

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Three A.A.s Share Their Experiences Attending the 80th Anniversary of A.A. at the World Convention in Atlanta



Over 61,000 were expected to attend the International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Atlanta, July 2nd – 5th with the theme “80 Years – Happy, Joyous and Free.”

Held once every five years, the World Convention brings together A.A.’s from 170 countries and territories to celebrate the three legacies of recovery, unity and service. This year, 800 speakers participated in the event, held at the Georgia World Congress Center, the Georgia Dome, Centennial Olympic Park and at several local hotels. Meetings were held in English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Japanese, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Swedish and American Sign Language with translations provided throughout the event. With A.A. literature now available in 90 languages, celebrants were united not by language but by their shared goals of recovery.

The international convention dates back to 1950, when Cleveland, Ohio hosted the first convention. The last world convention was held in San Antonio, Texas in 2010. The next one will take place in Detroit, Michigan in 2020, followed by Vancouver, Canada in 2025.

Three of our local A.A.s now share their experience at the recent World Convention in Atlanta:

Words cannot convey the gratitude, feelings, and emotions that one gets from attending an International Convention. Whether it's from seeing all the attendees with their badges stating they are from all over the world, witnessing the flag ceremony, in which one person from each of the countries represented carries that country's flag onto the stage, or the feeling that gets me every time: the energy and power of saying the Lord's Prayer with a stadium full of people where you literally feel the power flowing through you from the ground up.

I've been so fortunate (blessed) that I have been to every International since San Diego in 1995, and they have all been memorable in one way or another. My favorite one so far was Minneapolis in 2000, where I was in the elevator with Bob Smith Jr., aka "Smitty," and he was nice enough to sign my souvenir book.

Those of us at the Oldtimers meeting in San Diego in 1995 will never forget when an Oldtimer named Ruth got gonged when she wouldn't stop talking...the whole stadium started chanting "RUTH, RUTH, RUTH." I have never seen them use the gong since. Now, they just have people applaud. In 2010 I had the opportunity to bring two, first-time internationalists to San Antonio, and one of them caught the fire that only an international can bring. He came to Atlanta with me and is already looking forward to Detroit in 2020 (as am I), and Vancouver in 2025. So, like a friend told me some time in 1994, “If you ever have the opportunity to attend an International Convention you MUST take advantage of it because the only way to explain something that cannot be described is to experience it first-hand.” **Bernard B., Santa Clarita, CA**

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SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: September 9, 2015, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: September 14, 2015: Orientation for new IGRs: 6:30 p.m., General Meeting: 7 p.m., St. Innocent Church., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

San Fernando Valley H & I (3rd Monday): August 17, 2015: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): September 2, 2015: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

General Service Dist. 2: (1st Tues.): September 1, 2015: 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta.

General Service District 7: (2nd Sat.): September 12, 2015, 2015: 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

General Service District 11 (1st Monday): September 7, 2015: 6 p.m. New GSRs - 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale.

General Service District 16 (1st Mon.): September 7, 2015: 6:15 p.m., 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

General Service District 17 (1st Monday): September 7, 2015: 6 p.m. Orientation for new GSRs, 6:30 p.m., Business Meeting: 7:00 p.m., 5000 Colfax, NoHo.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

A.A. Central Office maintains 24/7 Phone Service for AAs. Go to: www.sfvaa.org to find meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, or download a copy of Recovery Times. **Want to be of service?** We are always in need of volunteers to answer phones, especially on weekends and holidays. If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, please call **Central Office: (818) 988-3001**.

Central Office has moved to 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station). Many people don't realize that Central Office is open every day for book sales (Monday - Sunday) except for holidays. However, we are closed the last Friday of the month for Inventory. Our large warehouse has all of the A.A. approved literature and pamphlets that your group needs, plus medallions and chips. Central Office is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$3,000 per year and must be from members of Alcoholics Anonymous, not from outsiders. **For more info, call: (818) 988-3001 or check out our website: www.sfvaa.org.**

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

SF Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee (H & I): Temporary contacts are needed to pair the alcoholic leaving rehabilitation, treatment or jail with A.A. in their home community. Contact Central Office for info. 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 to meetings. See meeting info above. (SFV H & I).

San Fernando Valley Convention Committee: Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2015 Convention. (See Page 3 for more info under SF Valley AA Convention).

