

# RECOVERY TIMES

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The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

## I Got Sober During the Holiday Season

I got sober just before the Holidays on December 22, 2013. It's not that I wanted to get sober. It's just that I dreaded another holiday spent alone and at that point, even alcohol wasn't making it better. The previous New Year's Eve I had been invited to a service put on by a religious group. Although I thought it would make me feel better, I only felt judged and walked out after shouting something nasty at one of the leaders. I immediately headed to a bar which was mostly empty and ordered a drink. While standing there, I realized how desperate my life had become. Rather than celebrating New Year's Eve, I was a woman in my mid 40's drinking alone in a bar.

That's partly why I dreaded the return of the Holidays that next year. Another season of people wishing me "happiness" and having to pretend that I wanted the same for them when the Holidays only compounded my misery.

But then something happened. Someone suggested that I go to an AA meeting and see if I found anything there that could help me.

At first, I scoffed at that idea. I mean, how could a group of people who didn't even know me, help me? But I had no other game plan on that evening so I attended my first A.A. meeting at the Radford Group. I sat in the 3<sup>rd</sup> row and tried to be anonymous but when they asked newcomers to raise their hands, I did so, and to my surprise, received a round of applause. It was embarrassing, to say the least. What's more, the people in front of me turned around and looked at me and later several women gave me their phone numbers! I had no intention of calling them but felt obligated to smile and thank them - even though I didn't mean it.

After the break, I heard someone share about their drinking story, and for the first time, I related to how that man felt. So I continued to listen.

The holidays are here.



Then all of a sudden, a horrible smell filled the room. Some young people who had been in the kitchen had lit a stink bomb and the fumes from it were emanating throughout the room!

I immediately got angry and wanted to confront the little thugs who had done this. After all, they had disrupted my listening to the stories of people who I wanted to hear. They should be thrown out of the meeting, I thought. Maybe I should say something to them?

I didn't, of course, I only thought about doing it. And someone else from the group dealt with the issue and the meeting continued. This, of course, was a turning point for me because instead of being an outsider, now I felt like I needed to hear more. I stayed until the end of that meeting and then decided to go to another meeting the following night.

The second night, I went to Dunsmore, the AA clubhouse in La Crescenta which is known as the oldest clubhouse west of the Mississippi for its continuous operation. It was another newcomer meeting and again, I heard someone share a story that reminded me of myself. I liked what I heard.

Unconvinced that this AA program was for me, I went to a third meeting at Unit A, then located on Lankershim by the

Sears store. It was a candlelight meeting and it was Christmas Eve. The meeting started at 11 p.m. and I had specifically chosen that meeting so that I would be too preoccupied to be drinking in a bar. I remember there was a small synthetic Christmas tree plugged into the wall and it was blinking on and off throughout the meeting. I felt comforted by that tree. It



reminded me of when I was a little girl and the Holidays were magical. It also reminded me of the love that I once had from my family around this time of year. Even though that was a long time ago, it felt like the spark of the past was still burning inside of me.

The Unit A crowd that night was a mixture of homeless people with shopping carts and other assorted misfits. I knew I stood out because of the way I was dressed. I was also only a few days sober and I didn't have anywhere else to go.

During that meeting, a man who was holding a scythe said that when he was drinking he always thought about cutting off people's heads but that since he had gotten sober, he didn't feel that way anymore. Although he looked scary, he carried the message and who was I to judge him? Later, after the meeting ended, a few of the people at the meeting invited me to go for coffee. I was glad I was included but since it was late, I was pretty sure I was not going to drink so I headed home.

The next day was Christmas and Radford was having a Holiday brunch before their Speaker meeting. I decided to go since all I had in the refrigerator was a frozen pizza that I knew was pretty old. Also, it was Christmas and I didn't want to drink and knew that I probably would if I were feeling sorry for myself.

The meeting was led by a Hollywood celebrity who I recognized from a movie I had recently seen. I thought to myself, "Wow, there are some cool people in A.A.! They're not all losers." That was another turning point for me. My previous understanding of alcoholics was that they were people who could not make it in the world. Now I realized that sober alcoholics were different and that they could and did get better.

The following day, my fifth day of sobriety, I attended a meeting at the San Fernando Group. I didn't know anyone there and I didn't know anything about San Fernando but it was close to where I lived so I figured I would go. I was one of just a few women who were at that meeting as it was mostly men. But some of the men were pretty good looking – in a rough and tumble way – and they had some fresh fruit for snacks which I felt was pretty thoughtful.

After I sat down, one of the guys came over and asked if I wanted a coffee and then got up and poured it for me and brought it back to my table. He introduced himself and asked me a few questions. I was glad he came over because I felt very self-conscious and it felt good to have someone to sit with. I don't remember much about that meeting except that they announced that there would be a New Year's Eve dance and Alcathon in a few days. The guy who had sat with me gave me his phone number and told me if I thought I was going to drink, to call him. He also told me to "Keep Coming Back."

I thought that meant that he really liked me and wanted to see me again. Of course I decided to come back and I also showed up for the alcathon, where I met many other members of the San Fernando Group. Everyone was so warm and kind to me. That was one of the biggest factors in my deciding to give this "AA thing" a chance. I was used to being ignored in the bars where I drank, except by people who I really didn't want to speak to. These people, on the other hand, seemed to really care how I felt and they looked me in the eye when they talked to me.

So on Day 5, I made a decision to try to stay sober. It was right before the holidays, and with the grace of my Higher Power, and the steps of AA, I have stayed sober since then and am looking forward to my next cake in another month.

My life today is considerably different from what it was before I got sober. I have dozens of close friends now – both in and out of AA, and many more acquaintances who I know from the meetings I attend. I still try to go to 4 – 6 meetings a week and I enjoy being there very much. My relationships with my family have changed and grown into loving warm relationships in almost all cases. Prior to sobriety, no one wanted to talk to me and I wasn't welcome in their homes.

I have learned to be a reliable, honest person who follows through on what I say I'll do. That wasn't the case before I stopped drinking. And instead of using "Magic Thinking" to resolve my problems – fantasizing about people who would rescue or fix me – I have realistic expectations of myself and my friends. Things don't always work out the way I want them to and when they don't, I try to be understanding and to give others the benefit of the doubt.

My faith has been lifted to the degree that I absolutely know that I am being guided by a Higher Power and that I have always been protected by this source of power, even when I was self-destructive. The difference is that now I appreciate and thank my Higher Power for being there for me and for letting me enjoy each day of my life.

With Alcoholics Anonymous, my life has grown to be full and I look forward to each new day as I reach out my hand to the next newcomer who needs my help. **Anonymous**



## Smarter phones

**Texting and posting can be tricky when it comes to anonymity. There are guidelines that can help**



**Tradition Eleven:** *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.*

Anonymity, in my experience, is one of the most misunderstood aspects of our Fellowship. It was complicated for our cofounders, and technology makes it even more complicated today. Bill W. wrote Tradition Eleven and Dr. Bob clarified anonymity in *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* at a time when there were no computers and smartphones. What would they say about anonymity today? How anonymous should I be in this era of social media?

There is an answer to that. AA published some "Guidelines on the Traditions and the Internet." It's available on **aa.org**. There is a section in these guidelines on social networking sites. Briefly, the guidelines state that someone "using their full name and/or likeness such as a full-face photograph, would be contrary to the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition." It goes on to suggest **that "it is in keeping with the Eleventh Tradition not to disclose AA membership on social networking sites, as well as any other website, blog, electronic bulletin board, etc., unless composed solely of AA members and password protected."**

My belief is that Tradition Eleven (and specifically the part about "press, radio and films") meant "media." There are two reasons why the idea of "media" is important: 1) this kind of communication is recorded and can be played back or retrieved. And 2) it is transmitted to a lot of people, some of whom may not understand AA and our Traditions.

My approach is: If I can be personally identified as a member of AA on social media, it's a violation of Tradition Eleven. So for example, if I post something online that identifies me as an AA member, I consider that to be a violation of the Traditions. My social media posts are recorded; they are available for all time and are easily retrievable by anyone who really wants to find them. Things that I posted 10 years ago are still there. So I do not post anything about my membership in AA on any social media sites. Also, I need always to look at my ego and ask myself why I am posting whatever I'm posting.

But at the same time, I also need to ensure that I am not "too anonymous." I do my best to be available whenever "anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help." My name, telephone number and email address are well known to my home group members and in my local AA community. People can easily find me if they need. -- **Hal W., Berwyn, Pennsylvania** Copyright © 2018 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

**A.A. Central Office** of the San Fernando Valley is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$5,000 per year and must be from members of AA, not from outsiders.



**AA Central Office maintains a 24 hour phone line** for alcoholics in need, hosted by volunteers. **Call: 818 988-3001** anytime to speak to a "live" person on the phones. After hours we still answer phones for those in need, so don't be afraid to refer people to our phone lines.

