

Recovery

Times

VOL 27, NO 7 - July 2003

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

The voice on the other end of the telephone quietly asked where she could find an AA meeting. As I looked through the local directory, I sensed the woman's urgency to get help.

This was my fourth month at Intergroup as a phone volunteer. When I was nine months sober (after being in and out of AA for a year and a half), I decided I wanted to give back what was so frequently given to me. The problem was that I was also a shy person. There was no way I could imagine myself speaking in front of a lot of people.

So when the chance to do volunteer phone service arose at Intergroup, I felt this was the opportunity I had been looking for. Little did I know how much this opportunity would benefit my own recovery and sobriety. The woman on the other end of the phone and countless other alcoholics just like her) would help me realize just how much AA and AA service allowed me to grow.

As I looked through the directory for a meeting in her neighborhood, we had a chance to talk. She told me how her drinking was sending her marriage down the tubes and how when she tried to stop drinking she just couldn't. She was telling my story. As I listened, I remembered back to when I was reaching out for help and the hand of AA was there to hold. I remembered the times I would tell myself that staying sober was not worth the hassle and effort. I remembered the times I would swear and cuss that I would never get over the urge to drink. And I remembered the times when my Higher Power would put someone in my life to help me through the struggle.

As we talked, she asked me what I did to replace alcohol in my life. Without hesitation, I told her there was no need to replace alcohol in my life. Through AA that urge to drink had been lifted.

For a moment, I stopped long enough to listen to what I had just said to this woman. Never in my life had I thought those words would come from my mouth, but here I was saying them, and believing them. For the first time since coming to AA I could see and feel the promises coming true in my own life.

I don't know if the woman on the phone ever made it to the meeting in her neighborhood, but the next day I was at my meeting full of gratitude - gratitude for the Fellowship, the help I've received, and the gift of sobriety.

Sue M., St. Paul, MN Grapevine September 1991

In This Issue...

***Upcoming Events**

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***Happy Birthdays**

NOTICE TO OUR READERS

In this month's issue of the Recovery Times, the Contributions Summary is provided as a page insert within the newsletter. The editors are revamping the newsletter layout. Look for more "new looks" in the upcoming months.

Upcoming Events

- August 1-3 11th Annual Foothill Roundup
at Occidental College, LA
Info: Call Central Office, 988-3001

- August 1-3 29th Annual Madd Dog Daze
Rancho Mirage
Info: Steve L., (760) 346-3316

- August 28-31 The Great Outdoor Beaver Meeting
Beaver, Utah
Info: Call Dot or Gerry, 818-341-7107

- Sept. 5 - 7 25th Annual Ventura Co. AA Conv.
Hyatt Westlake Plaza
Info: Paula B., 805-247-0337

- Sept. 26-28 17th Annual Gold Country Round-up
Amador County Fairground
Plymouth, CA
Info: Call Damon B., 209-296-8017

- Oct. 10-12 11th Annual Spirit of San Francisco
Ramada Plaza Hotel
San Francisco, CA
Info: Call 415-566-3845

- Oct. 10-12 52nd So. Cal Convention
Riverside, CA
Info: Hotline - 818-356-1041

Registration forms for the events above are at the
Intergroup Meeting OR at Central Office

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- *****
- July 21, 2003 **SFVH&I**
THIRDMONDAY
8PM Business Meeting
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,
5657 Lindley Ave.

- Aug. 4, 2003 **G.S. Districts #11, 16, 17**
FIRSTMONDAY
6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood

- Aug. 5, 2003 **G.S. Districts #2**
FIRSTTUESDAY
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore,
La Crescenta

- Aug. 6, 2003 **G.S. District #1**
FIRSTWEDNESDAY
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet,
Canoga Park

- Aug. 6, 2003 **SFV Board of Directors**
7pm, Central Office

- Aug. 9, 2003 **G.S. District #7**
SECONDSATURDAY
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- Aug. 11, 2003 **SFV Intergroup**
SECONDMONDAY
6:30pm Orientation
7pm Business Meeting
Knights of Columbus Hall
14450 Valerio Street, Van Nuys

Service Opportunities Alcoholics Anonymous in the San Fernando Valley

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE -

Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does and does not do. Could always use volunteers, especially young people and Spanish speaking A.A.'s for health fairs and to speak at various schools and businesses. Contact Central Office (818) 988-3001.

HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE -

Carries the message of Alcoholics Anonymous into hospitals, prisons & treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Meets the 3rd Monday of the month 8:00 PM @ St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Info: Sarah G. (818) 894-9921.

TREATMENT FACILITIES / CPC COMMITTEE -

Meets the last Sunday of the month 4-5:00 PM 6531 Laurel Cyn, North Hollywood. Contact: Jeri B. (818) 846 9115

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY INTERGROUP -

Elected Intergroup representatives maintain and develop policies for Central Office, and inform other IG Reps about Alkathons & fund raisers, etc. Meets second Monday, monthly, Knights of Columbus Hall, 14450 Valerio St., Van Nuys, CA. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

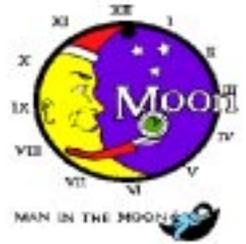
SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Planning and executing all phases of our annual convention, at the Burbank Hilton, Feb, 2004. Committee meets every 3rd Tuesday of each month; 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA.



CENTRAL OFFICE

GUIDELINES FOR PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES



All articles published in the Recovery Times will be reviewed by a committee of three (3) members. Articles must therefore be received by the 10th of the month for consideration of publication in the following month's issue. Guidelines for publication are as follows:

- 1) No use of profanity.
- 2) Primary content must pertain to alcoholism, the recovery from the disease of alcoholism, the 12 Steps or the 12 Traditions.
- 3) The committee reserves the right to edit all articles submitted.

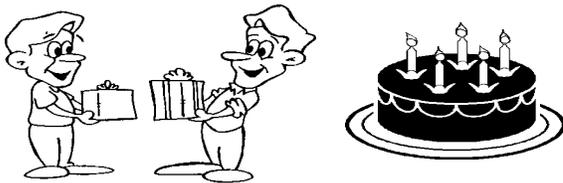
As stated in each issue of the Recovery Times: "RECOVERY TIMES presents the experience and opinions of members of A.A. (and occasionally others) on the subjects bearing on the disease of alcoholism. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement of its content by the San Fernando Valley Central Office or Alcoholics Anonymous. Articles from A.A. World Services, Inc. (AAWS, Inc.) and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. (as well as other publications) appearing herein are reprinted with permission. The names ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS and BIG BOOK are registered trademarks of AAWS, Inc."

Opposing views and rebuttals to articles published are also welcomed.

Submit correspondence to:

**SFVCO Newsletter Committee
7417 Van Nuys Blvd., Suite E
Van Nuys, CA 91405**

Your Birthday Gift to Central Office



Many A.A. members share their birthdays with those who need the same help and opportunity that A.A. gave to them.

By sending a donation to Central Office you share your birthday with Recovery Times readers. Send a dollar (\$1.00) a year - or \$1.00 for each year of your sobriety - or send as much as you wish to give to celebrate your birthday. The amount doesn't matter - it's the "counting" that counts.

May your special day be filled with joy from morning until night, and may the "24's" that lie ahead be especially glad and bright.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

JUNE 2003

Tony R.	16 years
Regina S.	12 years
Paul D.	10 years
Clint H.	12 years
Bob O.	35 years
Valley Action Group Birthdays - North Hollywood	



Spiritual Fitness . . .

Upon the foundation of spiritual fitness rests our freedom from bondage and our release from the compulsion to drink. The Big Book tells us that we are given a daily reprieve from alcoholism, contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Spiritual fitness, like physical fitness, requires effort, practice, repetition.

Just as our physical muscles gain strength through a daily program of action, so too does our spiritual conditioning depend upon a program of action.

