

RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 45, No. 9, Sept. 2015

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

How We Have Changed! In this issue, two A.A.s share their experiences with change.

Reflections on the past eight years

I'm not afraid to reflect back on what things used to be like. In order for me to grow, I have to be open to seeing the things that I've changed so I can see the results of that change. I also need to constantly be on the lookout for old behaviors threatening to take center stage. I need to see when my intentions and my actions are out of alignment as that can be a direct parallel to my disease and my recovery being out of alignment.



In an effort to seek growth on a daily basis, I have a prayer that helps me: "God, let me see what I need to see, hear what I need to hear and say what I need to say, so I can be right here, right now...present in my life."

In the past, I wasn't very honest; a slight of hand, a little fib, a fabricated story for laughs, a cut in line, and all the other little infractions that didn't seem to be such a big deal. I justified them as making life a little easier and leveling the playing field.

Today, I strive for honesty and find that even when I do slide back, the discomfort puts me back on the right path. I'm still not perfect, by any stretch, but I am always willing to be better than I was yesterday.

I have always made friends easily and am blessed with long standing relationships both in and out of recovery. In the past, if a connection became challenging or if someone would be dismissive or too dependent on me, I would find myself pulling away or simply spending less time with them. I remember feeling I had lots of friends and I didn't have the time. Today, I realize some people find it very difficult to connect and because I find it easy, I can meet them halfway. I can show people how to be a friend with my actions instead of just moving on to the next person. Patience, tolerance, compassion, kindness and a smile seem to go a very long way to being there for people who are working through their journey to find themselves. I just have to ask God for direction and I'll be okay.

I pride myself as a great negotiator and always have been able to get the other person to settle on a fair price. In the past, I would grind someone down until I felt it was an acceptable price to me. More often than not, they ended up losing money. I used to think that was winning. Today, I have to look at what's fair and equitable for everybody. Nobody works for free and it's not fair for me to take advantage of somebody just for my own gain.

Ego and pride. Need I say more? I have a big personality, and a strong presence. It has served me well in business and in my personal life. In the past I would walk into a room with an attitude of "Boom! Here I am." The bigger and brighter I was, the harder it was for them to see me. Now I know that me hiding me was taking from others.

Today, I am more aware of how my presence can affect other people. I need to be able to give other

(Continued, page 5)

SERVICE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE:

San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: Oct. 7, 2015, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: Oct. 12, 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): Sept. 21, 2015: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): Oct. 7, 2015: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

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

General Service District 7: (2nd Sat.): Oct. 10, 2015, 2015: 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

General Service District 11 (1st Monday): Oct. 5, 2015: 6 p.m. New GSRs - 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale.

General Service District 16 (1st Mon.): Oct. 5, 2015: 6:15 p.m., 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

General Service District 17 (1st Monday): Oct. 5, 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.

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 2016 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: **Randy H. – 18 Years, Anonymous – 19 Years, and Maryanne B. – 27 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 are not aware of any sober AAs who passed last month.

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, August 10, 2015**

OPENING: Dawn H.

- Dawn opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer. Casey read the "The Twelve Traditions."
- Cheryl A. accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from the July Intergroup Meeting with corrections.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Josh S.

- Personal contributions are still up (\$1600 over last year) and literature sales down compared to last year.
- MTD (\$1724.82) and YTD \$2389.48. Group contributions are \$13,000 over last year.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

- Everything is running smoothly at Central Office but we need more volunteers.

Recovery Times

- Reminder: deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat's e-mail xnowisthetime@aol.com.
- Dawn also asked A.A.'s to let Central Office know about members who have passed on.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Brian H.

- There was one new Intergroup Representative this month: Ramona C, *Solutions in Sobriety*, Saturdays @ 8 pm in NoHo. 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 (Tigran) District 11 hosts a 12 Concepts Study continuing the 1st Monday of each month.
- General Service (John) District 1 will host a Secretary's Workshop 9/12/15, 10am to noon.
- General Service District 17: Paul announced an Oldtimer's Event to be held 11/8/15.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Nancy said more volunteers are needed.
- San Fernando Valley 41st AA Convention: Joel S. - The committee meets 3rd Tuesday of each month and needs more volunteers for commitments. Speak with Tami if your group wants to host a Marathon Meeting.
- Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard announced the upcoming October Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: "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.

Message

"We must never be blindsided by the futile philosophy that we are just the hapless victims of our inheritance, our life experience, and our surroundings-that these are the sole forces that make our decisions for us ... We have to believe that we can really choose." AA Co-Founder, Bill W., November 1960
"Freedom Under God: The Choice Is Ours"

"A good question to ask myself frequently is: What am I looking for - advice or approval?" Tampa, Fla., May 1945

"I can now admit that most of my troubles stem from one large and glaring defect: self-centeredness." Manhattan, N.Y., September 1970

"Not to change is not to adapt; not to adapt is to become extinct." Atlanta, Ga., Feb. 1990

"We in AA talk about crossing the invisible line into our alcoholism. What about crossing the invisible line into the program of Alcoholics Anonymous?" Redwood City, Calif., April 1993 Copyright c. 1944-2012. AA Grapevine, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprints by permission only.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

- Tigran: Windsor Club Dance and Meeting every 3rd Saturday per month (9/19) after the 8 p.m. meeting.
- Marianna: Young People in AA Convention will be at the Woodland Hills Marriott over Halloween Weekend.
- Judy: Radford Hall BBQ 9/7/15
- Casey: Curtain Call Meeting "Feeding the Homeless" need volunteers, organizing at Radford Hall.

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 – AUGUST – 75 YEARS OF

SOBRIETY: Joel - 9 years; Brian -15 years, & Jim C. - 51 years.

VACANCIES ON BOARD: There is one vacancy on the Board. Joel was elected as 2nd Alternate Director at Large.

CLOSING: Dawn H. made a motion to adjourn at 7:28 with a reading of *The Lord's Prayer* by Alma. Prepared and submitted by: Cheryl A.

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

Upcoming Calendar of Events:

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.

Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Oct. 14 – 18, 2015: Embassy Suites in Valencia. www.scvaaconvention.org

31st Santa Barbara Convention: Oct. 23 – 25, 2015: Elks Lodge, Goleta, CA. <http://www.sbaaconvention.org>

54th Hawaii Convention: Oct. 29 – Nov. 1, 2015, Honolulu, HI. www.annualhawaiiiconvention.com.

28th Inland Empire Convention: Nov. 6- 8, 2015, San Bernardino, CA www.ieaac.org.

Yosemite Summit Conference: Nov. 19-22, 2015, Curry Village, Yosemite National Park. www.serenityyosemite.com

49th Las Vegas Roundup: Nov. 26-29, 2015, The Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino, Las Vegas, NV. www.lasvegasroundup.org.

Easy Does It

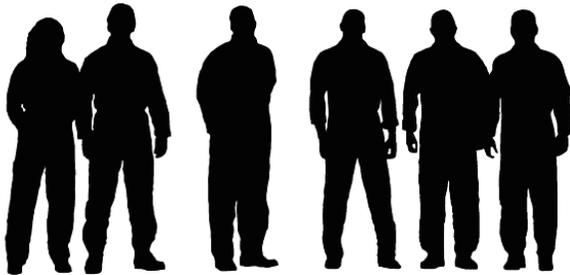
(Continued, page 1) Time to Change

...people an opportunity to be in the spotlight, even though they don't need it to be that bright. I've also learned to be able to let go, lean back and just observe when someone takes the spotlight from me in an aggressive manner. The only reason I would feel it was "taken" is if I'm holding onto it too tight myself, shame on me for trying to hide me. Today I understand that there is so much more to see when you are NOT center stage.

I constantly have to work just to be a worker among workers, a learner among learners, a friend among friends, and guest among guests. I used to get frustrated when things didn't go my way. Now I can find the irony in thinking things have to go my way or that my way is the way things are intended to go.

Whenever I feel someone else is causing me a problem, the fact that I feel that way IS my problem. I learned to be grateful for the people who have caused me the most difficulty. These are the people I've grown the most because of and I can embrace them as teachers instead of villains.

Most importantly I have turned my "whys" into "why not's" and look forward to what every new day will hold for me in this life long journey of spiritual recovery. *A grateful eight year old.* **Tristan S., Burbank**



THOSE "OTHER PEOPLE"

My life before alcohol was nothing to write home about. With very little supervision, I did just about anything I wanted to do, and the things I wanted to do were nothing to be proud of. I was always looking over my shoulder, hoping not to get caught, and lying and cheating became a way of life for me. I violated the trust of anybody that

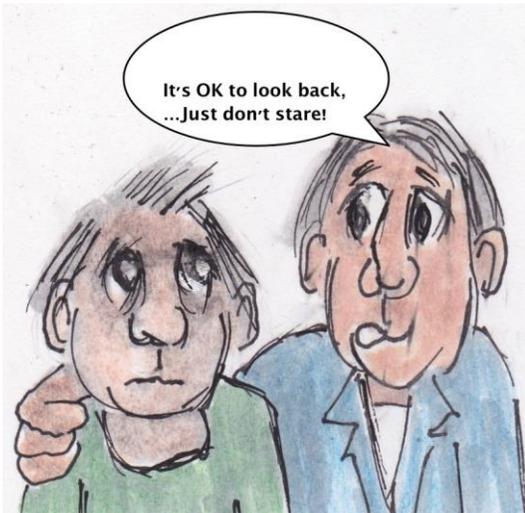
seemed to care about me. I laid awake nights with my head spinning trying to come up with answers to questions that I expected people to ask me, and I wanted to have alibis to cover up my errant behavior. But I knew that, for the most part, they weren't buying it. From the time I was eight years old, I can never remember a single night that I slept as a normal person sleeps. My brain was always spinning.

Somewhere around the age of thirteen was the first time that I set out to get drunk and for the first time in my life, I experienced sound sleep. The effect that the alcohol had on me, aside from the throwing up, was incredible and from that day on I drank every chance I could. The sleep issue was temporarily resolved with the exception of those nights when I couldn't get anything to drink. That went on for the next fifteen years until the progression of alcoholism took its course and I had lost more than I was willing to lose. I could no longer lie to myself that things were going to get better. I ran out of options and I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, at the young age of twenty eight (Oct. 15, 1969) desperate and defeated, and believe it or not, I haven't wanted a drink from that very first day.

That didn't stop my brain from spinning at the time but I immediately saw the possibilities of working through the steps of the program on most of the damage I had caused. Like most alcoholics, I didn't get it right away and even in the meetings, I was debating every issue. I

swear, I could take either side of an argument and give you indisputable information on the subject. My ego had me in competition with everyone. I needed to be right.

(Illustration by Leslie Z.)



As I began to work through the steps in a slow and methodical manner, with the help of a weekly step study meeting, most of my problems subsided but my brain still was in turmoil and I wondered if it was ever going to quiet down. I remember a dear friend in a meeting in 1970 saying, "all I want from life is peace of mind and a quiet heart," and I wondered if it was possible for me. As I got through most of the obvious problems, I continued to search for the deeper remedies and focused on the spirit of the Saint Francis Prayer in the 12&12. That helped tremendously but I still wanted to go deeper as my mind was still spinning.

In the book "Dr. Bob and The Good Old Timers," if I remember it correctly, they claim to have used the book by Emmet Fox, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Key to Success in Life* in their quest for a simple approach to a spiritual understanding. With this in mind, I read the book and I finally understood why my head was still spinning. I was still judging everyone around me and so focused on what I *thought they were thinking*, while still *competing for attention*.

I have been cycling through that book ever since, and I have come to an understanding of what I had to do if I wanted to experience the *peace of mind* that I was seeking. It explains a number of interface issues that we all have with *Those Other People* that I had been completely wrong about. I found that I was no better or worse than anyone else, and that started me on my way.

On page 268 in *As Bill Sees It*, is the topic "Those Other People" and I realized that I was causing my own problems even as I was pointing out the faults of others. I had to lay down my arms and give *everyone amnesty* without exception. We all have problems and I cannot be selective about who I do or do not accept or forgive. I am nobody's victim nor anybody's perpetrator. I have to be strong enough to look beneath the surface and try to understand why they act the way they do and try to have compassion.

I had to quit keeping score; it's not a competition anymore. In cases where a person crosses my boundaries and I see no way of rectifying the problem, I can quietly withdraw from that situation without being critical of that other person. I also came to the conclusion that I am not a mind reader (imagine that) and that nothing good can come from a mixture of my faulty thinking and their faulty thinking. I need only to be understanding and caring. It is not necessary that they reciprocate. I am no longer threatened by what other people think or say about me. That's in the hands of something much greater than myself. The people that "know me well," know me well, and that's more than enough for me.

I could go on and on with these examples of how I've addressed each and every one of my past problems with my thinking when it involves others who have problems. I will accept any idea that is consistent with acceptance and forgiveness, and as a result, my head no longer spins. I

can truly say that I experience *peace of mind and a quiet heart* almost without limits, and as always, I wish the same for *Those Other People*. **Rick R., Poway, CA**

Live and Let Live



Gold Chip Sobriety?

A member questions the role chips and coins play in the program

Sobriety coins and chips are not AA. Giving a chip or coin is becoming too big a tradition in AA meetings here in the Northeast and perhaps the rest of the country. I believe it is doing more harm than good. AA is a "one day at a time" program and always has been. I would venture to say that if you polled AA members and asked the question, "Are sobriety chips and coins part of the AA program?" most would say, "yes."

Most groups or individuals use the Fourth Tradition as a rationale for allowing them to dispense coins/chips. I say this practice does affect AA individuals and AA as a whole in a negative way.

There are some wonderful benefits and by-products of having continuous sobriety and connecting one sober day to the next. We learn to stay sober, we get our lives back and most importantly, we grow spiritually. We get this by having a daily reprieve from alcohol granted by our Higher Power and by "working a program" as outlined in the Big Book and the 12 and 12.

I have watched the chip/coin system send a very different message: one of pride and ego run amok, as well as bigshotism. There is nearly a class system based upon time sober now. This is a system whereby people who are struggling to get and stay sober are belittled. This is clear from how relapsers are viewed.

When I see folks receive coins/chips there is this unspoken (and sometimes spoken!) message of "look at me and look what I did." Have we forgotten that "left to our own devices," we'd be drunk? Where is the role of the Higher Power or the program in this?

Allowing chips and coins to continue in groups will only continue to send mixed messages to its members and I believe will create more harm than good to members. I have many years of continuous sobriety and March 15th will forever remain an important day in my life. It is important because it is the first day the AA program started working in my life. It saved my life. —*John P., Warrington, Pa.*

Copyright © 2015 Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. This is the official Web site of the General Service Office (G.S.O.) of Alcoholics Anonymous. Videos or graphic images may not be downloaded, copied or duplicated without the express written permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

Central Office of SFV
16132 Sherman Way
Van Nuys, CA 91406

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED