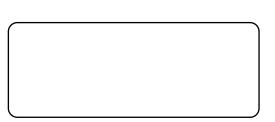
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Non Profit Org.



**APRIL 2017** 

Monthly Newsletter of the Ventura County Central Service Office Inc.

Volume 37 — Issue 4

# Features ..

# PAGE -1

Cover Story

Office Information

PAGE - 2

**Cover Story Continued** 

# PAGE - 3

- Living Step #4 A Review of Tradition #4
- **Humor Column**

# PAGE - 4

The Grapevine Corner Crossword

# PAGE - 5

- A.A. Birthday Club
- Trivia Question Contest
- Staff and Contact Information

## PAGE - 6

- Major Events Calendar Monthly Local Event Calendars
- Crossword Solution

### PAGE - 7

Districts, Area & AAWS Contacts

Concept IV

# PAGE - 8

♦ Subscription Order Form

### Plus ....

Flyers Inside

# Info Lines ..

Visit Our Website. Just want a meeting or other A.A. information? Check out the expanded Ventura County website. www.aaventuracounty.org

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# The Twelve Concepts of AA: A Beginner's Guide **Understanding A.A.'s Third Legacy**

by Boyce B. Brooklyn NY

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The Twelve Concepts of AA were a mystery to me for a long time in recovery. They were not a very compelling mystery since they were seldom referred to at meetings I attended. An oversimplified notion of service was part of my early training in sobriety; concepts of world service that provide principles like "the right of decision," the importance of hearing minority opinions, and "the right of appeal" were not brought to my attention. Only gradually did I notice how the third side of the triangle of recovery, unity, and service was overlooked.

It is not surprising that I have been a slow learner in recovery. Even those window shades with AA's Steps and Traditions were offputting to me at my first meetings. This drunk had eschewed belief systems any more subtle than the Ten Commandments. I was raised in a nonreligious household and developed a strong sense of self-sufficiency and independence. So, it was not surprising then that, for me, a practical sense of what produces instant gratification provided a system adequate for living. Or so it seemed, for a couple of decades of serious drinking.

Full of negative attitudes, distorted instincts, distrust, superstitions, and low self-esteem doing nearly constant battle with inflated selfworth, I was primed for a harsh bottoming out from years of daily drinking. Fortunately, my resistance to help had only a few days to fortify itself before I was dragged to my first meeting. As I sat there quaking in dread and confusion, listening to three speakers share their stories, one after another, of how it was, what happened, and what it was like now, I underwent a spiritual transformation. Hope was instilled where before there had been only an empty place deep within. By the end of the meeting, the outlines on the window shade, the brightly -lit room, and the many strangers were no longer threatening. They held the promise of support in whatever might lie ahead. They held the promise of recovery.

In the next few weeks, while coming out of the fog of long-term addiction, I heard many speakers tell of recovery in the narrative of their stories. When I heard reference made to Steps as they were functioning in sober living, I would look at the shade to ponder the spiritual principles involved. Soon I was familiar with the phrase "these are the Steps we took to recover" and I looked at recent experience to see if the Step referred to was working yet in my new life. Often it was and I came to know the Steps of recovery.

Now and then, in the first few years of attending meetings, I found myself in a meeting whose focus was not on recovery but concerned with matters of running the meeting, housekeeping, and all sorts of details that evoked discussions--sometimes heated. There had been ample opportunity to notice that those who attended meetings had little in common other than their addiction to alcohol and a desire not to drink by sharing experience, strength, and hope. With such incredible racial, educational, ethnic, and cultural diversity, not to mention the variety of temperaments and individual neuroses, we should never have been able to sit together and peacefully mediate so broad a range of opinions as we brought to bear on each topic on the agenda. And yet, at each of these meetings, a group conscience emerged that addressed our common welfare. When the meeting would come to loggerheads, someone with experience would focus attention on the Tradition whose principles applied to the matter at hand. I came to see that when two or more people were involved and affected, AA has Traditions of unity.

From my first encounter with AA, I was encouraged to pick up after myself and to assist in making the meetings possible. It was the rare meeting that had hired help, so it was essential that each member contribute service to ensure the smooth running of the meeting.

Continued page 2

## A Beginner's Guide Continued

And as I gained familiarity with the Steps of recovery, the principle of carrying the message and, eventually, of the many ways of doing this in a spirit of anonymity, became an important service that enriched and insured my own sobriety.

Since volunteer service had not been a part of my life in active alcoholism, chairing meetings, answering telephones at our Intergroup office, and keeping commitments to go outside of AA to do public information speaking when asked--these were a major change in my priorities and provided important exercises in character building. I was beginning to understand AA's third legacy of service.

Not until I was sober for a decade, with considerable experience in AA service, did I become General Service Representative (GSR) for my home group. It was then that I began to notice the Twelve Concepts for World Service. If the Steps and Traditions had been off-putting to me when I was first sober, the Concepts were doubly so now. The spiritual principles that I saw embodied in them were familiar and to some degree already functioning in my sobriety. It was the formal, business-like sound of them that seemed to place them outside of day-to-day sober living. Bill W. wrote them out of his long experience as an analyst of business structures and his nearly twenty-five years of involvement in various capacities with the running of the corporate structure of AA. Then in 1962, the General Service Conference accepted the Concepts as part of the Third Legacy of Service. But AA as a whole has never really gotten that message. While recovery and unity are conscious elements in the process of living sober, the Concepts remain the domain of trusted servants in the general service structure. Many members, however, are curious about this important omission and are ready to add this leg of the triangle to their program. Although Bill entitled his writings *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, many of us have found the Concepts essential in our service activities whether we think them world in scale or not.

Concept I contains the notion of the collective conscience of our Fellowship to augment our group conscience and our common welfare. These are essential to assuming final responsibility for and ultimate authority in making support available to groups through publishing and other services necessary to passing our message on.

In Concept II, we AAs entrust the actual voice and effective conscience of our whole society to the General Service Conference through our elected area delegates.

The traditional right of decision is outlined in Concept III as a spiritual principle to assume the means of creating and maintaining a working relationship amongst us members. We cannot force anyone to participate actively in the decision-making process, but the right must be there or we fail to work together. This right of participation assumes that minority opinions are heard and considered, that a majority will not dictate decisions, and that voting blocks will be discouraged. And when all is said and done, the right of appeal, as described in Concept V, ought to prevail with personal grievances carefully considered.

Concepts VI through VIII describe the corporate structure and relationship amongst the Trustees, the General Service Board, and the General Service Conference, which should operate in such a way that the business of AA and the spirit-led work of our members inform one another at each step of any activity of our Society.

In a fellowship that has an actual spirit of democracy, where all members are peers, and there is no authority, Concept IX reminds us of the necessity of good service leadership at all levels. Our sound and appropriate ways of choosing leaders and adhering to timely rotation have served us well.

Concept X challenges our ability to match service responsibility with equal authority so that a trusted servant can fulfill the well-defined tasks expected of that member. It is always important to carefully select members of committees, elected officers, or any other doing the work of AA so that we have the best qualified.

Our Twelfth Step speaks of practicing these principles in all our affairs while our Twelfth Tradition reminds us to place principles before personalities. In the one case, the principles referred to are those of recovery as outlined in the Steps; in the other the principles of unity, as presented in the Traditions. Yet, in pondering both practicing the principles and principles before personalities, there emerges a further set that are outlined in Concept XII in the very specific form referred to as warranties. They have proved to be spirit-inspired standards that are evident in most service activities in the Fellowship. We should maintain the spirit of AA tradition: by avoiding the concentration of perilous wealth or power; by maintaining sufficient operating funds and prudent reserves; by declining to create positions of unqualified authority over others; by reaching decisions through discussion, vote, and substantial unanimity; by refusing to engage in personal punishment or incitement to personal controversy; by avoiding acts of government; by always remaining democratic in thought and action.

As symbolized by the triangle in the circle of Fellowship, the gifts bestowed on us recovering alcoholics known as the three Legacies--the Steps of *recovery*, the Traditions of *unity* and the Concepts of *service*--have proved to be invaluable. For these I'm grateful.

# Concept IV

Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation," taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

The principle of "Right of Participation" is built into the General Service Conference through the Conference Charter. Voting members include not only delegates, but also the trustees, and the directors and staff members of A.A. World Services (i.e., G.S.O.) and the A.A. Grapevine.

In the same way, the boards of these two operating entities include as voting members not only trustees, but also nontrustee directors and paid administrators and staff members

The chairperson of the General Service Board appoints nontrustee members to the standing committees in order to have the advantage of their expertise, and staff members serve as committee secretaries. "There are no 'superiors,' no 'inferiors,' and no 'advisers." New trustees on the General Service Board and new directors of the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine boards are sometimes surprised to see paid executives, staff members and outside accountants attending the board meetings. They are invited because of A.A.'s "Right of Participation." Thus, the trustees and directors "are put into direct communication with these workers, who. . . feel wanted and needed. Although they do not vote, these workers may freely participate."

Bill warns against the possibility of new delegates or trustees trying to "weaken, modify or toss out" the "Right of Participation." He cites arguments by delegates to take away the trustees', directors' and staff members' vote at the Conference. "Certainly," he says, "our trustees and service workers are not less conscientious, experienced and wise than the delegates."

"It is vital," he continues, "to preserve the traditional 'Right of Participation,' in the face of every tendency to whittle it down."

Finally, there is a spiritual reason for the "Right of Participation." All of us desire to belong. In A.A., no members are "second class." The "Right of Participation" therefore reinforces Tradition Two, that no member is placed in "ultimate authority" over another. We perform our service tasks better "when we are sure we belong-when our 'participation' assures us we are truly the 'trusted servants' described in Tradition Two."

(Reprinted from The Twelve Concepts Illustrated, page 9, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)



# District 13

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 166 Ventura, CA 93002

# Gold Coast Districts (9 & 12)

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 132
Camarillo, Ca. 93011

# District 24 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 843 Simi Valley, CA 93065

District 28
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 3432
Thousand Oaks, CA 91359

Area 93
Mailing Address:
PMB #140
606 Alamo Pintado #3
Solvang, CA 93463

AAWS P.O. Box 459

Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163 (212)870-3400

# AJOR AYA EVENTS Around/America

# **District 28 Spring Workshop**

Safety in A.A. April 22, 2017 9:00 - 1:00

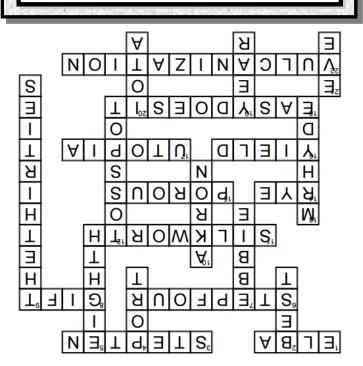
St. Patrick's Episcopal Church 1 Church Road, Thousand Oaks

# Serenity By the Sea

April 28 - 30, 2017 **Oxnard Performing Arts Center** 800 Hobson Way, Oxnard www.vcaaroundup.com

# **The Ventura County Central Office**

has listings and flyers of many other AA related events in Southern California and throughout the United States. Call 805-389-1444 or drop by to see us even if it's only for a cup of coffee. www.aaventuracounty.org



# APRIL 2017 Calendar

Wed 5th 6:00 pm District 13 GSR Meeting @ Ventura Center for Spiritual Living @ 101 S. Laurel, Ventura

