

Recovery Times

November is Gratitude Month

A newsletter from Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office VOL 31, NO. 11 NOV. 2007

We Who Are Next in Line

To mix up our primary purpose with other destructive dependencies erodes the unity that binds us together.

I am a twenty-two-year-old alcoholic. After several years of hard drinking I was dying of alcoholism. Doctors had told me I was incurable and hopeless. I began to recover through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and by the grace of a very loving God and AA I'm still sober three years later. Because of my recovery I was allowed to pursue a lifelong dream and I enlisted in the Air Force. This has given me the opportunity to attend AA meetings in different states and other nations and I have noticed something interesting in my travels. Where a meeting allows people to talk about drug addiction, it usually allows them to talk about everything else under the sun and they invariably do. In these meetings that have little regard for AA Traditions there seem to be more people who go back to drinking, more people who don't practice the Twelve Steps, more people who don't have (or don't use) a sponsor, more people who don't extend a safe welcome to visitors or pay much attention to newcomers.

However, on the other side of the coin, meetings that insist on discussing subjects related to recovery from alcoholism only—and stand by it—are often meetings that make sure a new person is welcomed and given phone numbers with maybe a pamphlet or two, meetings that make their visitors feel like they've come home, meetings that get involved with hospitals and institutions committees and their service centers. These meetings produce a different result. The old-timers are there, and they have a respected voice because of their tested experience. People at those meetings have and use sponsors and they talk about how they've applied the AA program in their daily lives. They have more solutions and talk less about problems, more peace and less turmoil, and more people who stay recovered and less who go back to drinking again.

Bill W. was right: AA cannot fix the world. AA's Twelve Steps and Traditions can be applied universally to everyone's benefit, but AA itself must forever remain by and for alcoholics. To mix up our primary purpose—freedom from alcohol—with drug addiction and overeating and other destructive dependencies

erodes the unity that binds us together, unity we must keep to survive. It's not a matter of exclusivity, it's a matter of the survival of AA's very existence.

Since the Fellowship's early days we have had the Twelve Steps to guide us. But the bedrock of AA has always been one drunk talking to another. Through this, the depth of understanding is reached that gives hope to a desolate alcoholic's heart. One drunk to another—not one addict to an alcoholic or one codependent to an alcoholic. One drunk to another drunk.

One day it will be left to the young people now in our Fellowship to carry on the original spirit and traditions of AA, even though the buzz words and trends will come and go. It will be up to us to teach newcomers how to maintain the type of sobriety that achieves the promises of the Big Book and dispels some of the fables of recovery popular today. It will be up to us to help the newcomer from the street dry out, shakes and pukes and all. We will be left to teach the little things: how to sit at the front, not the back of the room, say hello to the new guy, wash coffee cups and ashtrays. One day it will be up to us to uphold the Traditions. It will be up to us to keep it simple.

Today, young people are learning from the last generation of AAs who got the message straight from the original old-timers. We must be diligent in preserving the AA way of life through our actions and our participation at meetings amid an ever growing attitude of "I come first" rather than "sobriety comes first." There are many catchwords, but only one program of recovery outlined in the Big Book.

Old-timers, there are still some of us who desperately need you and value what you have to say.

Young people, it's our responsibility to follow in their footsteps.

Jenifer C., Bury St. Edmunds

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Calendar Events

Upcoming Events

41st Annual Las Vegas Roundup

November 22 - 25, 2007

Las Vegas, NV

Website: www.lasvegasroundup.com

18th Annual River Roundup

January 10 - 13, 2008

Laughlin, NV

Registration Info: 928-770-4074

Website: www.rcco-aa.org

33rd Annual San Fernando Valley AA Convention

February 1 - 3, 2008

Burbank, CA

Info: 818-734-0383, Email: info@sfvaaconvention.org

Website: www.sfvaaconvention.org

Thanksgiving Events

Quite a few groups are having Thanksgiving events.

Please feel free to call Central Office

(818) 988-3001

for any information we may have regarding them.

Damaged Books for Sale

From time to time Central Office has slightly to heavily damaged books in inventory.

In early November we plan to start a program offering these damaged titles for sale.

Anyone interested is invited to contact Central Office. Ask to speak with Bob, Larry or Lindsay.

Opportunities for Service

Your Central Office needs **telephone volunteers** for the Late Evening (9 PM - 12 Midnight) shift and the Overnight (12 midnight - 9 AM) shift.

If you have one year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up to do a shift (from your home!) once per month and help your fellow alcoholics.

Service Committee Schedule

November 19, 2007 **SFV H&I**

THIRD MONDAY

8PM Business Meeting

7PM Get Acquainted Workshop

5657 Lindley Ave.

December 3, 2007 **G.S. District #11**

FIRST MONDAY

6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting

315 W. Vine St., Glendale

December 3, 2007 **G.S. District #16**

FIRST MONDAY

6:15PM meeting

15950 Chatsworth (church), Granada Hills

December 3, 2007 **G.S. District #17**

FIRST MONDAY

6PM New GSR orientation, 6:30PM meeting

5000 Colfax (church), N. Hollywood

December 4, 2007 **G.S. District #2**

FIRST TUESDAY

5:30PM, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta

December 5, 2007 **G.S. District #1**

FIRST WEDNESDAY

6:30PM, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

December 5, 2007 **SFV Board of Directors**

6:30PM, Central Office

December 14, 2007 **G.S. District #7**

SECOND SATURDAY

9AM, Agua Dulce Woman's Club

33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd

December 10, 2007 **SFV Intergroup**

SECOND MONDAY

6:30PM Orientation

7PM Business Meeting

St. Innocents Church

5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

November

is

GRATITUDE

MONTH

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 (Get Acquainted Workshop, 7:00 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 2008 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 October 8, 2007

Rick A. Co-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: None

Birthdays: Paul - 7 yrs, Natalie - 17 yrs,
Ron - 18 yrs, Sarah - 23 yrs, Karen - 24 yrs.

Motion to adjourn 7:35 PM

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

*These minutes are pending approval on
November 12, 2007*

Next Meeting - November 12, 2007

Prepared and submitted by:

Dawn H., Recording Secretary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

October 2007

Jane J. 17 years

Daniel J. 17 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.

Who's the Boss?

An old-timer speaks out about AA's singleness of purpose

My heart goes out to those long-term AAs who have let some of the newer people coming into the program, fresh from the drying-out-studios, become their boss. What else can it be when these valuable older members stop showing up, feeling they are being “trashed” by the newer ones instead of being respected?

Somehow, though, many of us have never thought of quitting. In fact, quite a few of us with long-term sobriety have felt that whatever contributions we are capable of making could be more important now than ever. So, we're here to stay. And to make clarity and simplicity and singleness of purpose our objectives.

Oh yes, we know firsthand how difficult it is to listen to some of the current philosophies, especially those that mandate that since all addictions are the same, there should be no closed meetings, that anonymity is now outdated, that AA is “evolving” into a world society of linked twelve-steppers who will march off to glory in the sunset.

Indeed, it is difficult for old-timers not to give in to the soul sickness that these fevered fantasies produce. Yes, we are saddened by AA meetings in which psychobabble and other diversions such as wholesale parent-blaming and generational self-pity take the place of the real AA message.

However, in the past couple of years a number of old-timers have set up brand-new groups whose stated objectives are to adhere to AA's singleness of purpose. Our posture is not to fight anyone or anything, even those who seem to abhor the very idea of old-timers. We merely wish to

observe the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. And to hope that others will follow on their own paths to mature sobriety.

So, with AA undergoing changes and with me approaching my thirty-fifth AA birthday, it seems important—vital perhaps—to determine who really is the boss in my sobriety, in my life.

I've sometimes found that it's easier to figure out who's *not* my boss than to put my finger on who is. I know it's not my checkbook, although it huffs and puffs a lot and tries to be very controlling. It's not my family, although they take a lot of my time. It's not my doctor, who seems to be fond of putting limits on what I may or may not do. Nor is it my church.

It's not my mailman, my favorite service station, the tax collector, my life insurance agent, my restaurant waiter, or the network newscaster—although each of these can spoil or make my day.

Is AA my boss? No, again! Witness the Twelve suggested Steps and Traditions: they are not the Twelve Commandments.

And so, as to who's the boss, we've already got one—a Higher Power. Others need not apply.

