

RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 50, No. 10, Oct. 2016

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

AA Looks Back on Its History

This month, Recovery Times, the monthly publication of the Central Office of the San Fernando Valley, explores some commonly-asked questions about the history and practices commonly found in AA meetings. I hope you enjoy them~ Editor

Q: What is the story behind the Circle and Triangle logo?



A: The Circle and Triangle symbol has long been connected to the A.A. Fellowship. It was adopted as an official A.A. symbol at the International Convention in St. Louis in 1955, and from that point on was widely used in the Fellowship. For the Fellowship, the three legs of the triangle represented the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service, and the circle symbolized the world of A.A. In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill W.'s 1955 speech, in which he describes the adoption of the symbol, is printed:

"Above us floats a banner on which is inscribed the new symbol for A.A., a circle enclosing a triangle. The circle stands for the whole world of A.A., and the triangle stands for A.A.'s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Within our wonderful new world, we have found freedom from our fatal obsession. That we have chosen this particular symbol is perhaps no accident. The priests and seers of antiquity regarded the circle enclosing the triangle as a means of warding off the spirits of evil, and A.A.'s circle and triangle of Recovery, Unity, and Service has certainly meant all of that to us and much more." (p. 139)

Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, A.A.W.S. decided to phase out the use of the Circle and Triangle symbol on its literature, letterhead and other material. It was decided to phase out the "official" or "legal" use of the Circle and Triangle symbol, and in 1994 the General Service Conference resolved that the logo be discontinued on all Conference-approved literature. However, the symbol is still associated with Alcoholics Anonymous (and other kinds of 12-Step recovery fellowships) and has a special meaning for AA members all over the world.

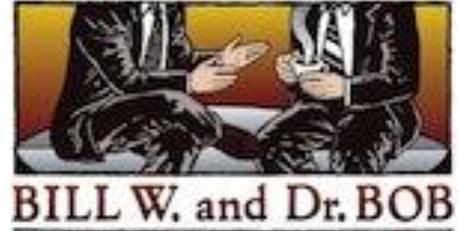
Q. Who wrote Chapter 8 of the Big Book, "To Wives"?

A. Bill was the author of the 'To Wives' chapter. It is commonly thought that Lois wrote it. But, as *Pass It On* describes (page 200), Lois said, *"Bill wrote it, and I was mad."*



She added, *"I wasn't so much mad as hurt. I still don't know why Bill wrote it. I've never really gotten into it - why he insisted upon writing it. I said to him, 'Well, do you want me to write it?' And he said no, he thought it should be in the same style as the rest of the book."*

G.S.O.'s Archives can provide extensive historical information about A.A.W.S.'s literature and pamphlets: origins; content; editions; printings; changes; and corrections that have been made over time.



Q. What is the history behind reading The Lord's Prayer at meetings?

A. It is mentioned in *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* that the prayer was used from the very beginning in the Fellowship, at least as early as 1938 and 1939. In those days there was no AA literature, so the early groups relied heavily on existing prayers, and on the Bible and Oxford Group literature, for inspiration and guidance.

Bill W. commented several times in his correspondence about the early use of the Lord's Prayer. He wrote a letter to a member in 1959 in which he stated: *"This practice probably came from the Oxford Groups who were influential in the early days of A.A. You have probably noted in A.A. Comes of Age what the connection of these people with A.A. really was. I think saying the Lord's Prayer was a custom of theirs following the close of each meeting. Therefore it quite easily got shifted into a general custom among us."*

Bill also wrote the following in a 1955 letter: *"Of course there are always those who seem to be offended by the introduction of any prayer whatever into an ordinary A.A. gathering. Also it is sometimes complained that the Lord's Prayer is a Christian document. Nevertheless, this Prayer is of such widespread use and recognition that the argument of its Christian origin seems to be a little far-fetched. It is also true that most AA's believe in some kind of god and that communication and strength is obtainable through his grace. Since this is the general consensus, it seems only right that at least the Serenity Prayer and the Lord's Prayer be used in connection with our meetings. It does not seem necessary to defer to the feelings of our agnostic and atheist newcomers to the extent of completely hiding 'our light under a bushel.'*

However, around here, the leader of the meeting usually asks those to join him in the Lord's Prayer who feel that they would care to do so. The worst that happens to the objectors is that they have to listen to it. This is doubtless a salutary exercise in tolerance at their stage of progress."

Q. I've heard it said that Bill always wished he could change the beginning of 'How It Works' to read "Never have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path" (rather than "Rarely have we seen..."). Is this true?

A. No. A rumor has persisted for years that Bill wished he could have changed "rarely" to "never." But we know, through Bill's own words, that that is not the case. In a letter to Les V., dated May 25, 1961 Bill W. stated: *"...Concerning your comment about the use of the word 'rarely' in Chapter Five of the Big Book. My recollection is that we did give a considerable thought at the time of writing. I think the main reason for the use*

of 'rarely' was to avoid anything that would look like a claim for a 100 % result. Assuming of course that an alcoholic is willing enough and sane enough, there can be a perfect score on such character. But since willingness and sanity are such illusive and fluctuating values, we simply didn't like to be too positive. The medical profession could jump right down our throats...I do remember thinking about it a lot."

