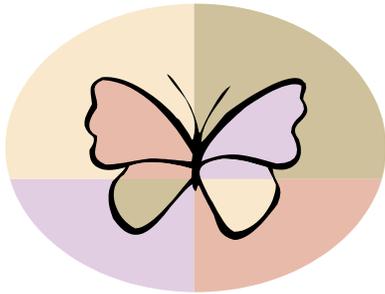


RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 41, No. 3, March 2014

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Monthly Newsletter



Powerlessness and the Moth

I have always been an avid spiritual seeker. But for years, even decades, I just could not get past the word, “powerless.” (Unmanageable, however, could easily be my middle name). I grew up with a WWII vet for a father—a hardworking perfectionist. You just work harder, that’s what you do, and everything will turn out fine. But then things started happening that I couldn’t control—people, places and things. Then my own health started falling apart, so I had to acquiesce that perhaps I WAS powerless over certain things.

We all get here when we get here. I’m getting here late but not from a lack of trying. Perhaps sometimes we are simply trying too hard.

I saw this firsthand the other day when I was watching a moth. I have a basic reverence for all of life because I figure in another universe WE might be an ant or a flea, so I try not to step on or squash small insects in particular. But this moth got stuck in the bathroom, he couldn’t get out and he was getting very weak.

I remembered from growing up that moths have what we called “magic dust” on their wings and that, if you mess with them too much, then they can’t fly anymore. But it got to the point where, okay, I need to do something. I need to see if I can help him get back outside.

So I tried to gently cup my hands around the moth and he was resisting like crazy. He did NOT want to be powerless. He was freaked out. But, somehow we managed and I got him outside, and he had enough of the “magic dust” left on his wings that he was able to fly away.

And I was thinking, I don’t know, but maybe what happened has something to do with us as well. I think we ARE given free will and choices so we’re not powerless in that respect.

And maybe when we’re resisting, God’s up there going, “You know, I’d really LIKE to help them, “ but we’re thrashing around like somebody drowning and God and the angels are like, “WHOA, I’m not going to touch THAT.”

It’s been said, to “Let go and let God.” That’s step 3.

Or—“Let go, or be dragged.” Which puts us back again at step one.

Perhaps if we just relax for a minute, we can heed a signal trying to be transmitted from above. And then, maybe we too can keep most of the magic dust (our free will) and be carried along to something greater on the wings of a new understanding that we didn’t possess before.

For in truth, we are not helpless or hopeless and, depending on our choices and the company we choose to keep, we can become more powerful than ever. And even, as the Big Book promises us, “Happy, Joyous and Free.”

Submitted by Phyllis H.



Illustration by Leslie Z.

SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:

- **SFV Central Office Board Mtg: April 9, 2014**, 6:30 p.m., Central Office
- **SFV Intergroup: Mon., April 14, 2014**, **New IGRs**: 6:30 p.m., General Meeting: 7 p.m., St. Innocent Church., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana
- **Gen Svc, Dist. 1 (1st Wed.) April 2, 2014**, 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Can. Pk.
- **Gen. Service, District 2: (1st Tues.) April 1, 2014**, 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta
- **Gen. Svc Dist. 7: (2nd Sat.) April 12, 2014**, 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Cyn Rd, Agua Dulce, CA
- **Gen Service, District 11: (1st Mon.) April 7, 2014**, 6 p.m. New GSR 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale,
- **Gen Service, District 16: (1st Mon.) April 7, 2014**, 6:15 p.m. meeting, 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.
- **Gen. Svc., District 17: (1st Mon.) April 7**, 6 p.m. New GSRs/6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg., 5000 Colfax, NoHo.
- **SFV H & I: (3rd Mon.) March 17, 2014**: 7 p.m. Orientation/ 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY:

Central Office needs telephone volunteers for all shifts (esp. midnight – 9 a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, please call Central Office: 818 988-3001.

Public Info. Committee provides info to the public about what A.A. does & doesn't do. Need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs & to speak at schools & businesses.

SF Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee: Temporary contacts are needed to pair the alcoholic leaving rehabilitation, treatment or jail with AA in their home community. Contact Central Office for information. H & I also needs volunteers to carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. See information above (SFV H & I).

San Fernando Valley Convention Committee: Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2015 Convention. The committee meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month starting in April.