Let's take a look into our spiritual gym bag and find some of the equipment that is inside: Ah -there's prayer and meditation, Step 11. Prayer and meditation are tools that enable us to become fit in order that we may help others.

Working with others is an activity that we are told will insure immunity from drinking as no other can. We learn to keep it by giving it away.

Reliance on God's will instead of self-will is another important piece of equipment. Willpower just hasn't worked for us!

There are many other tools also, and as we learn to use them, we will begin to see so-called problems and troubles in a new light. They, too, become opportunities to practice spiritual weightlifting. As we come to rely on God-reliance versus self-reliance, we will one day notice that we are being restored to sanity.

We will cease fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. The problem will have been removed so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

February 1969, AA Grapevine

Look to the Newcomer

Says A.A. member and past delegate Susan C., who currently is a director of the Grapevine Corporate Board: "Think of the newcomer. If A.A. swings wide the gates, where's the identification? A.A. never said we were for everybody, though if someone needs help with a problem other than alcohol, individual members will certainly try to help them get it." Moreover, she notes, "A.A. is mindful of the need to encourage any and all ways to help the suffering alcoholic, and we are grateful for any agency or method that tries to solve the problem of alcoholism. But we have Traditions that

prevent us from affiliating with anyone, even as outside agencies are under no obligation to abide by our own self-imposed singleness of purpose.

"For years now," Susan relates, "treatment centers and the courts have commonly lumped alcoholism and drug addiction under the term 'substance abuse' or 'chemical dependency.' People, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, are introduced to A.A. and encouraged to go to meetings on the 'outside' when they leave. This, despite the fact that while anyone is welcome to attend open A.A. meetings, only persons with a drinking problem are encouraged to participate in closed meetings or become A.A. members. It's a continuing problem that causes real difficulty for A.A. groups."

"Sponsor/Sponsee"

A man in a hot air balloon realizes he is lost. He reduces height and spots a man below. He goes closer and yells out, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I'd meet him an hour and a half ago, but I don't know where I am!"

The man below says, "Yes. You are in a hot air balloon hovering about thirty feet above the ground. You are at latitude thirty-four degrees north and longitude one hundred eighteen degrees west."

"You must be a sponsor", says the balloonist.

"I am", replies the man. "How did you know?"

"Well," says the lost man "everything you told me is technically correct, but I have no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is, I am still lost.

The ground man says, "Your must be a sponsee."

"I am", replies the man, "How did you know?"

"Well," replies the man on the ground, "You don't know where you are or where you are going. You have made a promise which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect me to solve your problem. The fact is that you are in the same position you were in before we met, but somehow now it is my fault."

AA IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

I was three years sober and was down to about one meeting a week, and the one meeting was the type that a person could get in and out with no one asking you to get involved. I had a sponsor in name only, meaning I really didn't have one.

Sobriety had lost its priority in my life. Needless to say, being the kind of drunk I am, my life was a mess. And I hurt inside real bad.

By the grace of God, an old AA friend popped into my life and started to ask some very pointed questions about my life and where it was heading. I was at a bottom in sobriety, and I was so into self that I couldn't see it. He made a few suggestions, one of which was to get a new sponsor and take his direction like I'd never done before.

I asked a very special person to be my sponsor. This guy was an active AA member and had everything I wanted. As we sat down and talked about my AA life and where I was with AA in general, I'll never forget this one phrase he used. He said, "AA is not a spectator sport. It's a participation sport."

What he meant by that statement is that for me to get better I'd have to get involved. He asked that I get on the hotline and attend three meetings a week and do some service work at the prison. When I looked at my schedule I thought to myself I'll never be able to keep up. But what I found was that the more busy I am the happier I am.

At first this advice didn't make any sense. But I followed it as best I could. I realize today that it probably saved my life. So if you're new or seem like you're in a bad place, my advice to you is to participate in your own recovery. Get involved with the group and follow the leadership of your sponsor. If it worked for me, it will work for you.

Bill H.