Q. What is the origin of the Third Step prayer and the Seventh Step prayer found in the Big Book?

A. As far as we know, Bill wrote the Third and Seventh Step prayers himself. From the first typed manuscript, which Bill completed in 1938, these prayers contained the same wording they do in the book today. We don't know of the prayers' prior presence in any religious movement, though it is likely that their central message – if not their exact wording – might be from the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group was a popular Christian movement to which both Bill and Dr. Bob belonged, and many of A.A.'s spiritual principles were drawn from that movement.

Q. Why do AA members use tokens, medallions, and chips to mark sobriety? When did that practice start?

A. The chip system is thought to have begun in Indianapolis in 1942. The tradition is believed to have started with Doherty S., who originally brought A.A. to Indianapolis. Doherty himself, in a letter to Bill, seems to indicate the practice originated in Indianapolis in 1942.

Nell Wing wrote in 1962 about the history of the chip system: "...*The chip system might have begun in Indianapolis....reference was made in a letter from Doherty to the start of giving out 'chips' and 'tokens.'* This was in 1942. I imagine this would be about right, because most of the early groups started in 1940 and it would take about a couple of years to think of anniversaries and marking any time of sobriety. I asked Bill about this and his memory is that the system started in Indianapolis."

In *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*, it indicates that Sister Ignatia in Akron, working at St. Thomas Hospital, also used medallions: "*Sister Ignatia gave each of her newly released patients a Sacred Heart medallion, which she asked them to return before they took the first drink. She would occasionally give out St. Christopher medals as well...*" (page 195). We don't know precisely who started this system first, or when and how it spread to other groups. As with many things in AA, the exact nature of the history eludes us! **(Continued, pg. 7)**

3RD STEP PRAYER

"God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always." (pg. 63)

7th Step Prayer

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." (pg. 76)

Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th edition

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: Oct. 5, 2016, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: Oct. 10, 2016: 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. 19, 2016: 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): Oct. 5, 2016: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

General Service Dist. 2: (1st Tues.): Oct. 4, 2016: 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta.

General Service District 7: (2nd Sat.): Oct 8, 2016, 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

General Service District 11 (1st Mon.): Oct. 3, 2016: New GSRs – 6:00 p.m, general meeting 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale.

General Service District 16 (1st Mon.): Oct. 3, 2016: 6:00 p.m., 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

General Service District 17 (1st Mon.): Oct. 3, 2016. Orientation for new GSRs, 6:30 p.m., Business Meeting: 7:00 p.m., 5000 Colfax, NoHo.

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 is located at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station) and remains open every day for book sales (including weekends) except for holidays and 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 2017 Convention. The meeting is the 3rd Tues. of the month at St. Innocents, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

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 6:30 p.m. for orientation with the general meeting to follow at 7 p.m. It takes place at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group. IGRs share information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. **To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call: (818) 988-3001.** Please Support Your Central Office by sending a rep to the monthly Intergroup

meetings the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley, 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. **Thank you everyone for your support!** This month, we received donations from the following: **Faith – 5 Years, Paul R. – 9 Years, Tony (English) – 16 Years, Lyn W. – 27 Years, and Frank K. – 32 Years.**

Deaths: We said goodbye to the following AA members – None reported.

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. Thank you~

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.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting, Sept. 12, 2016

OPENING: Brian H. - Brian opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer Tracy read "The Twelve Traditions," and Cheryl A. (for Sandy R.) accepted a motion for approval of the August Intergroup Minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Joel S. - MTD was (\$2907) and YTD was (\$12,575), compared with last year's YTD which was \$2,929. Group donations are up at \$9271, and only \$500 behind last year. H&I helped with book sales. Bob stated that although Central Office does need donations from the groups, to remember that our primary purpose is to newcomers. Gratitude month will normally yield an extra \$8000-\$10,000, so hopefully we'll be in the black at the end of the year.

Executive Secretary's Report: Bob F. - Central Office has 6 more volunteers! Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast is almost sold out!

Recovery Times Reminder: Deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Cheryl A.: 2 new Intergroup Representatives this month: Lee M., San Fernando Group, Sylmar and Alex, Quality of Life, Van Nuys.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

General Service District 16: Daniel: Everything is going well. He'll be reporting on a workshop.

General Service District 1: Norm reported about Unity Day Oct 22. Elections to be held at the Area Assembly in Simi Valley, Nov 15-17.

San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Daniel reported on SFV H&I's 35th Birthday Annual Dinner and Fundraiser: TBA.

San Fernando Valley AA 42nd Convention: Joel S: Will be held Jan 27 - 29, 2017. "Acceptance Was the Answer" is the theme. SFVAA Convention Planning meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard reported it will be held on October 21 - 23 at the Valencia Hyatt. Registration is available online at scvaaconvention.org. Rooms are still available at the Hyatt.

