

# Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 28, NO 4 April 2004

## *Spiritual Experiences*

It is the intention of the Grapevine to carry occasional accounts of spiritual experiences. To this interesting project I would like to say a few introductory words. There is a very natural tendency to set apart those experiences or awakenings which happen to be sudden, spectacular or vision-producing. Therefore any recital of such cases always produces mixed reactions. Some will say, "I wish I could have an experience like that!" Others, feeling that this whole business is too far out on the mystic limb for them, or maybe hallucinatory after all, will say, "I just can't buy this business. I can't understand what these people are talking about."

As most AAs have heard, I was the recipient in 1934 of a tremendous mystic experience or "illumination." It was accompanied by a sense of intense white light, by a sudden gift of faith in the goodness of God, and by a profound conviction of His presence. At first it was very natural for me to feel that this experience staked me out for somebody very special.

But as I now look back upon this tremendous event. I can only feel very specially grateful. It now seems clear that the only special feature of my experience was its electric suddenness and the overwhelming and immediate conviction that it carried to me.

In all other respects, however, I am sure that my own experience was not in the least different than that received by every AA member who has strenuously practiced our recovery program.

How often do we sit in AA meetings and hear the speaker declare, "But I haven't yet got the spiritual angle." Prior to this statement, he had described a miracle of transformation which had occurred in him - not only his release from alcohol, but a complete change in his whole attitude toward life and the living of it. It is apparent to nearly everyone else present that he has received a great gift; and that this gift was all out of proportion to anything that might be expected from simple AA activity, such as the admission of alcoholism and the practice of Step Twelve. So we in the audience smile and say to ourselves, "Well, that guy is just reeking with the spiritual angle - except that he doesn't seem to know it yet!" We well know that this questioning individual will tell us six months or a year hence that he has found faith in God.

Moreover he may by then be displaying "spiritual qualities" and a performance that I myself have never been able to duplicate - my sudden spiritual experience notwithstanding.

So nowadays when AAs come to me, hoping to find out how one comes by those sudden experiences, I simply tell them in all probability that they have had one just as good - and that theirs is identical excepting it has been strung out over a longer period of time.

Then I go on to say that if their transformation in AA extending over six months had been condensed into six minutes - well, they then might have seen the stars too!

In consequence of these observations I fail to see any great difference between the sudden experiences and the more gradual ones - they are certainly all of the same piece. And there is one sure test of them all: "By their fruits, ye shall know them."

This is why I think we should question no one's transformation - whether it be sudden or gradual. Nor should we demand anyone's special type for ourselves, because our own experience suggests that we are apt to receive whatever may be the most useful for our needs.

By Bill W., *AA Grapevine*, July 1962 (reprinted with permission)

# Calendar Events

## Upcoming Events

### **16th Indian Wells Valley AA Roundup**

April 16-18, 2004

Ridgecrest, CA

Info: [www.freewebs.com/iwvroundup](http://www.freewebs.com/iwvroundup)

### **31st Annual Golden Empire Roundup**

April 24-25, 2004

Bakersfield, CA

Info: Central Office, 661-322-4025

### **23rd Annual So. Cal H&I Conference**

April 23-25, 2004

Marriott Hotel

Irvine, CA

Info: 714-839-2658

### **A.A. Desert Pow Wow**

June 17-20, 2004

Renaissance Esmerelda Resort, Indian Wells, CA

Info: SherAli J. 760-360-5529 or [www.desertpowwow.com](http://www.desertpowwow.com)

### **20th Annual South Bay Roundup**

July 1-5, 2004

Torrance Marriott, Torrance, CA

Info: 310-354-7660 or [www.southbayroundup.org](http://www.southbayroundup.org)

Registration forms for the events above are at the  
[Intergroup Meeting](#) or at [Central Office](#)

## SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- April 19, 2004 **SFV H&I  
THIRD MONDAY**  
8pm Business Meeting  
Get Acquainted Workshop, 7pm,  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 3, 2004 **G.S. Districts #11, 16  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6pm, 11455 Chandler Blvd, N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 3, 2004 **G.S. Districts #17  
FIRST MONDAY**  
6pm, orientation, 6:30pm meeting  
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 4, 2004 **G.S. Districts #2  
FIRST TUESDAY**  
6:30pm, 4011 Dunsmore  
La Crescenta  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 5, 2004 **G.S. District #1  
FIRST WEDNESDAY**  
6:30pm, 7552 Remmet  
Canoga Park  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 5, 2004 **SFV Board of Directors**  
6pm, Central Office  
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- May 8, 2004 **G.S. District #7  
SECOND SATURDAY**  
Agua Dulce Woman's Club  
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd  
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372  
\*\*\*\*\*
- May 10, 2004 **SFV Intergroup  
SECOND MONDAY**  
6:30 pm Orientation  
7pm Business Meeting  
St. Innocents Church  
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