**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 to volunteer. (818) 988-3001, or ask your group to volunteer for a shift every month.

**Central Office is located at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys** on the SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station. Our large warehouse has chips, medallions and all the A.A. approved literature and pamphlets your group needs.

**Please buy your meeting supplies from AA Central Office of the Valley.** By doing so, you are supporting our office. (It's always more expensive to buy them from a retail store). 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).

**Visit our website: [www.sfvaa.org](http://www.sfvaa.org)** for meeting information and copies of Recovery Times.

**Update us with your meeting information via email: [sfvco@la.twcbc.com](mailto:sfvco@la.twcbc.com),** or stop by and pick up your medallions and literature at our Valley office: SFVCO, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

**Got a story to share?** Recovery Times is always looking for contributions of stories on your sobriety. **Please send to Editor Pat K: [xnowisthetime@aol.com](mailto:xnowisthetime@aol.com).** Stories of recovery should be no more than 600 words. Deadline is always the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for the next month's issue.

**SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE  
Minutes of Intergroup Representatives Meeting**

**October 14, 2019**

**OPENING: Josh S.**

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

**TREASURER'S REPORT: Tina K.**

- MTD is \$2,085 and YTD is \$1,526, as compared with last year's YTD which was (\$4,897).
- Financial Statements are available.

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

**CENTRAL OFFICE:**

- Sponsor Breakfast turnout was lower than usual.
- Everything is running smoothly, but we can always use more phone volunteers.

### **RECOVERY TIMES:**

Snail-mail subscriptions to the Recovery Times are available. The cost is \$15/yr. for 12 issues.

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: Lyn W.**

There was 1 new Intergroup Representative this month: Tyler C., "Feelings Discussion," Saturdays at 7:30pm in Van Nuys; and "Men's Book Study, Thursdays at 7pm in Reseda.

### **SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:**

**General Service District 16: Andy:** Seeking to host Area Assembly in February 2020.

**General Service District 1:** Cece: Area 93 Old Timers Event 2019, Sunday, Nov. 4, 11:30am, at the Prado Senior Recreation Center in Bakersfield.

**San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee:** Matt M. reported H&I meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at Saint Innocent Church in Tarzana. New member orientation at 7pm, business meeting starts at 8pm. Volunteers are needed for jail panels. For more information, visit [www.sfvhi.org](http://www.sfvhi.org).

**San Fernando Valley 45<sup>th</sup> Annual AA Convention:** Bernard B.:

Marathon Meeting request forms and Registration flyers are available. Also, the convention website at [sfvaaconvention.org](http://sfvaaconvention.org) is up and running! **Convention will be Jan. 31 – Feb. 2, 2020.** Theme is "Spiritual Life is Not a Theory." Planning meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7pm, at St. Innocent Church in Tarzana.

**Santa Clarita Valley 16<sup>th</sup> Annual AA Convention:** Bernard B.: Had a great convention!

### **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:** None

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:** Carla, Winners' Attitude Adjustment Group: What the Heck are the 12 Concepts? Concepts 101, Sunday, Nov. 24, 2019, 9am – 1pm at 5000 N. Colfax Ave., Studio City. For registration, TEXT Joshua at 323-821-8662.

### **REMINDERS:**

Josh S.: 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" ("an event that includes an AA Meeting as part of the event").

### **IGR BIRTHDAYS FOR OCTOBER: 46 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!**

Kim M., 22 Years & Dottie H., 24 years

**VACANCIES ON BOARD:** Bernard B. was elected to the vacant board seat. Congratulations Bernard!!!

**CLOSING:** A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m. with *The Lord's Prayer*. Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary



## FROM THE FOUNDERS

"It is not the fault of great ideals that they are sometimes misused."

**AA Co-Founder, Bill W.**, June 1961, "Humility for Today," The Language of the Heart

"The simplicity of this program never changes -- what works is constant: trust in God, clean house, and work with others."

**Concord, California**

"One old-timer explained it this way to me: 'Don't let your mind rattle on at meetings. Then all you'll hear from someone else is something that gets you thinking about what you have to say. Listen to everything the person talking has to say, as if your life depended on it -- because it might one day. Listen to everyone this way, especially the ones you want to ignore,' this old-timer said. 'God won't deprive you of the answer you need, if you've come to an AA meeting needing an answer. He may, however, have your answer come out of the mouth of the person you least expect to have your answer. God has a sense of humor.'"