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 IGRs to remove expired event flyers from literature tables. Continue to send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

Brian: please turn in proceeds from Sponsor Breakfast ticket sales, and outstanding tickets

New Business: No new business.

Announcements from AA Groups & Seventh Tradition:

Brian, Unit A: Unit A is holding its Founder's Day, Saturday, October 15, 2016, 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Burbank Blvd. in North Hollywood. All - day meetings, pot luck and BBQ, fellowship and fun!

Norm, District 1: Unity Day, Oct 22 10am-4pm, Speakers and free lunch.

Dexter S., Reseda Meeting Hall: Need support for early morning meeting, 6:45am-7:45am daily

Windsor Club: Sober Dance on the 3rd Saturday of every month at the Windsor Club in Glendale. Dance follows the 8:00 p.m. AA meeting.

Fall Bingo Blitz, Saturday, October 22, 2016, at the Windsor Club in Glendale, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Brian H, Central Office: Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast, Oct 15 8am-12noon, tickets \$15 ea. 2 for \$25

Other than Gratitude Month, this is Central Office's only fundraiser. It will be a terrific event!

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").

Acknowledge Birthdays for the month of September – 56 years of sobriety!

Brian, 5 years; Stephanie, 7 years; David G. - 8 years; Erin – 9 years & Lyn – 27 years.

Vacancies on Board: There are no vacancies on the Board.

CLOSING:

Brian H.: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm with The Lord's Prayer.

Prepared and submitted by: Cheryl A., Co-Chair

Got a birthday or AA anniversary to celebrate?

Why not celebrate by making a donation to Central Office for each year of your sobriety. Donations help fund the expenses for running our office 365 days a year and pay for the phones to answer calls from alcoholics seeking help. Next time you need a meeting, remember that your Central Office is the central source of information for meeting and other sober activities for AA in the San Fernando Valley. **Please consider making a \$\$\$ donation of whatever you can afford.**

FROM THE FOUNDERS

"By 1937, some of us realized that AA needed a standard literature. There would have to be a book ... Well, we did quarrel violently over the preparation and distribution of that book. In fact, it took five years for the clamor to die down. Should any AAs dream that the old-timers who put the book together went about in serene meditation and white robes, then they had best forget it."
*AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,
November 1951*

Quotable Quotes:

"Truth is not an immutable absolute, a granite peak, eternal, unmoving, hiding its head in a nimbus of clouds. Truth is a ballerina tracing arabesques in a pattern of color and music, ever-changing, harmonious." *Key West, Fla.,*

"Living sober is not all roses all the time. But the cool thing is, when I am nervous, it is OK. I do not have to drink to fix it. It is the same with being sad, worried or afraid."
Elkton, Md.,

"Thank God for all the wonderful people, professional and otherwise, who have helped me or tried to. Even when the help has not succeeded, it has kept me going, kept me trying."
New Canaan, Conn.,

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Thank You Volunteers: Central Office appreciates all of the volunteers who handle phones each day. Without them, alcoholics who need information might not know where to go. To become a phone volunteer, please contact Central Office: (818) 988-3001.

Our Yearly Fundraiser: Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast: 10/15/16, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.; Speaker Meeting follows at 10:30 a.m. Disabled American Veterans Hall, Woodland Hills, CA. This is a fundraiser for Central Office of the SFV. Tickets are required: \$15.00/\$25.00 for 2. See your Intergroup Rep (IGR) or call Central Office for tickets or go to our **Website** to find meeting schedules, back issues of Recovery Times, and lots of other helpful info: www.sfvaa.org.

Shop at Central Office: Did you know that you can buy books, literature, medallions and chips at the lowest price at San Fernando Valley Central Office? Please visit us at: 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station). Central Office's hours are: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. M-F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturday & Sunday. (Literature closed last Fri. of every month for inventory and on major holidays). **To reach our 24-hour telephone hotline** and speak with a live person call: (818) 988-3001.



For more info, email us at: sfvco@la.twcbc.com

(Continued, page 3)

Q. What are the origins of the Serenity Prayer?

A. It was debated for years who wrote the Serenity Prayer, and its origins are still somewhat murky, but it seems most likely to have been written by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, a well-known theologian who served for many years as Dean and Professor of Applied Christianity at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. G.S.O.'s Archives can provide more information about this prayer's historical origins upon request.

Alcoholics Anonymous became aware of the Serenity Prayer in 1941, when it was discovered printed in the New York Tribune newspaper. Ruth Hock, AA's first secretary and a non-alcoholic, was immediately taken with it. The headquarters staff thought of printing the prayer on a card to distribute to AA members.

We hope you have enjoyed reading these moments in A.A. History as referenced on the General Service Office Alcoholics Anonymous website. Editor, Recovery Times, October 2016

Central Office of SFV

16132 Sherman Way
Van Nuys, CA 91406

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED