean. That meeting brought me together with friends from both the Ventura area and my own area in the Crescenta Valley, as the speaker was our own Bob S.

I haven't yet been out of the country for a Zoom meeting, but I did meet two women from Austria and another from Tokyo, Japan, at my Saturday morning women's meeting that is usually held in Burbank. Yoko was taking a cake for 27 years and both she and Benita, from Austria, had attended our meeting when they were getting sober.

Last week, I attended a Zoom meeting for my AA meditation meeting and we all meditated for 20 minutes while one of our members played a crystal singing bowl. By using our imagination, we can travel to far-off places that we've always wanted to go, but without having to spend a dime. There are many meetings online, locally and also all over the world. Get connected with other sober people and you don't ever have to be alone again.

Pat K., Sunland, CA

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED