

# RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 59, No. 1, Jan 2018

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

## A New Adventure

**One letter at a time, she gets to explore sobriety with AAs all over the world**



There was a time in my life when I wanted to be an explorer, an adventurer and a writer. I was very young then and, like so many other AA members, I never said, "Someday I want to be an alcoholic." I didn't see it happening, but alcohol crept into my life and my daily routine slowly, patiently, waiting for the day I would say, "I need a drink." It was only after 30 years of drinking that I surrendered to my disease. I turned to AA and began living in the solution.

When I was two and a half years sober, I found myself on an airplane for the very first time, bound for San Antonio, Texas to celebrate AA's 75th birthday at the International Convention. I was filled with excitement and gratitude about the prospect of meeting AA members from all over the world.

Despite having a period of sobriety, funds were still tight—the airfare and hotel costs left me with meager spending money. I shared my concern about buying meals with an old-timer who told me, "Don't worry, there are hospitality rooms in all the hotels and you can get a coffee or a small snack there for free." So it was my intent to visit those rooms. Besides, I wanted to meet lots of people, and what better place to do so than in a room called "hospitality?"

As soon as I walked into the registration hall, I knew this weekend would be like no other in AA. Everywhere people were smiling, laughing and hugging one another. Excitement filled the air. Until that day, I hadn't realized just how big AA really is. As I received my registration materials and secured the green lanyard around my neck, I remember saying to myself, "This changes everything."

I spent my time chatting with fellow AAs, attending meetings, sightseeing and, of course, visiting those hospitality rooms, which were hosted for the most part by states or countries. One afternoon I walked into a room with "LIM-A" posted outside the door. I had no idea what that sign meant, but I was determined to find a cup of fresh, hot, free coffee. Inside, a woman approached me. "Would you like to write a letter to a Loner?" she asked. I replied, "Huh? What's a Loner?"

She explained that some AA members live in remote locations of the world where there are no meetings. There are others who can't physically get to meetings. For these members, meetings must be in print. In fact, a newsletter in which members share their experience, strength and hope is published bimonthly for that purpose. "Loners Internationalists Meetings—Australia" hosted the hospitality room I'd chosen.

"Sure, I'll write a letter," I said. She handed me paper and pencil and I wrote "Dear Loner: having a wonderful time in San Antonio. Wish you were here," or some such nonsense. I handed the "letter" back, got my coffee and went merrily on my way. I had a wonderful time at the convention, mingling with old and new friends and just enjoying my sober life. Even then, "I" was all I thought about. But I did not know that my sobriety would soon be forever changed by my visit to the LIM-A room.

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## SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE

### Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting December 11, 2017

#### **OPENING: Cheryl A.**

- Cheryl opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer.
- Diane read "The Twelve Traditions"
- Sandy R. accepted a motion for approval of the November Intergroup Minutes.

#### **TREASURER'S REPORT: Adrian I.**

- MTD is <\$944> and YTD is <\$8229>, as compared with last year's YTD which was <\$9269>. Gratitude Month for November generated \$2,477. Financials are available.

#### **EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.**

- Central Office
  - The website is running great.
  - Volunteers are running smoothly, but we could always use some more for the holidays.
- *Recovery Times*:
  - Reminder: Stories of recovery are welcome. Deadline for submissions is 15<sup>th</sup> of the month; send to Pat K. at [xnowisthetime@aol.com](mailto:xnowisthetime@aol.com).

#### **MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Larry S.**

- 2 new Intergroup Representative this month:
  - Tanya R., "Big Book Study," Sundays at 2:30 pm in Northridge; and
  - Mary V., "Nitty Gritty Discussion" Mondays at 8 pm in Sherman Oaks.

#### **SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:**

- General Service District 11: Ernie: Workshop scheduled for March 18, 2018, from 2-4pm, at the Windsor Club. The topic is "Putting the Commitment in Commitment." Also, more GSRs are needed. We meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of every month at the Windsor Club.
- General Service District 1: Norm for Peter: Area 93 Assembly was held last month.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Bernard for Daniel: Join us the third Monday of the month at St. Innocents Church in Tarzana.
- San Fernando Valley 43<sup>rd</sup> AA Convention: Bernard: Jan. 26 – 28, 2018, at the Warner Center Marriott. Theme is "I Could Have Missed It All." Registration flyers are available and online registration is open at [sfvaaconvention.org](http://sfvaaconvention.org). Pre-registration is now \$25, \$30 at the door. Golf flyers are available.
- Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard B.: Finalizing dates for 2018 Convention. More to come!

#### **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 new business.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:**

Bernard B., SFVAA Convention: Annual Golf Classic: January 26, 2018, 7:30 am, at Balboa Golf Course, 16821 Balboa Blvd. in Encino. \$85 per golfer, which includes cart, lunch and golf hat. You do NOT need to be registered for the Convention to participate.

**REMINDERS:** Cheryl A.: 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 DECEMBER – 119 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Roxanne, 1 year on 12/29;
- Lynn W., 4 years on 12/23;
- Norm, 9 years on 12/4;
- Kate F., 11 years on 12/14;
- Dennis B., 23 years on 12/12;
- Cheryl A., 35 years on 12/7; and
- Herb, 36 years on 12/24.

VACANCIES ON BOARD - There are no vacancies on the Board.

### CLOSING:

- Cheryl A.: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:17 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*.

Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary

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## **Continued, page one: A New Adventure**

About six weeks after my return home, I got a letter in the mail. It was an airmail letter, followed by more the next day. The letters were from AA members in Greece, New Zealand, Scotland, Africa, Australia—from all over the world. I received 14 letters in all, each one thanking me for taking the time to write to a Loner while at the convention. I was stunned. Then I remembered how snooty and pretentious the words I wrote were. I wanted to write a "better" letter to each person, but I wondered how I could possibly write to 14 people. I didn't have time to write letters. I work a full-time job! I have sponsees to speak to, meetings to attend, a house to maintain and church commitments. I just didn't have the time. Then I had a brilliant idea. I wrote one letter, left a blank space after the salutation to fill in with a name, and made 14 copies of it. My ego was so huge that I even copied a photo of my face onto the letters, right beside my signature! Feeling smug satisfaction at having solved the problem, I mailed the letters out.

Four weeks went by. I got more letters. I was again overwhelmed at the thought of replying to all those Loners. There just wasn't enough time. But something changed after I read a letter from a man who has since become a good friend and mentor. The postmark was from Scotland, and my new friend wrote: "Thanks for your letter. I myself am not fond of form letters, too impersonal. It's my preference to hand-write all my letters, and I do so about 20 times a week. What price sobriety, eh?"

Those last four words felt like a punch in the gut. Suddenly, everything seemed so clear. Who was I to say I didn't have time to write a simple letter? The reasons I had given myself for not having time to write were all gifts AA had given me—my job, my home, my friends—all things I had lost when alcohol ruled my life. Those were things I regained when I embraced sobriety. But those gifts are just on loan, a day at a time, and must be paid back. The Scotsman was right, and I felt humbled.

From that day on, I've hand-written all my letters to Loners. I have friends all over the world now. I thank my Scottish friend every time I write him for the four words he wrote in that first letter, words that forever changed my sober life. I'm not too busy or important to write a letter to someone who needs it. I'm fortunate to live in an area with 200 meetings a week. Others are not so fortunate and I need to remember that. Writing to Loners is a privilege indeed.

So it looks like my dream came true after all and today I am an adventurer and a writer. Not the kind I'd expected to be, but the kind AA needs me to be. I like to stay active in service work, but there are occasional moments when I feel it's all just too much. That's when I remember the words that so beautifully and simply "right-sized" me, and suddenly I have the strength to go on. What price sobriety, eh? —A. S., Middletown, Pa. **For more info on AA Loners-Internationalists**

**Correspondence Service (LIM), email: [lim@aa.org](mailto:lim@aa.org) or write to: Loners Assignment, c/o General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.**

AA Central Office of the San Fernando Valley is located at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys and maintains 24/7 Phone Service for AAs. We are located in an office building on the southwest corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station and remain 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.

**Please buy your meeting supplies from Central Office of the Valley.** In doing so, you are supporting our office and also getting your materials at our cost. (It's always more expensive to buy them from a retail store). Central Office is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$3,000 per year and must be from members of AA, not from outsiders.

Go to: [www.sfvaa.org](http://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: **(818) 988-3001**. For more info, visit: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org) or email: [sfvco@la.twcbc.com](mailto:sfvco@la.twcbc.com).

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Central Office thanks you for your group and individual contributions during Gratitude Month! With the donations you send in, we are able to pay for our rent, literature, and cover our phones 24/7 for any alcoholic who needs someone to talk to. We continue to answer the phone on weekends and holidays, as well as all night long – the loneliest time for an alcoholic.

**If you think you might drink, get yourself to a meeting. You can view all of the meetings online at: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org).**

**Or if you need somebody to talk to, call Central Office at: 818 988-3001.**

**Don't miss the biggest party of the year: The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention taking place January 26-28, 2018 at the Warner Center Marriott in Woodland Hills.** For the price of registration (\$25 in advance or \$30 at the door) you can attend unlimited marathon meetings and meet your fellow AAs and fellowship all weekend. Plus there's the fabulous banquet on Saturday night, the always entertaining Friday night opening skit (free with registration), inspiring AA speakers each day, the golf classic, and the Sunday Spiritual Breakfast. Get your groove on at the AA dance on Saturday night. Meet new sober friends and visit with people you know from your meetings. **You won't want to miss this year's AA Convention. Be there or be square! You can register online at: [www.sfvaaconvention.org](http://www.sfvaaconvention.org) or call the infoline: (818) 734-0383.** If you want to stay at the Marriott, we have a discounted rate. Use code: SFASFAA for the flat rate for Friday and Saturday nights, single or double occupancy. Third and fourth room guests are allowed at no extra charge. Reservations 888-236-2427.

## FROM THE FOUNDERS

"While we need not alter our truths, we can surely improve their application to ourselves, to AA as a whole, and to our relation with the world around us. We can constantly step up 'the practice of these principles in all our affairs.'" **AA Co-Founder, Bill W.**, February 1961, "The Shape of Things to Come"

"The fellowship in AA is unique. Ties are made overnight that it would take years to develop elsewhere. No one needs a false front. All barriers are down. Some who have felt outcasts all their lives now know they really belong. From feeling as if they were dragging anchor though life, they suddenly sail free before the wind." **Lois W.**, Feb., 1950

"Talking about what bothers me helps it lose its power over me."  
Martinsville, W. Va,  
January 1990

"It's hard to keep an open mind with an open mouth."  
Indianapolis, IN.

"Open-mindedness seems to me a core spiritual principle of the program ... Without it I cannot change."

San Francisco, Calif.,  
August 1995

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## AA SERVICE COMMITTEES:



**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 Young People in AA:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month @ 1 p.m. at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. Regular weekly meeting Monday nights at 8 pm.

**San Fernando Valley Intergroup:** Central Office holds a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.** Support Your Central Office by sending a rep to the monthly Intergroup meetings the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley, Tarzana. We would love to have you represent your group in this important function.

**Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary?** Please consider making a \$1.00 donation to Central Office for each year of your sobriety during your birthday month. **This month, we celebrate the AA anniversaries of Elena G – 2, Lynn W. – 4, Anonymous – 27 and Anonymous -? Years.**

**Deaths: We remember:** Ron C. – 12 Years, Roy S. – 22 Years, and Victor R. – 46 Years.

**Has your meeting changed?** Please provide meeting updates to: **SFVAA Central Office**, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. We're open Monday – Friday: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. and weekends: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Literature closed last Fri. of every month for Inventory and on major holidays).

# Pray for land!

**Stuck on a crazy boat for 10 days with no money and a dangerous captain—and no meetings in sight**



Sailing to exotic ports has always attracted me. Who doesn't dream of pristine anchorages, golden beaches, clear waters brimming with fish and lobster? After 11 years of sobriety, I bought my dream sailboat and was preparing for a cruise to Mexico. Unfortunately, all my travel funds were spent getting the boat ready. So I hired on to do some custom work on a big fancy motor yacht in my marina.

I put in several weeks of work and got the fine yacht fixed up. It, too, was heading to Mexico soon. The captain invited my wife and me to go along as paid crew. We were excited at the opportunity to make our first trip to Mexico on somebody else's dime and to enjoy the voyage in a large luxurious private yacht.

We closed up our little sailboat and that same night went to my home group to share our gratitude for the adventure unfolding. The next day we stopped by the bank, and discovered just how broke we had become. We had \$14 in the bank and \$9 in our pockets! But we had pay coming, and the prospect of paid crew jobs aboard the yacht. All seemed fine.

We loaded our gear on board and cast off for Cabo San Lucas, some 1400 miles from our home in Ventura, California. The trip down took about 10 days. During that time the skipper almost got us run over by large freighters, ran the boat aground once, and seemed to generally disregard boating safety. It was a wild ride and I didn't get much sleep along the way. Since we couldn't get off the boat in mid-ocean, we decided to leave the yacht as soon as we made landfall in Cabo. We planned to collect our money from the captain and head back home.