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA meets the 1st Sunday of the month at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., NoHo.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: Your Central Office holds a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd Monday of each month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group by sharing information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. **To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call: 818 988-3001.**

CELEBRATING AN A.A. ANNIVERSARY? By making a \$1.00 donation for every year of your sobriety, you can support Central Office in reaching out to alcoholics all over the county. Please send your donation in during the month of your birthday so we can acknowledge you in the correct issue of Recovery Times. For February, we thank the following for their contributions: **Herb S. - 21 Years, Jeff A. - 29 Years, Patty D. - 30 Years,**

Reseda Big Book Study - 1 birthday - 20 Years, Darwin B. - 41 Years



DEATHS (THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE) : **George J. - 33 Years.** If you are aware of the passing of a Fellowship member, please call us at (818) 988-3001 or email obituary to: sfvaa.org. **Please Support Your Central Office** by sending a representative from your group to the Intergroup monthly meetings. We meet the 2nd Monday of every month at **St. Innocent Church at 5657 Lindley in Tarzana.** Please come! We would love to see you!

Newsletter Subscriptions: If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times**, please send your name, address and payment for \$7.00 to cover cost & delivery to: **San Fernando Valley Central Office, 7417-E. Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91405.** Please tell us whether it is for a new subscription, a renewal, or if you are enclosing an additional contribution, and if moving, please also give us your former address.

A.A. Central Office maintains LIVE 24/7 PHONE SERVICE for A.A.s. Visit: www.sfvaa.org to find meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, or download a copy of Recovery Times. **Want to be of service?** Why not answer phone calls and help others? **Has your meeting Changed?** Please provide meeting updates in writing to: **The Valley Central Office, 7417 Van Nuys Blvd., Ste. E., Van Nuys, CA.**

San Fernando Valley Central Office

Minutes of February 10, 2014 Intergroup Representatives Meeting

OPENING: Bill S. opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*, Aimee T. read "*The Twelve Traditions*." Dawn H., Recording Secretary, accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from January's Intergroup Meeting; the minutes were approved as submitted.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Brian H. reported: Central Office is in the black \$7,777.29 MTD and YTD. Brian thanked the groups for their ongoing support. A full Treasurer's Report is available in the *Recovery Times*.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F. reported:

- Everything is running smoothly at Central Office in terms of operations, but the challenges with the building management have returned (i.e., lack of parking, inadequate restroom facilities). As a result, the search for a new office location is beginning again, with concentration on the industrial area surrounding the Van Nuys Airport.
- Drop-dead date for changes to the directory is Friday, February 14. New directories will be available in March.
- Our volunteer staff is currently running well, but Central Office can always use new volunteers. Interested parties should contact Larry at Central Office.
- Everything is running smoothly with the www.sfvaa.org website.
- *Recovery Times*: Everything is superb with the newsletter.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Introduction of New Intergroup Representatives – Neva S. welcomed 8 new IGRs this month. IGRs are reminded to encourage recruitment of IGRs from meetings that are not currently represented. There are currently 700+ meetings in the San Fernando Valley, with only 50-60 meetings represented monthly at IGR. Orientation for new IGRs begins at 6:30 p.m. prior to monthly IGR Meeting.

Service Representatives:

General Service District 17: Aimee said District 17 will be hosting the Area Assembly this Saturday, February 16th at St. Francis Xavier Church in Burbank, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Daniel Daniel thanked everyone for supporting H&I and welcomed any interested parties to attend the upcoming monthly meeting. There is an urgent need for people with jail/prison clearance to take panels into the various institutions. Clearance requirements are different for different agencies, and all were encouraged to attend the upcoming H&I orientation and business meeting to learn more.

San Fernando Valley AA Convention: Joel S. reported: The 39th Annual San Fernando Valley Convention was a wonderful success, and Joel thanked all who participated through service (continued, next page)

Quotes from our A.A Founders

"Consider the problem of the fast-growing overseas centers just now emerging from their pioneering time -- how they have slowly gained the confidence of medicine, religion, and the press; how they have finally grown into unity through an ever better application of our Twelve Traditions; how they have tried to make good their desperate lack of language translations; and how they have well begun to cross all barriers of race, creed, or social condition."

AA Co-founder Bill W., *October 1960; "Our Pioneers Overseas."*

"In the meetings I attend, newcomers sometimes ask me how I've been able to stay sober so long. My answer is always the same: every morning, the first thing I do is say three magic words -- God, help me."

Kissimmee, Fla., March 2006
From: "*Small but Mighty*"

Beginner's Book: Getting and Staying Sober in AA

"Drinking is no longer a problem, but my thinking sure is. Writing a gratitude list puts the brakes on negative thoughts, turns me back toward the light, and helps me to see the beauty in everyday life."

New York, N.Y., January 2006
From: "*Tools for Life*"

Beginner's Book: Getting and Staying Sober in AA

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and marathon meetings. The convention planning meetings will resume on April 15th, with Dawn H. assuming the role of Chair.

Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: *Bernard B.* - Fundraising for the 11th Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention kicks off with a Chili Cook-Off on February 22nd in Newhall. Dates for the convention are still being finalized, but will be in early October. A venue change is also being considered due to financial constraints. This year's theme is "No Middle of the Road Solution."