*John R.
Santa Barbara, California
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Humor from the Grapevine

T. S. of Morgantown, West Virginia, recalls when he was new and had never spoken up at a meeting. Asked by the group chairperson to read “How It Works,” he said yes even though he was terribly nervous.

All through the announcements he studied the words intently. Finally the time came, and he promptly began: “I'm Tom and I'm How It Works.”

« « « » » »

R. B. from Nashville, Tennessee, heard this one at a meeting: “Made a list of all persons we had *charmed*.”

« « « » » »

C. C. of North Hollywood, Calif. overheard a chairperson ask to see the hands of all those in their first “thirsty” days of sobriety. Bet a lot of hands went up.

« « « » » »

B. A. of Lincoln, Nebraska, ran across the opposite approach. A woman was having trouble with her ex-husband and read Step Six like this: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these *defective* characters.”

« « « » » »

R. C. of Monahan, Texas, swears she heard Step Ten read, “continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong and promptly *omitted* it.”

12 Steps Cafeteria Style

The two words “these principles” did not make much of an impression on me in my early days in AA. In fact, I was often told that the Twelve Steps were merely suggestions—that I was to take them “cafeteria style”—take what I wanted and disregard the rest.

I followed the course taken by many who start with reservations about the First Step; yet trying to “carry this message to alcoholics” even without “having had” any sort of chance of spirit or “spiritual awakening *as the result of these steps.*”

Recently I have heard a number of so called old timers who seem proud to proclaim “I don’t know the Twelve Steps—oh sure, I have read them—but I don’t know one from the other.”

It was not until nearly six years after my entry that I realized that such a statement is a hollow boast. And, as one who had to learn the hard way, I would like to suggest that (if there are any others who are as I found myself to be) maybe a repeated inventory of “these principles” might be in order.

Am I, of myself alone, powerless over alcohol? If so, would it not be wise for me to remember the need for continued help from a power other than my own ego?—and keep to my decision to turn my way over to that something beyond my own ego? And hadn’t I better continue to do some honest work on uncovering my own character defects—admit them—become willing to have them removed—and humbly ask? And, as a result of these Steps, won’t I be able to do a more sincere job of making amends to all who should be in an honest list of those I harmed? And won’t I be in a more sound position to continue a daily inventory? And won’t I have a real basis for meditation and prayer to open the door for a conscious contact with God, a knowledge of his will for me, and the power to carry that out?

I feel that as I *try* to improve my understanding of the Twelve Steps (and to me, they are in logical sequence) I will find that I am enjoying a spiritual awakening as the result of *these* steps, and feel better able to carry *this* message to alcoholics and practice *these principles* in all my affairs.

F. O., Vermont

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Co-founder Quotes

Dr. Bob Smith

Much has been written, much has been said about the Twelve Steps of AA. These tenets of our faith and practice were not worked out overnight and then presented to our members as an opportunist creed. Born of our early trials and many tribulations, they were and are the result of humble and sincere desire, sought in personal prayer for divine guidance.

As finally expressed and offered, they are simple in language, plain in meaning. They are also workable by any person having a sincere desire to obtain and keep sobriety. The results are the proof. Their simplicity and workability are such that no special interpretations, and certainly no reservations, have ever been necessary.

Grapevine, Sept. 1948

The Lifeboat

I went to a meeting last week that taught me the importance of the First Tradition. Some time ago this group had decided to discuss one Step every month. They were on the Tenth Step that month, and I was looking forward to hearing everyone's experience, strength, and hope.

The chairperson started the meeting in the usual way, but then introduced his own topic. I asked him about the group's decision to discuss a Step every month. He said he knew about that, but he wanted to talk about something else. The rest of the people in the meeting didn't seem to care, and it wasn't my home group, so I didn't feel in a position to argue. The chairperson went on to talk about a relative who had checked into a treatment center. As I sat there pouting, I began to think about Bill W.'s analogy in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. He said that the AA group is like a lifeboat. If everyone in the lifeboat is to survive, then everyone needs to stick together. I carried the analogy further. If a group follows the past experiences of our Fellowship (the Steps and the Traditions), it will be following in the wake of other boats. It will have a smoother ride.

The chairperson of that meeting was steering the boat. When he introduced his own topic, it was as if he took out a chainsaw and cut off his portion of the boat. He set the boat adrift. The next person talked about her concern for the way her daughter-in-law was raising the grandchildren. She took out another chainsaw and cut off her portion of the boat. The boat continued to break up as people brought up

topics that had little to do with the common welfare of the group. As a group, they not only lost their ability to stay afloat, but they also lost their effectiveness in pulling in others who were still suffering.

After the meeting, I talked with a lady who had been sober and coming to meetings for nine months, but was about to check herself into an outpatient treatment program. Apparently she wasn't getting what she needed to stay sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.

My home group has a group conscience statement that's read at the beginning of every meeting. Part of it reads, "The format for our meeting tonight will be the discussion of a Step or Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous. In keeping with AA's First Tradition, we respectfully ask that you confine your remarks to only the Step or Tradition being discussed. Other problems may be discussed after the meeting if you wish."

When I first started attending my home group, that statement really bothered me—because I wanted to talk about whatever moved me.

Today I see that statement as saying, "Please check your chainsaw at the door."

*Brian H.
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
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Just Keep Coming Back

Tradition Three:

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

My encounter with the Third Tradition came almost immediately upon entering the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. I remember reading that Tradition on a window shade which hung at the front of the room at the first meeting I entered.

Somewhere in the depths of my being I knew I wasn't a member because I didn't have, nor could I even imagine having, a desire to stop drinking. I was an alcoholic to be sure; that I knew! So I had no problem with the First Step of AA. But there certainly was a difference between admitting I was an alcoholic and having a desire to stop drinking.

When I mentioned this to a woman who was later to become my sponsor, she said, "That's okay, honey, you just keep

coming back." And I did. Eventually, after attending AA meetings for eight months, certain events took place in my life and all of a sudden I had a very powerful desire not to pick up another drink. I call that the two-by-four effect. My sponsor told me later that I rode the rim of AA until I fell in!

I now look at that eight-month period as my true test of self-honesty. I could admit all I wanted that I was an alcoholic, but when I admitted within me that I truly wanted to stop drinking—that's when I became a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*Rosemary P.
Pittsford, New York
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5th Step - Not Yet at Peace

“...in my heart and soul, I knew that I had not yet admitted to God, to myself, or to another human being "the exact nature" of my wrongs.

It is a beautiful, tropical Sunday morning here in Panama. I am sitting at the dining-room table, working on lesson plans for our AA group's regular Wednesday-night study session.

Looking through the window, I see the parked cars of those who are attending services at a neighborhood church. I often think that maybe I should be in that church, too. As time marches on and my period of sobriety lengthens, I feel more and more the spiritual stirrings in my heart. Little by little I am awakened, as alcohol looses its grasp over my soul. The thinking is becoming a bit less stinking, and I find that I am maturing and growing with each sober day.

I am restless, so I pick up a stack of Grapevines and thumb through them searching for a new article, but I have read them all. I look for notices of new AA literature, but there are none; I have already ordered all that is currently available. I pick up the Big Book and thumb again its dog-eared pages, with underlined passages and myriads of marginal notes. The same with the "Twelve and Twelve." I pick up a folder containing some Grapevines from 1946 and 1947 that I have been fortunate enough to acquire. I treasure these scraps of AA history and handle them with great care.

I am still restless and dissatisfied. Something is missing.

I think back to last Wednesday night's study session. There lies the cause of my restlessness. I conducted the meeting, reading from the "Twelve and Twelve" and sagely fielding questions from the floor. It was a good meeting. It ran twenty minutes past the usual hour. Everybody was excited and went home happy and content. Everybody but me. The subject of the discussion had been the Fifth Step, and, in my heart and soul, I knew that I had not yet admitted to God, to myself, or to another human being "the exact nature" of my wrongs.

Yes, that is the source of my discontent. I am not yet at peace with myself or with my God.

I think these inner stirrings and the "spiritual awakening" I have been feeling must be God at work, oiling the rusty hinges of the floodgates. If this is the signal that He is ready to listen, then I think that soon I must have the "courage to change the things I can."

Let us pray that the time has come.

T. R. T.

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Van Nuys, CA 91405

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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.*

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