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA: 1st Sunday of the month @ 1 p.m. at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. (Regular weekly meeting: Monday night at 8 p.m.).

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: 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.**

Happy Birthday!



Please Support Your Central Office by sending a representative to the Intergroup monthly meetings. We meet the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church at 5657 Lindley in Tarzana. We would love to see you! **Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary?** Please consider making a \$1.00 donation for each year of your sobriety during your birthday month and we will list your name and birthday year in the next issue. This month's birthday celebrants are: **Lani S. – 20 Years, Anonymous – 23 Years, Casey W. – 24 Years, Steve M. - 33 Years, Learning to Live Men's Stag – 12 members/172 years, Saturday Morning Women's Meeting – 2 members/27 years, and Reseda Big Book Study – 164 years.**

Deaths (Things We Cannot Change): If you are aware of the passing of a Fellowship member, please call us at (818) 988-3001. **We said goodbye to Don G. – 24 Years & Don C. – 36 Years (Dunsmore/San Fernando Group)**

Has your meeting changed? Please provide meeting updates in writing to: **The Valley Central Office**, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times**, please send us your name, address and payment with \$7.00 to cover cost & delivery. Also include information on whether you want a new subscription, are renewing, or if you are enclosing an additional contribution. If moving, please give us your former address.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE

Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting, July 13, 2015

OPENING: Dawn H.

- Dawn opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer. Ernie read "The Twelve Traditions."
- Cheryl accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from the June Intergroup Meeting with corrections.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Josh S.

- Personal contributions were up and literature sales still down compared to last year. This is a 5-week payroll month, so expect more expenditures.
- MTD (\$2747.09) and YTD \$4019.76

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

- Everything is running smoothly at Central Office but it is summer and we are shy on volunteers.

Recovery Times

- Reminder: deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat's e-mail xnowisthetime@aol.com.
- Pat announced that July's edition will feature stories from the World Convention in Atlanta. Dawn said she would share her experience.
- Dawn also asked A.A.'s to let Central Office know about members who have passed on.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Brian H.

- There were 4 new Intergroup reps this month. Ramona C, *Solutions in Sobriety*, Saturdays, 8pm, NoHo
- Gus K, *Attitude Adjustment*, Daily, NoHo
- Rosemary S, *Sunday Morning Speaker*, 9am, Woodland Hills
- Carmela S, *Conscious Contact Women's Stag*, Wednesday, 7pm, Granada Hills

IGRs were reminded to encourage recruitment from meetings that are not represented. There are currently more than 780 meetings in the San Fernando Valley, with only 50 - 60 represented monthly at IGR. Orientation for new IGRs begins at 6:30 p.m. prior to monthly IGR Meeting.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

- General Service District 11: Tigran: The District is hosting a 12 Concepts Study.
- General Service District 1: Norm: Wayne, doing a Secretary's Workshop on 9/12/15.
- General Service District 17: Lisa: Next month we'll hear from the delegate who attended the GSR conference.

Message

"Our very first problem is to accept our present circumstances as they are, ourselves as we are, and the people about us as they are. This is to adopt a realistic humility without which no genuine advance can even begin." AA Co-Founder, **Bill W.**, March 1962

"It would be virtually impossible to experience the Twelve Steps and not learn something of love. I believe that love is the willingness to extend oneself for spiritual growth. When we answer a call for help, we are extending ourselves for the purpose of spiritual growth. Someone once said that there are three steps to becoming a loving person: love yourself, be yourself, forget yourself." Brentwood, N.Y., 1998

"Before we can release the spirit from its imprisonment, we must first imprison the spirits in the bottle. We place the bottle on the shelf, place ourselves in the hands of AA as we understand it, and prepare for the adventure of sobriety." Manhattan, N.Y., 1984

"The ability to love can never be taken away from me, except by me. When I can get myself out of the way long enough to love another human being, it's the best feeling I know of." Dallas, Texas, Dec. 1979
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- San Fernando Valley 41st AA Convention: Joel S: There is a Bingo Fundraiser on 8/22. The committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month and would love to have more volunteers.
- Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard: Pre-registration for the convention is available online, "It Works—It Really Does" at the Embassy Suites in Valencia, 10/14-10/18/15.

OLD BUSINESS: Literature Sales are CLOSED on holidays and the last Friday of each month, but OPEN on weekends. Central Office doors remain open; phones are still answered. Reminder for groups to report upcoming group events, and remove expired event flyers from literature tables. Continue to send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

NEW BUSINESS - No attendance certificates were awarded this evening.
ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

- Tigran: Windsor Club Dance and Meeting every 3rd Saturday per month (7/18 and 8/15) after their regular meeting; Bingo Blitz 8/22 after the 6pm meeting, dinner and bingo, \$25 per person.
- Ernie: San Fernando Group will sponsor "Twelve Concepts" on August 8, 1 pm to 6 pm.
- Charles: Pacoima Group celebrates its 60th year Anniversary Alcathon 8/14-16; Traditional Longtimer's Meeting with buffet and cake on 8/15.
- Tammy: Cabrito House hosts a new AA Women's meeting.

Dawn H: Reminder that groups should bring at least 350 flyers for upcoming events so that each meeting can have at least 5 copies. Flyers must be for "AA-related events" (defined as "an event that includes an AA meeting as part of the event").

BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY – 54 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

Lynn B: 9 years; Gina: 9 years; Josh: 9 years & Maryanne: 27 years.

VACANCIES ON BOARD: There was one vacancy and Cheryl M. was elected as 2nd Alternate Director at Large. Requirements for board members include 2 years sober and 1 year intergroup representative.

CLOSING: Dawn H. made a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned with *The Lord's Prayer* at 7:22 p.m.

THE RECOVERY TIMES would like to hear your story. Please keep it to 500 words and focus on sobriety. Please include your sobriety date and an email or phone number then email Pat at: xnowisthetime@aol.com. Thank you!

Upcoming Calendar of Events:

Pacoima 60th Alcathon: August 14 – 16, 2015. 12502 Van Nuys Boulevard, #109, Pacoima, CA

12th Annual Mountain A.A. Conference: August 14 – 16, 2015, Big Bear Performing Arts Center, www.MountainAAConference.com.

31st Annual South Bay Roundup: August 27 - 30, 2015: Torrance Marriott, southbayroundup.org.

37th Annual Ventura County AA Convention: Sept 11-13, 2015, www.vcaac.org

64th So. CA AA Convention: Oct. 2 – 4, 2015: The Westin Mission Hills Resort & Spa, Rancho Mirage, CA: www.aasocal.com.

Continued, Page 1: World Convention



It's hard not to be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of it all. If you've never heard 62,000 voices join together to say The Serenity Prayer, then attending an International Convention is a must!

As a newbie to the international scene, what stood out for me the most was the sense of love, fellowship and camaraderie among all the attendees. Let's face it, it's not easy to get that many people cleared out of a sports stadium. But there we were – all 62,000 of us – walking out of the Georgia Dome, behaving appropriately, nobody shoving or fighting or getting sick in the street. Rather, we were all

hugging and reliving the highlights of the meetings we'd just attended. It was an awesome sight to behold.

I was especially thrilled that the AA with the longest sobriety was our very own Gardener, who was one of the participants at our 2015 SFVAAC Longtimer's Meeting, and who, at 103 years of age, was celebrating 62 years of sobriety at the Longtimer's Meeting on Saturday night in Atlanta.

The diversity of attendees was also humbling. I saw name tags representing countries from Abu Dhabi to New Zealand, and I wondered several times during the convention if Bill and Bob had any clue of the miracle that grew out of their single first conversation!

This was my first International Convention, but it definitely won't be my last. We are already planning for Detroit in 2020 and Vancouver in 2025. Hope to see you all there! **Dawn H., Studio City, CA**

The adventure started for me months and months ago when plans were made, flights and hotels were booked, and money was being saved. I flew out the day before the convention started, got to the airport and there were a bunch of AA's on the same flight: let the party begin. Even at this ungodly hour, the smiles, happiness and energy leave you speechless.

We were greeted in Atlanta by a host of volunteers. Wow! What a welcome. Thank you!!! Due to the weather, Thursday's party in the park was moved inside. Bands, DJ's music, food, festivities, dancing....our upcoming 2016 San Fernando Valley Convention's theme is true "We Are Not a Glum Lot"!!

Friday started off the marathon meetings at the Georgia World Congress Center and The Hyatt Hotel and Friday night was the Opening Flag Ceremony and Big Meeting. Ninety-four countries were represented: such pride and happiness representing their country where AA is alive. Helping hopeless and suffering alcoholics to find recovery. If that alone didn't move you to

emotion and gratitude, I don't know, maybe you aren't breathing. It was memorable beyond words. The buzz and energy in the room was refreshingly exhausting and spiritually moving. Many of the meetings have sign language available and in the International Hospitality Suite, non-English speaking alcoholics could pick up an electronic translator, with earplugs, to use during the meetings.

As I sat in the stadium with over 56,000 smiling, happy people I couldn't help but be overwhelmed to think that all of this stemmed from a meeting of 2 alcoholics, and to be grateful to be given a chance to experience, not only an International Convention, but the 80th Anniversary of our fellowship. I believe Bill and Bob, along with Lois and Ann, would have been floored at what this "thing" has become.



There were 2 tented areas where vendors were set up. One was called Sober City and the other was called Sober Village. I couldn't keep the 2 of them straight. Imagine a very small version of a fair with exhibits, vendors selling their wares and concession stands to get things to eat and drink. That's what these looked like. Needless to say, I was in heaven. It was like someone took multiple AA online stores and dropped them into these tented areas where you could pick up, try on and physically check out SO many different things. Wow!! Dang!

While walking around outside, we kept hearing bagpipes being played. Come to find out that was Timothy from Louisiana. He rode his bicycle from Louisiana to Atlanta to play for his fellow brothers and sisters. What a wonderful example of the fellowship - and he played beautifully.

The Atlanta police and fire department were amazing, even in the heat and humidity. Always patient and smiling while trying to get thousands of alcoholics to cross the street safely when they blow their whistle. Some of us still have trouble following instructions. (Sigh). We were sure to continue to thank them for their service and bought waters for them. I swear this one female police officer never went home.

Volunteers were everywhere with bright lime green T-shirts - almost 5000 from 33 different countries. Thank God for the volunteers. They were helping with everything...how to get to the Marta, where Building A. at the Congress Center is, how do I get out of this building? (Yes, that was a question I often asked). Where's Sober City? I need a bathroom, I lost my glasses, what time is the dance tonight? On and on and on.

They greeted us with cheers and applause at the airport and never diminished in their enthusiasm and zeal. High fives all around. A LOT of high fives, to everyone, all weekend, up and down the escalators, hugs, laughing, more hugs...they were amazing!!!

Saturday night was the Oldtimers Big Meeting. Instead of a countdown to see the newcomer, they did a count up to find the Oldtimer. The amount of people still standing when they were at



35 years gave me goose bumps. The cheering was phenomenal. My hands hurt from clapping. To qualify to be an Oldtimer, to speak at this meeting, you needed to have 50+ years of sobriety. Come to find out, the convention had 108 qualifiers. What?? Wow!! The man with the most sobriety had 66 years!! Each of their names (the 108 with over 50 years) got put into the big Atlanta peach and 12 names were pulled. Those 12 were the speakers and had 5 minutes each.

Here's what I learned. STAY SOBER!! The guy with 66 years was 103 years old. He looked great!! None of these guys would look that great if they were still drinking. Right???

Sunday morning, crap, the morning came really soon, was the Closing Big Meeting. When a portion of Chapter 5 was read, each of the steps was read in a different language. Step 7 was Japanese, Step 8 was Portuguese etc. You knew what language it was from the picture on the jumbo Tron. My throat is still sore - I feel like I've attended a 5 day concert.

The 35th million printed edition of the Big Book was given to The Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine where Sister Ignatia served. If you aren't familiar with this non-alcoholic female pioneer for AA, definitely check her out. She helped tens of thousands of alcoholics recover by admitting them into the hospital under conditions such as "gastritis" and then would contact Bill and Bob to do a 12th step call on them. Ever wonder why we give chips and medallions? Sister Ignatia would give the patients a medallion when they were discharged from the hospital. Fascinating, beautiful, inspiring woman. Truly a pioneer!! And really?? There's been THAT many Big Books printed. Holy moley!!!! Powerful is one of the words I would use for this meeting.

A portion of Chapter 2 was read, it's kind of long but I think it ended the convention perfectly. "We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement that binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined. The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly love and harmonious action."

And that quickly, the convention was over!! The feeling of attending will last for quite a while.
Jeni P., North Hills, CA

(Thank you Bernard B., Dawn H., & Jeni P. for your stories and Ernie C. for the photos). Editor

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