Making Amends – A Benchmark in Sobriety

When I arrived at the Eighth and Ninth Steps, I found I had an unusual amend to make. I needed to make amends to the entire town I grew up in for various acts of juvenile delinquency. There was no way to find individual firemen, policemen or citizens I may have harmed twenty

years before. But I still wanted to make amends in some way.

I first tried writing a letter to the local newspaper outlining my transgressions of the past and declaring that I wanted to apologize to the town. The editor refused to publish my letter, saying that such a letter might actually encourage other young people to misbehave. So I turned the whole thing over to my Higher Power and went on about the business of living in sobriety.

After about a year in the program, I sat down on a park bench to rest during a long walk. It occurred to me that someone ought to paint the park bench. I thought about doing it myself, but I realized I would need a whole bag full of tools, besides the paint to do a good job. It was too much for me to deal with. So I turned it over to my Higher Power.

Another year went by and when I sat on another bench in a nearby park I realized, "Somebody ought to paint this bench!" It occurred to me that over the preceding year I had acquired most of the tools I would need. All I needed to buy was paint and some brushes.

I bought the supplies, assembled my tools, put them all in a large shopping bag and I began to paint park benches. I took it one day at a time. Over a period of three years, I painted about thirty benches in three parks. Some of the benches were getting tough use and those I painted twice.

I enjoyed the work. It wasn't drudgery for me. I was outdoors, in the parks, out in the sun and wind, listening to the birds, watching the squirrels and sometimes interacting with the people in the park.

I never told anyone outside of A.A. that I was doing this to make amends. I just said that I needed doing and I enjoyed doing it. Some people asked if this was required, court-ordered community service, and I said, "No, I'm just a volunteer."

Then came a day, after about three years, when it occurred to me that I was done. I had made amends to the town. I didn't have to do it anymore.

If you can't figure out how to make amends, just turn it over to your Higher Power. In time, there will be an answer; there will be a way.

Reprinted with gratitude from the New Reporter, January 2001

Beyond Your Wildest Dreams

This is a phrase that I've heard and read many times since I attended my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1986. Over the years, it is a promise that has come true many times for me. However, it has not been a promise of wealth and material possessions. Rather, it has been a promise of the quality of life in sobriety. This is one of those stories.

About four years ago, three members of my home group were having coffee after our regular Friday night meeting. Two were of Scottish ancestry, one of Irish ancestry. One was also a travel agent. Some fantasizing resulted in a wonderful tour - four days in Ireland and four in Scotland in June 1999. With the passing of my father, my mother passed along part of an inheritance to my sister and me. It was just enough for my wife and me, and we brought back many wonderful photos and memories.

For the next year, it was obvious that Al C., one of the original organizers was determined to go back. He kept up contacts with some AA members in Scotland and heard about an annual AA Gathering there. He had a half dozen travel agencies bidding on the transportation for a group. With a workable price for the transportation set, he called Harry in Scotland with the news that we would try getting a group together for their Gathering. Harry was on the Gathering Committee and found a great bed and breakfast at a good price for our group that would do a great job of providing us with a home away from home. Al and I have been good friends since we were both only a few months sober, and he kept me up to date with his organizing and solicited my help with the work. Through it all, I could not see how I could afford another trip for me and my wife so soon, but the pieces kept falling together in such an incredible manner that "something" told me the trip was going to happen, and we were going to go. The flier we used told our AA friends of the trip, and of the fact that this would be no tour, that the primary purpose was to attend the AA Gathering, and that what they did the rest of the six days was up to them. After six months, we had put together a group of twenty-one AA Members with their significant others, plus a few friends. June 26, 2001 we took an overnight flight to Glasgow, Scotland, returning July 3rd.

During the days that the gathering was not taking place, the group scattered over the southern third of Scotland. Some played golf in the country that invented golf. Most traveled around the Lowlands, and the lower Highlands, gathering photographs, souvenirs and other mementos. My wife and I brought back our share of what was one of the most

memorable trips we have ever taken, and we will certainly treasure it. But those are not the memories that have had the most lasting affect on me. Harry, Alex, Duncan, Sandy and others also introduced us to local AA meetings before the weekend Gathering. I was struck by how incredibly open, warm and friendly everyone was at those meetings, and then at the Gathering. At first, I thought they were making a big deal of having American visitors. Wrong. I found that they were treating us the same as they treat each other. I thought that their flying of our flag alongside the Scottish flag was in honor of their American visitors. Wrong. Our flag is displayed every year in recognition of the greatest American contribution to Scotland - Alcoholics Anonymous.

I was asked to be one of the speakers at the Saturday morning meeting at the Gathering. I had mixed feelings about that, having hated public speaking since long before I picked up my first drink. I am no stranger to stage fright, but I consider it an honor and privilege to speak at any AA meeting. My sponsor, in particular, has stressed, as far back as I can remember, above all else, sharing my experience, strength and hope is a responsibility that comes with the gifts of sobriety. The steps tell me that, as long as I'm where I'm supposed to be, doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I will be OK. I'm frequently a poor judge of where I'm supposed to be and what I'm supposed to be doing. But I think that is the purpose for which God placed Alcoholics Anonymous in my life.

During this trip, the alcoholic ego was telling me that I/we were something special. The experience was a reminder of the power that exists within this fellowship, transcending thousands of miles and many cultures, socio-economic status, etc. By the grace of God, that power comes from our commitment to leading a decent, sober life, and carrying that message to the still suffering alcoholic. In closing my talk on Saturday, I made a commitment to my newfound Scottish friends to carry the message of my experience in Scotland back to the groups I attend, and the prison group that I sponsor. That task was completed, with pleasure, within a week of our return.

Beyond my wildest dreams? I would not trade the memories of the fellowship in Scotland for all of the photos, mementos, scenic views, rounds of golf, etc. That is the part of the experience that cannot come from human planning because it comes from the heart. The theme for the gathering was "A Vision for You." This is the vision that I brought home with me.

Dick H., Today Group, Wilmington, De

**San Fernando Valley Central Office
Intergroup Representatives Meeting – May 12, 2003**

Paul D Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm
Treasurer's Report; See Insert

Old Business: Memorial Day Free Picnic will be Monday, May 26, 2003 at Woodley Park- section 2

Birthdays Michael S., 15 years, Linda S., 14 years, Robbyn, 16 years, Walter B., 24 years, Andre, 10 years

Service Committee information see page 2 of the Recovery Times for more information

Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM

The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for May is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.
Next Meeting - July 2003

Prepared and submitted by: Marie B Recording Secretary

Profit & Loss Statement - 28th Annual San Fernando Valley Convention

Income

Contingency & Seed Income	\$ 8,333.33
Donation Income	\$ 4,934.00
Give Away Donations Income	\$ 13,125.00
Hospitality Income	\$ 7,625.80
Registration Income	\$ 60,670.00
Sporting Events Income	\$ 8,475.00
Ticketed Events Income	\$ 75,380.00
 Total Income	 \$178,543.13

Expenses

60-30-10 Distribution	\$ 3,500.00
Administrative Expenses	\$ 15,175.16
Contingency & Seed Expenses	\$ 15,155.83
Give Away Donations Expenses	\$ 9,319.33
Hospitality Expenses	\$ 4,688.34
Hotel Charges	\$ 36,364.20
Printing & Mailing Expenses	\$ 11,220.83
Sporting Events Expenses	\$ 6,934.44
Ticketed Events Expenses	\$ 76,185.00
 Total Expenses	 \$178,543.13

Overall Total \$ 0.0

Newletter Subscription: If you wish to receive your copy of the Recovery Times at your home, please complete this form and return with a check (\$7 donation to cover delivery cost) to:

San Fernando Valley Central Office
7417-E Van Nuys Boulevard
Van Nuys, CA 91405

Current Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ ZIP _____

New Renewal
 Additional Contribution \$ _____

Moving ???: We need your former address as well as your new address to correct our records. Fill out both forms and mail to the address above.

Former Address

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ ZIP _____