

# RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 36, No. 3, March. 2012

## The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Monthly Newsletter

### **“DUNSMORE,” THE OLDEST, CONTINUOUSLY-OPERATING CLUBHOUSE WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI, STARTED AS A MEN’S STAG**

The San Fernando Valley A.A. clubhouse known as “Dunsmore” (aka: The Verdugo Hills Alano Club) sits at the end of a Dunsmore Street in a residential neighborhood at the juncture of Honolulu Avenue in La Crescenta. To see it from the outside, you wouldn’t know that it played a significant part in A.A.’s history. It just looks like a house that, from time to time, attracts large groups of people who tend to smoke cigarettes and chat outside.

However, the history of Dunsmore is daunting. Inside the clubhouse in a polished glass case sits the original letter Bill Wilson wrote to its founders welcoming them to the fold of A.A. The letter is dated August 31, 1949 and is posted from the New York headquarters of A.A. World Services. In fact, Dunsmore is the oldest, continuously operating A.A. clubhouse west of the Mississippi. Ask any oldtimer there - they’ll tell you.



The Verdugo Hills Alano Club got its start as a Men’s Stag meeting back in 1947 when sober men met at each other’s houses for meetings and to play poker. After a while, it became necessary to find another location where these early A.A.s, many of whom worked in the entertainment industry, could get together to play poker without the presence of alcohol.

“There were other A.A. meetings in the surrounding area at that time,” says Stan S. of Dunsmore. “Meetings were held in Sun Valley and downtown L.A. But the local men of A.A. wanted a place of their own.”

Finally, one of the founders, C.H. Davenso, found a 1,520 square foot house at 10401 Wilshire Boulevard in West L.A. that was going to be demolished and had the house moved on a flatbed truck to its present location. One of the founders owned the vacant land where the Clubhouse sits and granted the property to the Verdugo Hills Alano Club on May 25, 1949. Co-founder N.J. Holly, a contractor, then did all of the structural work to stabilize it, building the stairs and getting it up to code.

Says Stan, “Since opening its doors in 1949, Dunsmore is the oldest, continuously-operating A.A. clubhouse west of the Mississippi and the last of its kind.”

From the correspondence and meeting notes that were maintained through the years, it appears that the men started holding meetings soon after the building was moved. The original Clubhouse had a fully-functioning kitchen, a bathroom, an attached bedroom and a living room. The bedroom and living room eventually were turned into the Club’s meeting room. In addition to meetings, the original Clubhouse hosted dinners, Christmas parties, and birthday parties, making it a hub of social activity for A.A. in this area.

From its earliest days, even before the Clubhouse was established, the men took attendance at their meetings. The attendance rosters kept track of who was sponsoring who, how much sobriety they had, whether they relapsed, what meetings they attended, and what meetings they missed. According to the records, about 30 men were regular attendees by the end of their first year of meetings. **(Continued Pg. 4)**



## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **28<sup>th</sup> Annual Sunshine of the Spirit**

#### **High Desert A.A. Convention**

March 9 – 11, 2012

Victorville, CA (Ambassador Hotel)

[www.highdesertconvention.com](http://www.highdesertconvention.com)

#### **Seniors in Sobriety**

7<sup>th</sup> International Conference

March 14 – 17, 2012

Yuma, Arizona

(928) 247-0395

#### **All California Young People in A.A.**

March 15 – 18, 2012

Ontario Convention Center

2000 E. Convention Center Way, Ontario, CA

#### **35<sup>th</sup> Annual San Diego Spring Roundup**

April 5 – 8, 2012

Town & Country Resort Hotel

[www.sandiegospringroundup.com](http://www.sandiegospringroundup.com)

## **Service Opportunities**

#### **Central Office Board Mtg: Wed., April 4,**

Nuys, 6:30 p.m.

**Phone Shifts:** Central Office needs

a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up online: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) 818) 988-3001.

**SFV Intergroup: Mon, April 9, 2011:** 6:30 Orientation, 7 p.m. Business Meeting, St. Innocent Ch., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana The SFV Central Office coordinates this monthly meeting for all **SFV** Intergroup on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month.

**Public Information Committee:** Provides info to the general public about what A.A. does. Need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs & speaking at schools & businesses. For info: 818) 988-3001.

**Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee:** Carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Call Central Office if interested. **Mon, March 19, 2012** 7:00 Orientation, 8 p.m. Business Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

**San Fernando Valley Young People in AA:** Committee Meeting is held the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month **Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>**, Unit A., 10641 Burbank, N. Hollywood

**Gen Service, District 1: Wed., April 4, 2012,** 6:30 p.m. Business Meeting, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park

**Gen. Service, District 2: Tues, April 3, 2012,** 6:30 p.m. Business Meeting, 4011 Dunsmore Ave., La Crescenta

**Gen. Service District 7: Sat., April 7, 2012,** 9 a.m. Bus. Mtg, Agua Dulce Women's Club, 33210 Agua Dulce Cyn. Rd.

**Gen Service, District 11: Mon, April 2, 2012,** 6 p.m. New GSRs/6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale, CA

**Gen Service, District 16: Mon, April 2, 2012,** 6:15 p.m. meeting, 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills

**Gen. Service, District 17: Mon, April 2, 2012,** 6 p.m. New GSRs. /6:30 p.m. Bus. Meeting, 5000 Colfax, N. Hollywood

## **THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE:**

#### **Gus W. – 26 Years, Burbank Group**

If you are aware of the passing of a member of our Fellowship, please call us at (818) 988-3001 or email an obituary to: [sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net)

### **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Orange County A.A. Convention**

April 6 – 8, 2012

Hilton Costa Mesa

<http://ocaac.org>

#### **31<sup>st</sup> Annual So. CA H & I Conference**

April 13 – 15, 2012

Bahia Resort, San Diego

[www.socalhandi.org](http://www.socalhandi.org)

#### **2012 International Men's Conference**

April 19 – 22, 2012

Orleans Hotel & Casino

Las Vegas, NC

[www.laamclasvegas.org](http://www.laamclasvegas.org)

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

June 7 – 10, 2012

Indian Wells, CA



**2012,** Central Office, 7417 Van Nuys Blvd., Ste. E., Van

telephone volunteers for all shifts (esp. midnight – 9

a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up online: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) 818) 988-3001.

## **Quotes from our Founders**

"Men and women who are allergic to alcohol and who compulsively persist in drinking eventually become sick from a unique illness. This illness is known to medicine as alcoholism; it is unique in that it adversely affects us physically, mentally and spiritually." **The Little Red Book, Step One**

"We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having lost their self confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve." **The Doctor's Opinion XXVIII**

"On the other hand – and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand – once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules."

## **The Doctor's Opinion, xxix**

## **CENTRAL OFFICE NEWS:**

**HAVING A BIRTHDAY?** Celebrate it with A.A. by sending a donation to Central Office. We will post your birthday here, below. Please consider making a \$1.00 donation for each year of your sobriety. You'll be helping Central Office reach alcoholics over the phone lines 24-hours a day/7-days a week. 🎵🎵🎵 **Happy birthday to you!** 🎵🎵🎵

**Mr. Anonymous – 23 Years**  
**Maggie M. – 28 Years**

**LIVE 24/7 PHONE SERVICE:** Whether you are reaching out for help from another AA member or surfing the Web, you can find the Valley Central Office any hour of the day or night. Visit us at: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) for meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, and links to other cool AA websites or call to speak with a sober AA member: (818) 988-3001.

**HAS YOUR MEETING CHANGED?** If your meeting info changes (location, time, meeting name or type of meeting), let Central Office know. Please provide meeting updates in writing by mail or delivered in person during office hours.

## **Central Office: IGR Mtg. Notes of February 13, 2011**

**IGR Chair Cheryl A.** opened the meeting with *The Serenity Prayer*.

**Recording Secretary Dawn H.** accepted a motion for approval of the minutes from January's Intergroup Meeting. The minutes were approved with minor corrections.

**Treasurer Brian H.** reported that Central Office is in the black \$3,180.81 MTD and YTD, which is down only slightly from the previous year. A full Treasurer's Report is available in this month's *Recovery Times*.

**Executive Secretary Bob F** reported Everything is fine with the Internet site at [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org). Central Office is running fine.

**H & I, Bob F. (on behalf of Tom T.)** said H & I needs sober alcoholics to take panels into the L.A. County jails. Jail clearance is required and those who are interested were encouraged to attend the upcoming H&I meeting the 3rd Monday of the month at St. Innocent. Orientation: 7PM, meeting: 8PM.

**2012 San Fernando Valley AA Convention Planning Committee:** Joel thanked everyone for their attendance and support of our convention last month. The Convention Planning Committee meetings will be dark until April 17<sup>th</sup>, when they will resume at 7:00 p.m. at St. Innocent. All are welcome to attend.

**Group News:** Wayne said **The Nest** is moving from its current location on Sherman Way. Meetings will temporarily be held at the **Hole in the Sky** until a new permanent home can be found. The **Burbank Group** is hosting an AA panel followed by a dance on March 17<sup>th</sup>. The dance is \$6, and begins at 10 pm, right after the Saturday evening meeting.

## **Intergroup Rep. Birthdays:**

- Dan – 2 years on 2/27
- Rick – 16 years on 2/24
- Sandra – 18 years on 2/27



*The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 7:15.*

## **DUNSMORE: Continued, Page 1**

The Clubhouse originally required dues for membership. Members kept a low profile, as in the late '40s and early '50s, there was a stigma about being an alcoholic and holding A.A. meetings in the community. Stan notes, "It was a socially-sensitive area for people to disclose their membership in the club. But in holding meetings and giving drunks a place to go, Dunsmore became very important to people who would never have had a place to socialize with others -- if there hadn't been a clubhouse. Back in the old days, many people got sober after being brought to the clubhouse. There was a pretty regular practice where an alcoholic would be escorted to the clubhouse and may have gone through withdrawals right in the meeting. It was a place where drunks could dry out while Club members took turns watching them. It was similar, in some ways, to social services."

The Men's Stag meeting also held annual camping trips as they still do today. At a Men's Stag campout in 1989, Stan heard from Joe N. about some of the history that has never been written down. "He said, it was never designed to be an open place where anybody could come to A.A. It was just supposed to be a clubhouse for sober men."

However, after the clubhouse opened, it became so popular, that wives began meeting there and then Newcomer meetings were established. All in all, it changed the way Dunsmore operated and helped the club evolve to what it is today with meetings several times a day, seven days a week.

Stan S., class of '88, is a longtime member of Dunsmore who has spent many hours researching Dunsmore's history. Much of the information he gathered over the years came from oldtimers such as Joe N, a much beloved Dunsmore elder statesman, who passed away more than a decade ago. Dunsmore's anniversary is held each year in September with a BBQ picnic in the park across the street on Honolulu. Editor, Pat K.

### **A Soldier's Tale: My name is Brian, I'm an Alcoholic**



In 1967 at the age of 17 I joined the army. As both my parents were dead the army became my "Surrogate family". After basic training I was sent abroad to Germany. It was there that I came to realize that drinking in the army was a way of life. You are fed, clothed, given accommodation and money to spend, and most of my money was spent on drink. I was drinking almost every night, but weekends were the real drinking times. Being drunk for much of the time was just a laugh, (or so I thought). At this time I was starting to get into trouble through drink. I would end up in the middle of a field, or occasionally be locked up for the night in the guardhouse for some drunken escapade. As time passed my drinking started to even out and I managed for the most part to stay out of trouble, but only for a while.

I was eventually promoted and given stripes, although never a week went by when I was not drunk. As my alcoholism progressed I started to get into more serious trouble. I was arrested by the German Police for drunk driving and this culminated in my entry into a detox unit. After treatment I went through a "dry" period and the army shipped me back to England for two years. During this time I decided to start a fitness regime and somehow managed some "controlled drinking"

I arrived back in Germany and for a few years I continued to manage "controlled drinking." I saved up all my "sweeties" for the weekend. I was then promoted and given a normal posting back to England. At this time the progression of my alcoholism was affecting me more and more. After a drunken argument I clocked an officer and was in trouble again. It was 1986, I knew I had a serious drink problem and it was then that I first made contact with Alcoholics Anonymous.

I went to a few AA meetings and managed to stay "dry" for six weeks. "Fear" was what stopped me from drinking. I was still blaming people, places and things however and inevitably lifted the "first drink". Providence



again seemed to be on my side and I was given a posting back home to Scotland before retiring from the army. I finished my last three years without any more serious trouble.

When I left the army it was with a great sense of relief. It was 1991 and my alcoholism began to accelerate. For the next three years I went through a cycle of “binge drinking” emerging from each bout demoralized and full of fear. During this time I tried to get back to AA and managed some “dry periods”, but all I was doing was “getting fit to drink again”. On 11th November 1994 I asked for help and finally took the First Step.

I knew I had to build up a “mental defense against the first drink” by using the 12 Step recovery program. Being “atheist” at this time, the mention of God always put me off. The Third Step in particular seemed to be a major hurdle. It was explained to me however that I was only being asked to “make a decision” to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him. The actual turning over would take place as I” worked the next eight Steps.”

I began to understand that the alcohol was only a “symptom” of deeper emotional problems. I then sat down and took a moral inventory of myself, writing down all my fears and resentments. After some serious thinking, I took my inventory to a priest in the Fellowship and unloaded all the “emotional garbage” I had been carrying around all my adult life. I told him things I thought I would take to my grave. What I had done was build myself a “platform” which would then allow me to move onto a new and sober life.

I continued on the recovery program and made a list of all the people I had harmed. I made amends as best I could and put myself on the top of the list. By this time I was starting to become “God conscious” and I was also reading a lot of AA books. It was after I read Chapter 16 of “Pass it on” that I was guided to a church in Glasgow where I went through a “Spiritual Experience”. After that night the whole 12 Step recovery program fell into place.

At the beginning this “atheist” was told that if I thoroughly applied myself to the 12 Steps as they are laid down, it would be “impossible” not to come to believe in a God of my own understanding. Today the first 9 Steps have been put into the dustbin of the past (I would only have to go back to them if I got drunk) and I use the last 3 Steps as my daily maintenance Steps.