"Quiet Guidance," **Sober and Out**

"My greatest challenges are before me. But my experience with the Third Step, even in the smallest matters, gives me the courage to meet whatever lies ahead, twenty-four hours at a time."

**Manhattan, New York**

## A SERVICE COMMITTEES CALENDAR: GS Area 93

**District 1:** Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month at 7552 Remmet Street, Canoga Park, CA at 6 p.m. orientation; 6:30 for general meeting.

**District 11:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month at 123 W. Windsor Road, Glendale, CA at 6:30 orientation; 7 p.m. general meeting.

**District 16:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (Central Office) at 6 p.m. for orientation then meeting.

**District 17:** Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month at 5000 Colfax Ave., North Hollywood at 6 p.m. orientation; 6:30 p.m. general meeting.

**For more info, refer to your District Committee Member (DCM).**

### **OTHER AA COMMITTEES:**

**Public Information 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. To volunteer call Central Office: **(818) 988-3001**.

**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. Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana (St. Innocent) at 7 p.m. for orientation/ 8 p.m. for the general business meeting.

**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 at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. (6:30 p.m. for orientation; 7 p.m. for business meeting). Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group, sharing info on upcoming AA events in the Valley. Support Central Office by sending a rep from your group to the monthly Intergroup meeting.

**Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary?** Consider making a \$1.00 donation to Central Office for each year of your sobriety during your birthday month.

**Bequests/Contributions:** The maximum dollar amount of individual bequests by A.A.s is reviewed every two years at the General Service Conference. In 2019, at the 69th General Service Conference, the maximum amount of an individual bequest by members to A.A. was raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000." This is a one-time contribution and is not in perpetuity.

**This month, we celebrate the AA anniversaries of:**

Hannah A. – 37 Years and John C. – 46 Years

**We also remember (A. A. Deaths):** Kimberly C. – Years unknown  
Charlie W. – 35 Years, Chuck D. – 35 Years and Candy B. – 48 Years

## NOW, THAT'S ATTRACTION

Judy was my step-great-grandmother. I first met her when my mom and stepdad married in 1990 when I was 6 years old.

In my eyes, Judy was a classic sweet old lady. She was spritely and alive. She square danced on Tuesdays, baked a delicious glazed ham on Sundays, loved playing board games and hung out with her friends on Saturday nights. Strangely, she also described herself as an alcoholic. That made absolutely no sense to me because I never saw her drink. In time, I learned that "hanging out with friends on Saturday nights" actually meant attending the Ladner Saturday Nite group of AA.



Judy had a sponsor, her sponsor had a sponsor and Judy sponsored others. She worked the Steps and she did service. If you had a Twelfth Step call in the Vancouver area sometime between the 1970s and 2000s, you may have met her. AA was the cornerstone of Judy's life.

When I was 12, Judy invited the whole family to attend her home group to help her celebrate 31 years of sobriety. At that time, I was still seven years away from my first drink, but all the "isms" were alive in me already. I felt anxious, inferior and uncomfortable in my own skin. Friends, if you knew the kind of stinking thinking that was going on in my head, how badly I needed something to "fix" me, you would have bought me a Big Book, saved me a seat and told me to "keep coming back."



Besides that one night at her AA anniversary, Judy never really told me much about AA or sobriety. Instead, she showed me.

She was an active, beloved member of our family, of her community and of AA. She was open and honest in discussing her recovery from alcoholism and her membership in AA, but she never shoved it down anyone's throat. I never heard her say that a person "should" go to AA. Thank God for that. I'm an alcoholic, so if you tell me I "should" do something, I'll usually do the

opposite. No, this woman practiced attraction rather than promotion. She let us observe her. So I did just that. I observed her and I filed the experience away for later.

Judy passed away in 2005, at 39 years sober. I came to AA and got sober in 2010, so unfortunately she and I never got to discuss recovery in depth, but she did plant the AA seed in me.

When I hit my bottom and admitted I needed help, AA was the first place I turned because Judy "attracted" me here. At the end of my first meeting, when we all held hands and prayed, I remembered the Serenity Prayer plaque that hung in Judy's kitchen and I smiled. Finally, those simple words made sense to me.

That plaque now hangs in my own home, a constant reminder of the effect that one alcoholic can have on another, even without ever knowing it. Judy showed me that AA works, and I strive to practice Tradition Eleven in my life the very same way she did. Thank you Judy, wherever you are, for the part you played in my sobriety. -- **W.L., Vancouver, British Columbia**



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