

Recovery Times

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 30, NO. 3 March 2006

My Brother's Keeper

Alcoholics Anonymous not only saved my life, but it allowed me to meet my mother.

An adoptee, I had always been curious about who my mother was, but never attempted to find her because I was so absorbed in drinking. In 1995, I contacted the state where I was adopted and received a form to fill out. I was told that if my mother had filled out a similar form, we would be reunited. I never mailed in the form. There was a thirty-five dollar fee, and that was thirty-five dollars less I would have to spend on drinking. My sobriety date is April 1, 1997—the last time I was put in jail. I was in jail for violating probation when I failed a drug test. After serving a ninety-day sentence, I went to a twenty-eight-day treatment facility. I had been around AA before but this time, after ten years of drinking, I finally had had enough and “become willing to go to any length” to stay sober. For the first time in my life, I did what I was told to do. When I got out of treatment, I joined a home group, got a sponsor, did everything my sponsor told me to do to the best of my ability, and became involved in service work.

The Promises began to come true pretty quickly. In July 1999, my wife and I bought a house, and while we were unpacking our belongings, I came across the adoption form I'd received in 1995. I filled it out and mailed it in, along with the thirty-five dollars. My perception of the situation had changed completely. In my years prior to AA, I wanted to find my mother for all the wrong reasons, selfish reasons. Now I mailed the form with no expectations and without any fear of what I might or might not discover.

Less than a week later, I received a phone call from the state adoption registry. A woman told me my mother had been looking for me since I'd turned twenty-one years old. She then nonchalantly gave me my mother's name and phone number. I was surprised to learn that my mother and I had the same area code! All kinds of questions went through my mind, including “Do I already know her?”

Immediately, I called my sponsor, his sponsor, who is a friend and coworker of mine, and my wife. I was excited and scared at the same time. My sponsor told me to “relax and take it easy,” and to pray. I prayed for God to direct my thoughts and actions and for his will to be done. I had waited for twenty-eight years for that moment. God gave me the courage and the strength to dial my mother's number. If I had mailed in that form in 1995, I would have gotten the same phone call from the adoption registry, but I would have been too scared to call.

My mother answered the phone and at first neither of us knew what to say. We talked for several hours. She told me how she had given birth to me when she was sixteen and how her family had forced her to place me with adoptive parents. She was full of guilt and remorse. I finally convinced her that I was not angry or resentful. I assured her that I was raised by wonderful parents who loved me unconditionally. She told me she had thought that I might be either dead or in prison. She had no idea how close to the truth she was.

She also told me about the rest of my family. After I was born, she stayed with my father and four years later they had another child. I have a full brother four years younger than I. My parents divorced when my brother was a baby, due to my father's alcoholism and drug and emotional problems. My father, whose family has a history of alcoholism and various other problems, died in 1995 at age forty-five of cirrhosis of the liver.

continued on Page 4

Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

29th ANNUAL SAN DIEGO SPRING ROUNDUP CONVENTION

April 13 - 16, 2006
San Diego, CA
Info: (619) 992-6333
Email: SDSRUregistration@hotmail.com
Website: www.sandiegospringroundup.com

A.A. DESERT POWWOW

June 15 - 18, 2006
Indian Wells, CA
Info: SherAli J. (760) 321-6568
Website: <http://www.desertpowwow.com>

Registration forms for the events above
can be obtained at the Intergroup Meeting
or at Central Office

Valley Events

TO FIND OUT
WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON
YOU CAN:
COME TO CENTRAL OFFICE
CALL US AT 818-988-3001
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
<http://www.sfvaa.org>

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

- Mar. 20, 2006 **SFV H&I
THIRD MONDAY**
8PM Business Meeting
7PM Get Acquainted Workshop
5657 Lindley Ave.

- April 3, 2006 **G.S. District #11
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
315 W. Vine St., Glendale

- April 3, 2006 **G.S. District #16
FIRST MONDAY**
6:15PM meeting
15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

- April 3, 2006 **G.S. District #17
FIRST MONDAY**
6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting
5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

- April 4, 2006 **G.S. District #2
FIRST TUESDAY**
6:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

- April 5, 2006 **G.S. District #1
FIRST WEDNESDAY**
6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

- April 5, 2006 **SFV Board of Directors**
6PM, Central Office

- April 8, 2005 **G.S. District #7
SECOND SATURDAY**
Agua Dulce Woman's Club
33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd
Sharon G. (661) 951-0372

- April 10, 2005 **SFV Intergroup
SECOND MONDAY**
6:30PM Orientation
7PM Business Meeting
St. Innocents Church
5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

It's FREE !!

(Now that I have your attention...)

The almost free, almost Memorial Day Picnic will not be held this year.

Instead we will hold the

All Services - Almost Free Fall Festival.

This event is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, October 1, 2006.

More information to follow.

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 third Monday of each month 8:00 PM at St. Innocent's Church, 5657 Lindley Ave, Tarzana, CA. For more information, contact Central Office at 988-3001.

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. Orientation 6:30 PM, Meeting at 7:00 PM. 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.

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. Check it out: <http://www.sfvaa.org>

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

Email it to us at: sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net

San Fernando Valley Central Office Intergroup Representatives Meeting February 13, 2006

Michael F. Chairperson – Meeting opened at 7:00 PM
Treasurer's Report: See Insert
Service Committee information - see page 2 and 3 of the Recovery Times for more information
Old Business: None
New Business: A vote on whether or not to sell the book *A New Pair of Glasses* will be taken in March. The vote will be based on each group's decision, for or against.

Birthdays: Jeff - 2 yrs, Rick - 10 yrs, Nikki - 11 yrs, Hal - 34 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.

These minutes are pending approval on

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

February 2006

Hector C.	1 year
Greg I.	5 years
Craig M.	10 years
Bob R.	15 years
Hal S.	34 years
Reseda Speaker	
Birthdays	a lot of years

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.

My Brother's Keeper *(cont'd from page 1)*

I went to meet my mother the following weekend. I was nervous and didn't know what to expect. At the reunion we cried and hugged one another. That day, I met my mother, grandmother, brother, and a cousin. I felt amazingly comfortable around my new family, as if I had known them all of my life.

My brother and I are exactly like; we even look alike. He also has had troubles with addiction. At the time I met him, he was being court-ordered to go to AA meetings and other rehabilitation classes. I wanted to take him under my wing and share my experience, strength, and hope with him. He seemed to be very receptive, and my expectations grew.

My wife, three children, and I had a wonderful weekend with my new family. I didn't see my brother again until four months later. He had stopped going to his court-ordered classes and AA meetings. He was arrested and put in jail for ninety days. He then went to a treatment center for twenty-eight days. Everything that was happening to him was so similar to my last days of drinking. I had renewed hope for my brother based on countless letters and phone calls between us during his confinement.

Five days after getting out of treatment, my brother failed another drug test, and I was asked to appear in court on his behalf. Reluctantly, I went to his hearing. This was the first time that I had gone to a hearing where I wasn't the defendant. I prayed for God to speak through me and for his will to be done.

The judge addressed me by saying "I have done some checking up on you." I had just gotten off felony probation a month earlier and had no idea what the judge might have heard about me. He said that he had heard good things about me (which was a new thing to hear about myself in a courtroom) and jokingly asked my brother if we were sure that he and I were brothers. He told my brother that he had an "invaluable resource" standing beside him and if he was smart he would heed my advice. The judge gave my brother another chance, even though I had told him that my brother belonged in prison.

My brother has terrorized my mother and the rest of the family for many years. Now I've been able to tell them about my experiences and what worked for me. The parents who raised me pretty much cut me off toward the end of my drinking and that definitely sped up my willingness to change. My wife and kids had also left. I had no one left to manipulate. Thank God I was arrested. I believe I wouldn't be alive today otherwise.

It is now nine months since I met my new family. We visit each other often. I talk to my mother and grandmother on the phone at least every other day. My relationship with my adoptive parents has become even stronger. They are happy for me, and even want to meet my mother. I have also met my paternal grandmother and have a good relationship with my father's family. I seem to be their family counselor too.

My new family has never seen me drink, and I am a completely different person than I was only a few years ago. Today I am a junior in college with aspirations to become an alcohol addiction counselor. If I had mailed in that form in 1995, I would have seen my father on his deathbed, but I don't believe that would have made me stop drinking. I would have said, "That will never happen to me." Five years later, I know it was God's will for me to find my family when I did. I would have been useless to them five years ago. Now, thanks to AA and my Higher Power, I can be of service to my family. I can give and expect nothing in return.

My brother is awaiting sentencing and will be spending some time in prison. He has definitely helped me stay sober. Hearing his excuses, self-pity, and blaming of others for his problems reminds me of myself only few years ago. We are just alike. He doesn't think so, but he didn't know me when I was a practicing alcoholic. I can only show him by example, pray for him, and be there for him. I love my brother and would do about anything for him. But I can't get him sober or make him change.

Mark W., Dothan, Alabama

It's A Promise

On April 1, 2002, I celebrated a five-year anniversary—on the job! What's the big deal? In thirty-four years I've had twenty-eight jobs. Subtract the last five years for my present job and that leaves twenty-seven jobs in twenty-nine years. An average of almost one job per year! You see, I always knew better than my boss. I was never appreciated. I always had the answers; nobody else knew what they were talking about.

What does this have to do with sobriety? Everything. I've been hanging in for eleven and a half years. The Promises do start to come true. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. I never thought I would enjoy working, let alone earn more money than I've ever earned before. I still have financial problems of my own making, but I know the Promises will continue to come true if I work for them. Thanks to my Higher Power, Bill W. and company, and the people in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Anonymous

A TRUE STORY

An old-timer took a newcomer to an AA round-up of about 400 people, and when the speaker had finished, the chair started handing out chips. Three people picked up their one-year chips, and the crowd gave them a nice round of applause. Three more people picked up nine-month chips, and the crowd clapped again. They clapped a little harder for the members picking up chips for six months and three months, and louder still for the person who picked up a chip for one month. Then an elderly man picked up a white chip for the desire to quit drinking for one day, and the roof almost fell in: The crowd yelled and clapped for five minutes.

"Why are they doing all that for the guy getting a white chip?" a newcomer asked. An old-timer smiled and explained: "They believe him."



Co-founder Quotes

"In the late stages of our drinking, the will to resist has fled. Yet when we admit complete defeat and when we become entirely ready to try A.A. principles, our obsession leaves us and we enter a new dimension – freedom under God as we understand him."

Powerless Over Alcohol

I had gone steadily downhill, and on that day in 1934 I lay upstairs in the hospital, knowing for the first time that I was utterly hopeless.

Lois was downstairs, and Dr. Silkworth was trying in his gentle way to tell her what was wrong with me and that I was hopeless. "But Bill has a tremendous amount of will power," she said. "He has tried desperately to get well. We have tried everything. Doctor, why can't he stop?"

He explained that my drinking, once a habit, had become an obsession, a true insanity that condemned me to drink against my will.

SHOELESS

In him, he saw his own face. In him, he saw his own hopelessness.

I have been continuously sober since June of 1989. It can be so easy to lose sight of gratitude for sobriety and to take my new life for granted. I believe that the longer I stay sober the more important it becomes to remember all the gifts the program has given me. I can do this through prayer, meditation, and especially through frequent contact with the new member.

I am an alcoholic who has recovered as a result of the program as outlined from the title page to page 164 of the book Alcoholics Anonymous. As I read the Big Book with my sponsor and others in my early sobriety and did what was described in those pages, a new life was given me as a free gift. As we went through the process outlined in the book and made a decision to turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understand God; as we went through the process of writing an inventory and admitting all of my faults; as we went about making amends for the harm I had caused others; as we became teachable on a new way of life that includes daily prayer and meditation; as we were able to experience so many of the promises that the Big Book gives; I was transformed and given a new way of life. The desire to destroy myself, the obsession to drink, and that feeling of hopelessness were removed and replaced by a sincere desire to work our Twelfth Step. I have been given a new way of life that is about recovery through self-sacrifice and service to others.

I have so much as a result of following the instructions I have been given in AA that I easily forget what a huge gift we have been given. I was given one especially poignant reminder last summer.

We had just come from a Seattle Mariners' baseball game. Baseball has become a passion with me, and on this day I had especially good seats. I was with my wife and we enjoyed a great day at the ballpark together.

On our way home we began to talk about our plans for the rest of the day. It was late afternoon and my wife wanted to go for a walk on the beach and catch the sunset. I wanted to head for town and see if we could catch an AA meeting. It was one of those uncomfortable situations and rather than argue I agreed, and we pulled off the freeway and headed in the direction of the water. I felt angry and disappointed that I was not getting my way. The tension in the car was heavy as a result. Once again I felt the common restless, irritable, and discontented feelings that I suffer from when I am living in selfishness.

Here I was, driving in a very nice car, sitting across from the most beautiful woman I had ever met, and coming from doing one of my favorite things, seeing a major league ball game. And I was on my way to the beach to walk with the woman I love to see a summer eve's sunset. Yet I felt angry that I was not getting my way. The Big Book tells us that selfishness, self-centeredness, is the root of our problem. How true it was for me on that day.

As we passed by an intersection that was very familiar to me from my drinking days, I had an inspiration to stop. I told my wife I wanted to show her one of the spots where I had spent time prior to getting sober.

I had met my wife when I was seven years sober, so she had heard the stories of homelessness, alcoholism, and drug addiction, but I wanted to show her the spot where I used to hide and had set up a cardboard lean-to next to a well-known fast-food restaurant.

I asked my wife to take the corner and pull into the parking lot. Just the thought of visiting that spot began to bring me back to a place of gratitude. I saw the spot behind the building where I once sat hopelessly: it was between the fast-food restaurant and a tavern. The space between the buildings was only a few feet wide and closed off on both sides by a fence. In this small area on the last day prior to my getting sober, I had set up a cardboard box and crawled in. From that place I could see the world going by and yet remain unseen. I had crawled out of that box many years before and walked a few blocks into an AA meeting.

From the car I showed my wife the spot and we both felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. It was so far from the life I knew now and so far from the man my wife knew today. As we were thinking and looking at the spot, a man emerged from the very place I used to lie. He ducked out from under a few bushes and popped up right next to where

continued on Page 7

SHOELESS *(cont'd from page 6)*

we had parked. I looked him in the eyes and he glanced back and kept walking. It was such a powerful moment for me that it gives me chills to this day.

As the man walked away, my wife spoke first. "You have to talk to that guy," she said. We talked for a minute or so, and I agreed I needed at least to approach the man and let him know that I, too, had been in the same place at one time and had found an answer.

I got out of the car and followed the man until we both came to a stop at the corner, waiting for the light to change. I told him I had seen him emerge from the spot and he seemed very surprised but was somewhat willing to talk. He sat down at a bus stop shelter and I sat with him. I told him that I had once been in the same place. Looking at me and seeing my wife in our car parked close by, he was probably wondering what I wanted. I told him I was a member of AA and that that was where I had found my way out. We talked for a very long time and mostly I listened to his story. He was from the south and was traveling. Although he did drink and do drugs that, of course, was not part of his problem. I knew. I had been there.

I wondered, as I listened, what I could do for this man. I told him about the showers at Fisherman's Terminal and about a few shelters downtown. While I talked I could see him pulling at his disheveled clothes trying to look his best. I could tell his dignity had been stripped and sitting with me he was embarrassed at his torn appearance.

He was a gay, black man and I am a white heterosexual. But in him I saw my face, and in him I felt my own hopelessness. He clearly was not willing to hear about an answer so I left my advice to a few things that would be helpful in getting around the city as a homeless man.

I gave him all the money I had in my wallet. I noticed his shoes had large holes in the toes and his size was just about the same as mine. I took off my shoes and gave them to my new friend. I remembered how blessed my life really is. I had in my home a pair of new running shoes that had never been out of the box. I had bought them because they were on sale and I knew I could use them eventually. My wife was very surprised when I returned to the car shoeless.

Gratitude overwhelmed me on that day, and I hope and pray my friend will someday remember about the answer in AA that I described.

K. D., Lynnwood, Washington

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 _____