OLD BUSINESS: Literature Sales are CLOSED the last Friday of each month. Central Office doors remain open; phones are still answered. Reminder for groups to report upcoming group events. Continue to send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

NEW BUSINESS: The Board of Directors has approved a cost of living increase in compensation for the three employees of Central Office (executive secretary, office manager and weekend manager). As the staff had not received a raise in six years, it was brought to the general meeting that the bylaws be amended to revising the compensation structure for the Central Office staff each December. A formal copy of the proposed amendment will be presented at the Intergroup meeting in March, and will be voted on at that time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION: *Bill S.:* There are several conventions and round-ups coming up soon, including the 30th Annual Tri-State Roundup in Laughlin (May 15-18), the 30th Annual South Bay Family Roundup in Torrance (May 23-26), and the A.A. Desert Pow Wow in Indian Wells (June 5-8). Groups should bring at least 350 flyers for upcoming events. Flyers must be for "AA-related events" (defined as "an event that includes an AA Meeting as part of the event").

ACKNOWLEDGE BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY:

- Aimee – 6 years on 2/15
- Rick – 18 years on 2/26

VACANCIES ON BOARD: There is currently an opening for a 2nd Alternate. Sandy R. was nominated and unanimously approved to fill this position. Welcome, Sandy!

CLOSING: Meeting adjourned with *The Lord's Prayer* at 7:26 p.m.

Prepared and submitted by: *Dawn H., Recording Secretary*

Got a story, poem or artwork that is A.A.- related that you want to share? Stories should be 500 - 700 words. Please email to "Editor, Recovery Times" at: xnowisthetime@aol.com. Stories must include your phone number and/or email contact info. We welcome all A.A. submissions but only publish those that are about Recovery and A.A. and which follow our format. We look forward to hearing from you!



CALENDAR OF A.A. EVENTS

- 42nd Annual All CA. Young People in AA Roundup:** Redding, CA Civic Auditorium, April 3 - 6, 2014
- Tri-State Roundup:** Laughlin, NV May 15-18, 2014
- South Bay Roundup:** Torrance, CA May 23-26, 2014
- AA Desert Pow Wow:** Indian Wells, CA June 5-8, 2014
- Foothill Roundup:** La Canada, CA August 1-3 2014





Alcoholic or Addict -- Or Both?

My name is Max and I am an alcoholic. After being sober for four years, I recently checked into detox to get off the pain med my doctor prescribed to “manage” my severe neck injury. It took two weeks in the detox and then another several at home for the fog to clear, flu-like symptoms to go away, and true sobriety to return. I came away from my hospital stay with a newfound lease on life, and a front row seat to the insanity of our disease.

While I was in detox, I met several individuals struggling with sobriety and other addictions. Many felt that that they were there because of one substance and one substance only.

During my time in the detox, I developed a friendship with a woman who was battling addiction with a substance other than alcohol. She was an amateur boxer and divorced mother of two who had her real estate license revoked and was now making a living by dealing her drug of choice while managing a small escort service on Los Angeles’ Westside. Despite her war stories about excessive alcohol consumption, she never did mention alcohol as being her problem. Despite the physical pain she was undergoing, which came with horrible withdrawals, she employed her boxing spirit and was determined to fight her way to being clean. As a former athlete myself, I admired this in her.

After detox, I went home while she went on to a treatment center for a month. When she left treatment, she moved in with her parents up in the high desert to get away from the L.A. scene and she invited me to visit. I suggested that we go to an A.A. meeting and she accepted my suggestion, so I made the two-hour drive to see her.

We decided to grab some dinner prior to the meeting and found a Chinese place close to the meeting's location. However, when it came time to order drinks, my friend ordered a whisky sour while simultaneously telling me that “they make the best ones here.”

I didn't want to be preachy so I explained how, in my experience, I am and have been addicted to any substances that change the way I feel and that, every time I substituted one for another, the result was the same--incomprehensible demoralization. Her response was that she was not an alcoholic - only an addict.

I then suggested that we get going to the meeting. “Oh, the meeting started at 7:00,” she replied. I checked my watch and it was already 8:00 - well past the time to make it to the meeting.

I wasn't angry with my friend, just sad and worried for her. But I did realize at that point that I had to set some strong boundaries to protect myself from that point forward. I have found that being around someone in this mindset can be infectious and not good for my sobriety.

Since that night, I have called and texted my friend, but have not heard back. I hope and pray that she is okay. This disease is so cunning and baffling and it is so easy to cross that invisible line when we substitute one substance or pleasure for another.

It takes what it takes for us to finally get it and begin our walk in the sunlight of the spirit. But for the grace of God go I.