When we got to Cabo, the skipper told me he didn't have our pay, but that the owners were flying in the next day and would pay us. We were stuck for the time being. Ten days offshore with no meetings had left me on shaky ground. I became angry and afraid. I'd trusted this guy and he had endangered us, stiffed us of our pay, and lied about his abilities as a boat captain. We were hundreds of miles from home, AA, friends, and family—and we were broke.

About that time, my recovery momentum kicked in. I suppose it was automatic conditioning from going to many meetings for 11 years. Acting on an inner hunch—in other words, "an intuitive thought or inspiration"—I suggested we get away from the problem for a while, spend our last money on a meal and some coffee ... and take a moment to pause and ask our HP for help.

We found a lovely, quaint little restaurant on a dirt road, down a side street away from the busy harbor. We spent the better part of our last \$9 on pancakes and coffee. We prayed about it and enjoyed our first brunch in a foreign country. It wasn't long before we both seemed to perk up a bit. Remember H.A.L.T.? It's not just for newcomers!

After we ate, we began discussing our options. We didn't have many: we were broke. The cheerful and accommodating waiter came back to refill our cups. My wife, who spoke no Spanish, asked him in English, "Do you know where there's an AA meeting nearby?" (Cont., next page)



He lit up with a huge grin and twinkling eyes as he began gesticulating wildly and speaking in Spanish. When he saw we had not understood a word, with one finger he pointed to the floor, which I interpreted that as "here." Next he waved one finger in front of our eyes, which I took to mean "in one hour." And then he held up four fingers in the air, which I read as "4 o'clock." It was just then 3 o'clock!

My wife repeated, "AA?" "Alcohólicos Anónimos," I translated. He repeated the same gestures, this time more emphatically. My little human brain, already off the beam, was certain that he didn't understand what we had asked him. I apologized for

our poor Spanish and thanked him for his kindness.

I was now angry, discontent, fearful, and embarrassed. Is there an acronym for that? HP must have been chuckling in the background. I'd been trapped on the ocean with a madman for 10 days and was now stuck a long way from home with no money and no apparent way out. There was no way to call my sponsor or fellow AA members for help. I felt lost and alone and was nearing panic mode. And now, suddenly, I began to cry with joy at realizing HP and AA were right here with me in Mexico. HP had just played his Why-Do-You-Ever-Worry card. He had brought us to this angel of a man, who led us to an AA home meeting here at the "End of the Earth," (another name frequently used for Cabo San Lucas, which sits at the end of a 1000-mile peninsula.)

Relieved, we had another cup of coffee and waited with anticipation. The AA meeting did happen and it was wonderful! It was just like any AA meeting I'd been to during the past 11 years. It had laughter, hugs, handshakes, back slaps, welcoming, kindness, healing and affirmation. I was able to share about my situation, and let go of it.

I became aware that HP had a big hand in this coincidence, and all would be OK. I just didn't know how it would come to pass. But I knew I didn't need to know. If God could produce an English-speaking AA meeting with a dozen members out of thin air, down a dirt road, in the middle of nowhere, 1400 miles from my home, he could likely handle this little problem of mine.

And he did. The next day the yacht's owners arrived. I spoke with them quietly and calmly, sharing our experience and telling them that we were leaving the boat and needed our back pay. They instantly became a part of HP's miracle. Unbeknownst to me, they'd known the captain had problems. With humble appreciation, they paid happily in cash and gave us a bonus for helping to keep the boat safe and being honest about the situation. They had come down to the boat to let him go. Then they placed me in charge of their floating paradise, with a huge raise! Now the real fun began in earnest. We stayed with the boat for a month or so and enjoyed Mexico and our luxury motor yacht. We attended that wonderful AA meeting in Cabo (it was held three days a week at 4 o'clock!), as well as several Spanish-speaking meetings. In a city not far away, we found more expat AA meetings. When we parted ways with the vessel, we were able to spend a few fabulous weeks vacationing with our new AA family in Mexico.

My new slogan is, "Why do we ever worry?" Since that experience, I'm quicker to get myself out of the way and to pause and ask for an intuitive thought or inspiration. HP seems to be happy to provide solutions to life's apparent problems when I let him.

HP is truly everywhere. In the 27 years since my first Mexico adventure, I've enjoyed many travels around this wonderful planet. HP and AA have found a way of showing up everywhere. Those two initials—AA—seem to be recognized by many people, in many countries and in many languages, outside the program. Help is always closer than I think. At home, every day unfolds with HP and AA as my foundation. The same holds firm and true for my traveling days. -- Jim B. Richardson, Texas, USA

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**Central Office of SFV**

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**Van Nuys, CA 91406**

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