I met my wife Mary in AA and we have both settled down to a happy and sober life. All thanks to AA and the grace of God as I understand Him. **Brian**, *Reprinted with permission from A.A. Roundabout.*



### **Our Humble Apologies**

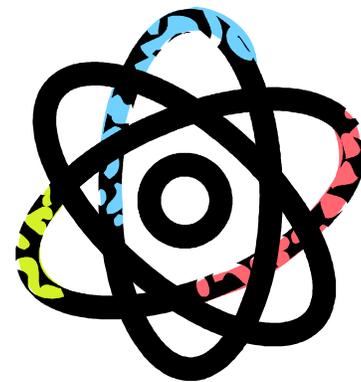
As a result of a paperwork snafu by a member of the Veterans’ Administration on the Westside of L.A., our annual “**A.A. at the V.A.**” Christmas Caroling and Holiday Dinner was cancelled at the last minute leaving many A.A.’s wondering, “What’s up with that?”

For all those who were looking forward to joining the 30<sup>th</sup> annual A.A. at the V.A. event at the North Hills Veterans facility, we humbly apologize for not being able to put it on this year. Many people worked very hard to organize the food donations, to cook the turkeys and hams, to find volunteers to staff the dinner and to continue our age-old, much loved tradition started by Bob F. of the San Fernando Valley A.A. Central Office.

Despite desperate last minute attempts to reach the administrator of the V.A. on the weekend of the event, we were unable to reverse the error. Just wanted to let you know that Central Office appreciates all those who made plans to show up for the event – and those who did show up in the driving rain to sing Christmas carols outside by the sidewalk. We didn’t get to see any patients at the V.A. this year, but it made a few of us feel good for trying. Thank you~ Editor, Pat K.

## Six Axioms of Alcoholic Thinking: A member gives us a rundown in plain English

Dr. Silkworth wrote that the alcoholic becomes restless, irritable, and discontent when all he is doing is not drinking. The Big Book describes us as egocentric, egotistical, self seeking, and self-will run riot even though we don't like to admit it. These observations were documented around 1939. In 1944, Dr. Tiebout added his comments, writing that the alcoholic, as a class of people, is narcissistic, has an egocentric core, feelings of omnipotence, is intent on maintaining at all costs its inner core; that alcoholics are defiantly individualistic, display grandiosity, insist on being the master of their own destiny, and will fight to the end to preserve that position.



I began to observe those tendencies in myself soon after taking the 12 Steps of AA, but still didn't like to admit it. When I am not spiritually fit, I tend to follow the Six Axioms of Alcoholic Thinking. They are:

1. **It's not fair.**
2. **It's not my fault.**
3. **Other people are behaving badly.**
4. **I know what is best.**
5. **It's my job to straighten them out.**
6. **I'm not being treated with the respect I know I am due.**

While I absolutely relate these axioms to my own thinking, I am occasionally suspicious I am not alone in the way I process information.

The first axiom seems to relate to the belief that the world somehow owes me something. Other people seem to benefit from situations that don't really suit me. I have to work harder than is reasonable to get the benefits others seem to have with little or no effort. Perhaps this relates to unmanageability and wanting to control the world around me.

The second axiom seems to say that I am a victim, that my intentions were always good, but circumstances just didn't work out for me. It's kind of like saying bad stuff happened when I drank through no fault of my own. I can always emphasize that I have a disease and am due some special consideration because I am impaired. It's simply not my fault.

The third axiom lets me judge others, take their inventory, and suggests that the world would be a better place if only others would behave better. Of course, I am the proper judge for what comprises good behavior. If the other actors would say their lines properly, if the scenery were properly arranged, then everyone would be happy.

The fourth axiom is the restatement of my egocentric nature. Of course I know what's best, and everyone would be happy if they just did as I suggest.

The fifth axiom is a statement of my rebellious nature, false pride, and my feeling of self-importance. I am not happy with the unmanageability of my life, don't like the implications of the second half of the First Step and wish to assert my authority since I have achieved a few days of sobriety and am nearing spiritual perfection.

The sixth axiom indicates people around me do not realize with whom they are dealing, that they don't see all the good I am doing for them, how much I am actually helping them even though they haven't asked for help, and surely haven't asked me.

*George T., New Bern, NC, Reprinted with permission from the A.A. Grapevine.*

**The 12 Steps through Word Search.** Each month, Recovery Times features the Step of the Month. This month, March, we are featuring Step Three. **Find the words to Step Three below:**

***“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood them.”***

L A N M I T E O V E R I  
B O B A M O T U R N O V  
S T Y M L L O R B I L L  
O T I D E C I S I O N N  
B H C D O F M V R U A S  
R E A N D I K A E R E G  
I M R E W G O D T S R L  
B I E G E I P A L Y L O  
B D O W I L L I L M J O  
K U N D E R S T O O D F



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