## Valley Events

Bike N For Books Sat June 12 Woodley Park  
Info: Central Office or your Inter-Group Rep or  
any member of H&I

Stepping Stones 1st Alcathon June 11,12,13  
Info: call 661-298-0371

Burbank Group: May 22, June 12  
Saturday Nite 8PM Guest Panel Speaker mtg  
followed by a dance  
Info: call 818-565-5691

## Special Events

**CENTRAL OFFICE**

**2nd Annual**

**Almost Memorial Day**

**Almost Free Picnic**

**Sunday, May 23, 2004**

**10AM - 3PM**

**Woodland Park Picnic Area #2**

**Japanese Gardens Entrance**

**6350 Woodley Avenue**

**Tickets - \$1**

**At Central Office**

**or**

**See your Intergroup Rep**

# Service Opportunities & News

## Service Opportunities 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.

### 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, St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Contact: Central Office at 988-3001.

### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CONVENTION -

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2005 Convention. The Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month (except February and March); 7 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. Convention planning meetings will begin in April, 2004.

## Central Office News

### San Fernando Valley Central Office is On the Web

The SFV Central Office website is now available for Internet browsers. On the website, you can find a map to our office in Van Nuys, a listing of upcoming events in the Valley, service organization information and links to other cool A.A. websites. Our meeting schedule is also accessible on the website. Meetings are listed by day, Sunday through Saturday. Special thanks to Michael F. for his creativity and hard work to make it happen! Check it out: <http://www.sfvaa.com>

### Second Annual Almost Memorial Day Almost Free Picnic

Join us for a day of fun and fellowship in the park.  
See the details on the preceding page, Special Events.

### Do you have an article for the Recovery Times?

Email it to us at: [sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting Feb 9, 2004**

Sarah G. Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 pm

Treasurer's Report; See Insert

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

Old Business: None

New Business: First vote next month to change By-Laws.

Birthdays Rick A. 8 yrs, Darrell R. 21 yrs, Hal S. 32 yrs,  
Liz B. 3 yrs

*Motion to adjourn 7:30 PM*

*The long form of the Intergroup Meeting Minutes for February is available at Central Office or at the Intergroup Meeting.*

*Next Meeting - March 8, 2004*

*Prepared and submitted by: Jennifer J. Recording Secretary*

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

**March 2004**

**Patricia K. 16years**

**Cheryl M. 21years**

**Marie McG. 20years**

**Lisa M. 17years**

**Learning to**

**Live Men's Stag 26years**

*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.*

## One Alcoholic's Story

There it was, the address I was looking for. A storefront in a Reseda, California strip-mall shopping center. Windows painted with a circle & triangle embossed on the large glass pane, and the words ALA-NEST inscribed above it. I drove to the back parking lot and cruised the rear entrance. A number of people were milling around. I parked my car at the far end of the lot. As I walked along looking in the various stores, acting as a shopper in the mall, I approached the small crowd. Two scroungy looking guys dressed in shorts and tank tops greeted me asking if I was looking for the "NEST"? I replied that, "I was just checking it out". They welcomed me in, and told me "You're in the right place". An hour or so later I returned to my car, knocked down the last few ounces of vodka, and returned to the Nest. This began my journey to sobriety.

Growing up in L.A., the oldest of four kids, my mother and I took the brunt of the physical and emotional abuse of a domineering, controlling alcoholic father. In time I became defiant and would involve myself in my parent's arguments. I grew to despise my father. Each summer vacation I'd stay with my mother's brother working for their trucking company. I was a young adolescent, and took pride in being able to work as hard as any man. At fifteen it was agreed that I would move in with my mother's sister and her husband. I was now a sophomore in high school. I made the football team and soon became one of the tough guys on campus. Cruising, drag racing, and looking for girls, an occasional fight, and of course, a few beers became my routine.

As in time past, I found it necessary to have a drink or two in any social situation. By twenty-one I was a daily drinker. Seldom drunk, never sober! Alcohol became my companion and confidant. With self-medication, John Barleycorn and I would conquer the world.

After a short Army active duty stint, where I was labeled a leader and promoted rapidly, I left the military, and returned to L.A. I went into the insurance business and achieved immediate success. Money in my pocket, kudos from friends and associates, the morning drink soon became the norm.

I met the girl of my dreams, had a big wedding, bought a home, a boat, new cars, had two sons, and was promoted to District

Manager all within 5 years. On the outside my life seemed pure success. My father had said. "You'll never amount to anything". I showed him didn't I? But on the inside — why did I feel so alone? Why did I have this gut wrenching fear that only a few drinks could calm me down? I sought professional help but nothing worked. Alcohol was a part of my life - for the rest of my life. It was the only thing that worked. I'd make plans, and not follow through. I lost self discipline. I blamed others. Was there a conspiracy? Was God involved? Why was everything falling apart?

