

RECOVERY TIMES

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The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Peace on the inside

As the hospital helps him with his mental illness, the AA meetings give him hope until one day he can get out



I found peace in an unlikely place when I was committed to a mental hospital at the age of 28. While I was there, I was told by one of the staff that I should go to an AA meeting they held there, due to the fact that all I talked about was how badly I needed a drink. So I went.

Growing up, I drank in excess right from the start. It became normal for me to get falling-down drunk and make a fool of myself. I would go out one night and get into trouble and then I'd drink for

the next few days to cover up my feelings of guilt and shame.

As my drinking progressed, so did my run-ins with the law. In just a couple of years, I got a half-dozen underage drinking fines and just as many disorderly conduct charges, along with one DWI, even though I drove drunk all the time.

In my early 20s, I started to experience paranoia, anxiety and panic attacks, all while going through extreme high and low moods. I assumed everyone felt the way I did. These feelings pushed me to drink even harder. I was either drinking to cover up negative emotions, or I was manic and drinking because I felt like I was on top of the world.

I would tell myself that I would have just a few mixers or a beer, then stop. But then it always got out of control. The craving for more would have me blacked out in a few hours. Every time I awoke from a blackout, I would start drinking all over again to cover up the embarrassment I felt.

These negative emotions were so strong. At times, I wanted to die because of the self-loathing. I hated myself so much. I began to have thoughts of suicide.

One day, I finally hit a breaking point and I decided to get some help. I went to a psychiatrist and he decided that I needed a psychologist. They agreed that I had a mental illness. I was actually relieved that I finally knew what was wrong with me. I started medication right away, and I felt good. I even quit drinking for a few days. That's when the panic attacks got worse and the hallucinating started. So I did what I thought would make things better: I stopped the medication and I hit the bottle harder than ever. The more anxiety I felt, the more I went for the alcohol. I wasn't aware that the drinking increased my anxiety and panic attacks.

At this point, I was putting a few shots in my coffee to kill the shakes on my way to work. I became unemployable. I had to leave two jobs in a matter of a few weeks because I was convinced everyone was talking about me. I had learned to adapt to my illness instead of treating it. People would tell me my drinking was out of hand, and I would respond by saying that my problem was not drinking, it was mental illness. My delusion was that alcohol was somehow helping me.

As my drinking progressed, so did my mental illness. As I drank harder, my symptoms got even
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SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting
January 8, 2018

OPENING: Josh S. for Larry S.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Bob F. for Adrian I.

- Central Office is in the black! MTD is \$14,399 and YTD is \$6,170, as compared with last year's YTD which was \$4,050. Financials are available.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

- Central Office
 - The website is running great.
 - Volunteer status is running smoothly, but we could always use more.
 - *Recovery Times*: Stories of recovery are welcome. Deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Josh S.

- 5 new Intergroup Representative this month:
 - Dan D., "Burbank Group,";
 - Eric V., "SOS Stags of Sobriety," Mondays at 7pm in Canoga Park;
 - Will A., "One Day at A Time Participation (Gong Show)," Thursdays at 7pm in Winnetka;
 - Terri S., "Conscious Contact Women's Stag," Wednesdays at 7pm in Granada Hills; and
 - Sarah P., "Reseda Big Book Study and Discussion," Fridays at 7:30 pm in Reseda.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- General Service District 11: Dan for 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 1st Monday of every month at the Windsor Club.
- General Service District 16: Daniel: Looking for topics for this year's Workshops. Suggestions are welcome.
- San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: Daniel: Join us the third Monday of the month at St. Innocents Church in Tarzana.

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:

The Gong Show: Leader Participation Meeting, Thursdays at 7pm, 7930 Mason Ave., Winnetka.

AA Desert Pow Wow: June 7, 8 and 9, 2018 in Indian Wells, California. Registration forms are available or register online at www.desertpowwow.com.

REMINDERS:

Josh S.: 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 JANUARY – 81 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Lee M., 17 years on 1/8;
- Dan, 29 years on 1/7; and,
- Herb M., 35 years on 12/24.

VACANCIES ON BOARD

- There is one vacancy on the Board. Elections were held, and Brian H. is our new Intergroup Board Member. Congratulations, Brian!

CLOSING:

- Before closing, acting Chair, Josh S., presented past Chair, Cheryl A., with a beautiful plaque in gratitude for her service on the Intergroup Board of Directors. Many thanks for a job well done, Cheryl!!!
- A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*.

Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary

Continued, page one: Peace on the Inside

worse. This all ended with me having to go into a mental hospital. My first year in I was a dry drunk, still mentally obsessed with alcohol, still angry, irritable and discontent. Then I finally got to my first AA meeting. At that first meeting, I saw guys who volunteered their time to show us that we could have a better life and that living the Steps could change the way I lived and rebuild the relationships I had lost.

These guys were like me, except they were happy, joyous and free. I wanted to have what they had, so I did the work. I got a sponsor and I read the Big Book. I found out that the Twelve Steps aren't just a way out of drinking but a way of living.

Now, thanks to AA, I've found peace on the inside. I've gained a sense of control over my life that I never had before. Medication has helped me with my mental illness, but I'm still an alcoholic.

I used to find reasons why I should die; now I find reasons why I should live. This new way of life for me has given me hope for the future. If I can find peace and hope in a mental hospital, I can only imagine what it can do for me when I get out. -- Travis K., Madison, Wisconsin, USA



If you think you might drink, get yourself to a meeting. You can view all of the meetings online at: www.sfvaa.org. Or call Central Office at: 818 988-3001: 24/7 phone number.

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.

Our website: 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 or email: sfvco@la.twcbc.com.

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WWW.SFVAA.ORG.

MOVING TO THE HILL COUNTRY

In seven years of sobriety, she had never shared her story or done much in the way of service, until she joined a very special home group in the Texas Hill Country

My husband and I retired when I was seven years sober. We moved from the Houston area to the Hill Country to a little town called Brady, Texas. The group I attended in the Clear Lake area for early morning meetings was very special to me and I knew I would miss being there. But I found a group I am very proud now to call my home group here in Brady. What I didn't realize then, but do now, is that I was headed for a journey I won't ever forget. I had been told about the strong ladies here at Brady from a young lady who came out of prison and started attending meetings at my Clear Lake group. She had been incarcerated near Brady and the ladies from the Brady group would take a meeting into the prison. She had so much praise for these women and told me I had to connect when I moved here.

In October of 2010, when I moved up to Brady, I started attending the meetings at the group. We are not a big group and have even gotten a little smaller as we lost some special people over the 6 years I have been here, but we are a powerful group. When I got here, I immediately found myself put into service work. Wasn't necessarily a choice at the time. I had never really gotten that involved with service work before except to do a little secretarial job and maybe help clean the building. My first experience was to help with the group anniversary party held each August. At that time, it was the 63rd anniversary. What I saw over that two day celebration was the most hardworking group of ladies and yes, some men, giving **(continued, page 6)**

FROM THE FOUNDERS

"At the beginning we sacrificed alcohol. We had to or it would have killed us. But we couldn't get rid of alcohol unless we made other sacrifices. Big shot-ism and phony thinking had to go. We had to toss self-justification, self-pity, and anger right out the window. We had to quit the crazy contest for personal prestige and big bank balances. We had to take personal responsibility for our sorry state and quit blaming others for it."

AA Co-Founder, **Bill W.**,
January 1955
From: "Why Alcoholics
Anonymous Is
Anonymous"

"A fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source." AA Co-Founder, **Bill W.**
"Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need," April 1959

"As long as I am willing to do what I am called to do in any given moment and to abandon the effort to control the results of my actions, then I am following the path that my Higher Power - call it God, Good Orderly Direction, the soul, the life force, or anything else - has set out for me."
Thompson, PA

"Feed your faith and starve your doubt" Ind., Ind.

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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: 1st 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 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. 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 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 Anonymous – 18 Years, Lenny F. – 21 Years, Larry F. – 30 Years, Francis K. – 33 Years & Brian M. – 40 Years.

Deaths: We remember Wayne W. -14 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).



(Moving to Hill Country, continued)

of their time to make a very special event successful. And what fun it was even though it was a lot of work. I watched as people from all over, even out of state, came to attend this celebration. There were fantastic speakers, as well as fantastic food prepared by these ladies and gentlemen. I was introduced to so many new faces and began to make a whole new set of friends in the program. This event is held every year and we are now coming upon our 69th anniversary.

I had never shared my story from the podium, but was asked to do this at another time. I was scared, but the encouragement of these great folks put me at ease. I have since shared it again. The importance of getting out of myself and telling my story was encouraged by this group.

As time went on, more and more opportunities arose for me to serve. Our annual Christmas party was one. We would all gather a few weeks before to decorate and clean the building. Through this I developed a strong relationship with these ladies that I don't think I would have gotten if I had just sat in meetings. We now go places together and it isn't always AA-related.

But I think the thing that really has gotten me in touch with the importance of service work was to start serving on the group conscience board and getting involved with our district, first as secretary and treasurer and now as GVR. I serve as our group's GSR as well. I have been privileged to attend conferences and have met the most wonderful people. I know these people now and they know me. Me, who was shy and afraid of most people, now has a world of people I can relate to.

These ladies are very big into service work. And they have taught me the importance of giving back what has freely been given to me. But I am still receiving so much from doing the work. The satisfaction of knowing I can make a difference is huge. Coming out of my shell and being there for AA, just as it has been there for me, is priceless. I encourage everyone to get involved with your group and your district. The rewards are just too great to miss. -- Suzy L., Lohn, Texas

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Remember to buy your chips & literature at Central Office of the San Fernando Valley. You'll get the best price and you'll be supporting AA.

ANY LENGTHS IN GHANA



A member gets a firsthand look at the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous in a city in Africa

When I was invited to go to Ghana a few years ago, I had no idea I would actually be able to make the trip. I had met a couple, Dan and Agnes O., who told me about what was happening with AA there, but I had no idea that they were referring to the actual start of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ghana. It turned out that I was able to take them up on their offer and travel to Accra, the capital city, that June. What I found there was very similar to what I left here. I was able to meet men and women working together to spread the message of recovery to other suffering alcoholics in their community. No one complained about the lack of resources, AA literature, or the fact that old-timers were rare in the area—if they existed at all. They just wanted to be sober and have others teach them about the Steps and Traditions.

I was familiar with our history and the stories of Dr. Bob and Bill W. Dr. Bob sobered up only to get drunk time and time again, until that fateful day in the living room where he and Bill had a meeting about a spiritual solution. What I saw, and was able to participate in in Ghana, was the closest thing to what I'd imagined the early days of AA to be. During the 10 days I spent with Dan, Agnes, my guide Kwasi and others, I was able to participate in meetings and share my experience, strength and hope.

I met a gentleman from South Africa named Mike, who got sober more than 20 years ago in San Francisco and moved to Africa to teach English as a second language. He had traveled to Accra for a few days to lead a Big Book workshop and take a few guys through the Steps. Mike explained to me that the guys in Accra who were trying to stay sober and practice the principles of AA did not have the luxury of picking a sponsor to help them work the Steps. Out of the two million people who live in Accra, there were about 20 who were sober; of those 20, only a handful had more than six months of continuous sobriety. People like Mike and others who traveled and stumbled upon AA there, spent a week or two teaching the Steps and what they knew about the Big Book. According to Dan, AA was growing, and the families of a few of these alcoholics had started an AI-Anon group at Trinity College.

As I sat in the Black Star meeting of AA listening to the Ghanaians describe their experience with Step Six, I found myself suddenly overwhelmed with an immense sense of gratitude. Did Bill W. ever conceive of a 31-year-old woman who got sober in Macon, Georgia at 21 years old, to be traveling to a meeting halfway across the world to listen to how we stay sober and become useful members of society? I certainly did not have this on a list of things to do when I first got sober. Watching a new guy come into the meeting and seeing the others welcome him with a cup of coffee, a phone list and a meeting list, sent chills up my arms. I was moved to see that the message was still being carried in the same way it was for me in the U.S. more than 10 years ago.

Before I went to Ghana, I had become concerned about some of what I had been hearing in meetings back home. I'd often call my sponsor, complaining that the solution was being diluted. I was scared that AA might not be the same for my son in 20 years. I found myself getting bitter, frustrated by newcomers, negative about where I was going to meetings, and resentful at the old-timers just "letting it happen." But after being in Ghana, I began to realize just how wrong I'd been. Relapse was as real to them as it used to be for me. Talking with AA members in Ghana who were locked in insane asylums, taken to prayer camps, and treated with shock therapy, all in an effort to cure their alcoholism, reminded me of some of the methods I had used to "get cured."

However, what they were going through was worse and more extreme than anything I ever tried. I also got a chance to speak to a few mothers and family members of people who were still drinking. With tears in their eyes they told me story after story of their sons calling them in the middle of the night from jail or a hospital, or not calling at all. Visiting with the Ghanaians only reinforced my love for Alcoholics Anonymous. I told them that they taught me more in 10 days than I had learned in three years. —Anonymous USA Copyright © 1990 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

Central Office of SFV

16132 Sherman Way
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