Max S., Sunland



A Death In The Family

A home group becomes a community when

an anchor of the meeting dies

Most of us who are regular members of an A.A. group feel ourselves to be a part of a community cemented together by common desperation--to paraphrase the Big Book, like passengers from a sunken ship who find themselves in a lifeboat on the open ocean. That sense of cohesiveness and mutual interdependence is particularly strong in my home group, which meets at 7 A.M. six days a week and numbers among its members people who have been showing up, sharing and making themselves of service, virtually every day for years. That they are anchors goes without saying--but what does a group do when it loses one of its anchors?

Recently, we were faced with just such a circumstance. If there was any one individual whose presence seemed to define our meeting it was Stevie G., a tall, vigorous 61-year-old computer wizard with a heart of gold. It was fortunate he was also stubborn, for in the early days, some members of the group - A.A. "purists," were reluctant to welcome a man who talked a great deal about drugs and made liberal use of profanity while sharing. He did stay, chalked up sober time and established himself as a person willing and capable of working with difficult, poly-addicted sponsees. He volunteered at the jail, performed many tasks for the home group and found time to fix innumerable ailing computers for his friends.

His love and devotion to his wife and six children set a wonderful example. One could write a book about Stevie as a paradigm of the extraordinary capacity for goodness found in ordinary people. My purpose in writing, however, is not to eulogize our friend--others have done so very ably--but to describe the effect that his recent illness and death had on our local A.A. community.

Last fall, Stevie, who was rarely ill and avoided doctors, was persuaded to seek medical attention for disorientation and mental confusion that looked to outsiders like a relapse on drugs. Doctors diagnosed aggressive brain cancer with a poor prognosis. A week after surgery, Stevie was back in the meeting, looking like Frankenstein's monster with all those stitches. He reported cheerfully that he'd never felt better in his life and thought that some long-standing barrier to serenity had finally been removed from his skull.

That euphoric state didn't last. Chemotherapy and a spinal infection left him, by the middle of December, confined to his house. He was in pain so severe that refusing drugs was no longer an option, as he was facing the stark reality of his own death. He declined steadily from then on and died at home on Feb. 28, surrounded by his loving family.

I will always remember how much he was able to continue to give to us, his A.A. community, during those final three months, and how we as a community came together in support of him and his family. All of us are grateful to his wife and grown children for the graciousness with which they included us, even when their desire for privacy must have trumped their need for assistance.

Early on, a group of his sponsees and A.A. friends held regular A.A. meetings in the sick room. Several came from considerable distances, witness to the feeling of kinship that ties some sponsors to sponsees long after one has moved away.

After Stevie was confined to his bed and was losing his ability to converse, people continued coming in ones and twos, sitting for hours at the bedside, talking with the patient when he was able and with each other when he was not. His sick room became almost a place of pilgrimage. Friends and family created a kind of museum of Stevie's life with hundreds of photographs lining the walls and mixes of his favorite rock music playing on the stereo.

Even while dying, Stevie was still in the midst of life which was where he wanted to be. His courage and good cheer were infectious. It was impossible to be grim and dolorous in his presence and it seemed almost sacrilegious to revert to that state away from it. A number of people commented in the meeting

that being a part of this unconventional but somehow very functional deathbed scene helped them to better handle the illness and death of their own family members.

Many of us, I am sure, are a little less apprehensive about our own aging and death after seeing Stevie's journey. One home group member organized a relay of cooks to take meals to the family and another established a fund to help defray expenses. Others collaborated with the family to organize a moving memorial service attended by nearly 500 people, followed by a benefit concert. We learned that when you mobilize the resources of a community this large, you can have an incredibly meaningful experience at almost no cost. We learned that we are not sheep who go astray when something happens to the shepherd but more like geese. If you watch a flock of migrating geese, you will notice that there is always an identifiable leader, but that individual changes in a fluid and seamless manner. There is always some goose ready to step in and take responsibility.

I've lost both parents and many friends and relatives over the years, and this is the first time I felt that the surrounding community functioned fully as a support group. Churches didn't do it. The workplace didn't do it. A scattered and distant family didn't do it, and the medical establishment certainly didn't do it. My A.A. group, on the other hand, proved itself a true community. I am profoundly grateful that my home group was there for Stevie and--provided I remain an active participant--will be there for me when I face life's inevitable difficult transitions. Martha S., Eugene, Oregon

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Daily Reflections Word Search. Each month, we feature a puzzle from a page in Daily Reflections. Today's reading is from Feb. 24. **"I try to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one's heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion that we can ever know." (As Bill Sees It," page 37).**

Read sideways, up and down and diagonally. (Some, but not all of the words, are featured).

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

**San Fernando Valley Central Office
7417-E. Van Nuys Boulevard**

Van Nuys, CA 91405

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