By 1974, I had been terminated from my job. Sold my home, gathered my remaining assets, and moved to Fresno. A business scheme failed. Broke, no job. DWI, and drunk, my wife filed for divorce. How could she?

A few months later, my brother found me in an alcoholic stupor and I was admitted to a ten-day detox facility in the San Fernando Valley. With IV's in both arms I proclaimed "NO. THIS PLACE IS FOR DRUNKS. I'M NOT A DRUNK!"

An H&I panel at that hospital was my first exposure to AA. I realized I had to quit for good. No more booze. I'll explain this all to my wife. She'll take me back. We'll make it. I'll even try this AA deal. Now I know, it was the booze. The day before my release from detox, an old man called me over to talk. I had not seen him before, and have not seen him since. He told me, when I drink again and am at the end of my rope to go to this place, as he handed me a note with the address of The Nest. "These people will help you." I told him. "Thanks anyway, not necessary, I'm through with booze, I've made up my mind." He said. "Take it anyway, you never know."

Two weeks later I awoke. Where am I? Who's she? What's happened? OH MY GOD! What have I done? I spotted a liquor store, bought a pint, and realized it was July 16, 1976. I had been in an eleven-day blackout. Sitting on the seat was the slip of paper the old man had given me. What had happened to my resolve? I headed for the Nest.

Twenty-six years have passed since I made the decision to surrender myself to the path suggested in Chapter 5 of the Big Book.

*Continued on page 5*

## One Alcoholic's Story (cont'd)

Meetings, a sponsor, and the Twelve Steps have taught me how to live in my own skin on a daily basis. Because of a relationship with God (as I understand Him), I receive a daily reprieve from the soul-sickness, which once plagued me.

Today, I share my life with another recovered alcoholic. Our days revolve around our AA commitments and activities. Sponsorship, meetings, conventions, travel, and a host of AA friends provides us days filled with freedom and joy. I know I will never outgrow this Program. I'm going to keep coming back. My Home Group is the South County Men's Stag - Tuesday 8:00 PM - Arroyo Grande. "My name is Nick F. - I am an alcoholic."

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### Today is the Tomorrow That I Worried About Yesterday And What Else I Heard at a Meeting

I used to fret. I used to worry. Now that I am in AA, I still fret; I still worry. However, I just can't seem to do it as creatively as I once did. I go to meetings. I hear things. "This too shall pass." Well, life is short. It too will pass. Is this supposed to calm me? Other things I've heard. "One needn't make a crisis out of an incident." Why not, for heaven's sake. What the heck is an incident for anyways? You cannot at all lay claim to the center of attention if all you have is an incident! You need

mountains for that. What self-respecting alcoholic would go to a meeting titled "The Molehill Group." "Wherever you go - there you are." I heard that at a meeting. Did I need to hear that? Actually, maybe, I did. I thought if I went some where else there would be somebody different there. Unfortunately, there wasn't. My self seemed to be like a dog that always found its way back even if it hadn't been there before. Now, when I go someplace, I prepare. I take precautions. For the chances are, given the way things have been going lately, I'll be there when I get there and, because of that, God knows, I'll need to know where a meeting is. And a dog park.

"To live or just exist- the choice is yours." I heard this to. It worries me. What to choose?

"The way to get anywhere is to start from where you are." I also heard this at a meeting. I've concluded it must have been thought up by the same guy who thought up "Wherever you go, there you are."

Who is this guy that says all these things that are heard at meetings, anyways? I ask people, "Who said that?" "I don't know," they respond.

Sometimes I wonder if it's an anonymous program out of principle, or because we don't know.

I go to meetings. I worry. But, it's not like it used to be.

Another thing I've been worrying about lately. All my best thoughts seem to be things I've heard at meetings.

Go Figure.

(Anonymous and Relieved)



### Co-founder Quotes

#### Relapses - and the Group

An early fear was that of slips and relapses. At first, nearly every alcoholic we approached began to slip, if indeed he sobered up at all. Others would stay dry six months or maybe a year and then take a skid. This was always a genuine catastrophe. We would all look at each other and say, "Who next?"

Today, though slips are a very serious difficulty, as a group we take them in stride. Fear has evaporated. Alcohol always threatens the individual, but we know that it cannot destroy the common welfare.

*AA Comes of Age, p. 97*

"It does not seem to pay to argue with 'slippers' about the proper method of getting dry. After all, why should people who are drinking tell people who are dry how it should be done?"

"Just kid the boys along - ask them if they are having fun. If they are too noisy or troublesome, amiably keep them out of their way."

*Bill Wilson Letter, 1942*

## ***Principles Before Personalities***

Traditionally, rotation keeps AA members from becoming frozen in office. It also ensures that group tasks, like nearly everything else in AA, are passed around for all to share. Upon election, or vacancy of office, many groups have alternates or assistants to each trusted servant who can step into the service positions they have been trained for, while other members fill the alternate slots just vacated. To step out of an AA office you love can be hard. If you have been doing a good job, if you honestly don't see anyone else around willing, qualified, or with the time to do it, and if your friends agree, it's especially tough. But it can be a real step forward in growth—a step into the humility that is, for some people, the spiritual essence of anonymity. Among other things, anonymity in the Fellowship means that we forgo personal prestige for any AA work we do to help other alcoholics. And, in the spirit of Tradition Twelve, it ever reminds us “to place principles before personalities.”

Rotation helps to bring us spiritual rewards far more enduring than any fame. With no AA “status” at stake, we needn't compete for titles or praise — we have complete freedom to serve as we are needed. The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the group members through the sharing of full information, individual points of view, and the practice of AA principles. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions with an open mind. On sensitive issues, the group works slowly — discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before personalities, the membership is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a “yes” or “no” count — precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term “informed group conscience” implies that pertinent information has been studied and

all views have been heard before the group votes. In most groups, the chairperson or another officer calls the business meeting, which ordinarily is held on a monthly or quarterly basis. While some groups may occasionally permit nonmembers to attend, only the group members have a vote. The order of business may include: electing new officers; scheduling meetings; receiving and discussing the treasurer's periodic financial report; hearing progress reports from the G.S.R. and other group servants; and apportioning excess funds among the local central office/intergroup, G.S.O. and the area and district treasuries. Business meetings generally are scheduled before or after the group's regular meeting. They tend to be informal, but custom varies from group to group. Some groups have tried observing Robert's Rules Of Order, only to find that many members are inexperienced in parliamentary procedures and feel too intimidated to speak up. Besides, there is the spiritual nature of our Fellowship, embodied in our Traditions and Concepts which give ample guidance. Almost every group problem has a resolution, which usually can be reached through the mechanism of an informed group conscience. Importantly, a good sense of humor, cooling-off periods, patience, courtesy, willingness to listen and to wait — plus a sense of fairness and trust in a “Power greater than ourselves”— have been found more effective than legalistic arguments or personal accusations.

### ***HUMILITY***

*Humility - the acceptance that being human is good enough - is the embrace of ordinariness. That is not to say that humility sees ordinariness as “good enough”; humility rather sees us as good enough, even in our ordinariness.*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

In A. A. we have found that trying to carry the message to others helps us to maintain our own sobriety. This is because we help ourselves by trying to help others. The bearer of the message benefits from bearing it, whether the recipient accepts the message or not. Service can take many forms. On an individual level it can mean something like welcoming a newcomer to your meeting, saying hello and introducing ourselves. This is one simple way in which we can try to serve. We can give newcomers or old-timers rides to meetings, ask them to have coffee afterwards, introduce them to other members of your group, offer them our phone number and encourage them to call when they need someone to talk to. We can also put our names on the phone list at the Central Office to call or visit those who call A.A. looking for help. We can stand up and tell our story at a meeting when asked; or join the Institutions Committee to do the same for those unable to attend a regular A.A. meeting. We can be sponsors. We can get to meetings early and help set up the meeting or stay afterwards and help clean up and put things away. Instead of just talking to our friends before and after the meeting, we can pick up a chair or dust off crumbs and throw away the coffee cups left behind. This also brings us to Group Service. Every group needs people willing to take responsibility to make sure that the meeting goes off as scheduled, that there is coffee, that the rent is paid (on time) and the meeting room is left clean and neat. Every group usually has someone, elected by the group to make sure these needs are met and usually a Treasurer to manage the groups funds and make sure that anything over the prudent reserve is send off to the other Service entities that they support. We can see how important these positions of service are by remembering that there would be no meeting for us, let alone others, if the trusted servants of the group did not perform them. If no one was there to open up the doors to the meeting — there would be no meeting. If there is no meeting — then there is no group and no way to practice carrying the message to others. All of this teaches me that the message does not carry itself. It does not drop from heaven like rain. We must carry the message to each other, alcoholic to alcoholic. We are the only ones who can carry the message to the next alcoholic, just as others carried it to us. It takes time and effort and may not always be convenient to us. But getting and staying sober takes time and effort. And when did doing only what was convenient get or keep anyone sober?  
Reprint from *It's NEWS to me*, Tri-County Central Office, Tampa

**Newsletter 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 \_\_\_\_\_