Thu 6th 7:00 pm Inter-group Board Meeting @ Central Office

Sun 9th 12:00 pm VCYPAA Committee Mtg Central Office 5.30 pm H & I Committee Mtg @ Central Office Sun 9th 3:30 pm VCAAC Committee Mtg @ The Buck

Wed 12th 7:00 pm Inter-group Meeting @ The Buck 321 N Aviador Suite 111, Camarillo

Sat 15th 10:00 am Newsletter Stuff and Fold @ Central Office

Tue 18th 7:00 pm GSR District 28 Meeting @ King of Glory Lutheran Church 2500 Borchard Road, Newbury Park

Wed 19th 7:00 pm Gold Coast Districts General Service Mtg The Buck 321 N Aviador Ste 111 Camarillo

Thu 20th 7:00 pm District 24 General Service Meeting United Methodist Church 2394 Erringer Rd Rm # 10, Simi Valley

Sun 23rd 12:00 pm VCYPAA Committee Mtg @ Central Office

Apr 17th Last day to submit items to the May Newsletter

# WAY 2017 Callendar

Wed 3rd 6:00 pm District 13 GSR Meeting @ Ventura Center for Spiritual Living @ 101 S. Laurel, Ventura

Thu 4th 7:00 pm Inter-group Board Meeting @ Central Office

Wed 10th 7:00 pm Inter-group Meeting @ The Buck 321 N Aviador Suite 111. Camarillo

Sat 13th 10:00 am Newsletter Stuff and Fold @ Central Office

Sun 14th 12:00 pm VCYPAA Committee Mtg Central Office 5.30 pm H & I Committee Mtg @ Central Office Sun 14th 3:30 pm VCAAC Committee Mtg @ The Buck

Tue 16th 7:00 pm GSR District 28 Meeting @ King of Glory Lutheran Church 2500 Borchard Road, Newbury Park

Wed 17th 7:00 pm Gold Coast Districts General Service Mtg The Buck 321 N Aviador Ste 111 Camarillo

Thu 18th 7:00 pm District 24 General Service Meeting United Methodist Church 2394 Erringer Rd Rm # 10, Simi Valley

Sun 21st 12:00 pm VCYPAA Committee Mtg @ Central Office

May 22nd Last day to submit items to the June Newsletter

# A Review of Tradition #4

**APRIL 2017** 

# Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

- Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
- Does my group always consider the welfare of the rest of AA? Of nearby groups? Of Loners in Alaska? Of Internationalists miles from port? Of a group in Rome or El Salvador?
- Do I put down other members' behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
- Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
- Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths—his lengths, not mine—to stay sober?
- Do I share my knowledge of AA tools with other members who may not have heard of them?

# Living Step #4

# Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

When we decide that we want what other recovering members have found, and are ready to face our oversized egos, we become ready to start on our personal moral housecleaning. Step #4 is one of the action steps that can help set us free from the wreckage of our past which binds us to resentments, fear, envy and the thoughts that we can somehow escape the emotions of our past negative actions. In direct terms, Step #4 allows us to become ready to totally "come clean and face our past as it really is."

The freedom that recovering members gain from meeting those old buried secrets head-on, in many cases is a life changing and a freeing experience as we then move on to step #5 and share our inventory with our Higher Power and our sponsor or another human being. Ask your God for guidance, work with your sponsor or a step study group and don't procrastinate. Step four can be emotionally challenging, but the results and the freedom we gain in God's time are often awesome.

Step #4 requires that we put our pen to paper as suggested in the Big Book of AA, on pg. 64.



Timmy O'Leary was sitting in the beer garden of his local pub having a cold one on a beautiful sunny day. A nun happened to be passing by and starts preaching about the evils of drinking. "Drinking is evil and all it will get you is a place in hell!", cried the Nun. She continued to lecture Tim and after about five minutes of her ranting he became annoyed. "Sister", he asked "Are you a reformed drinker?" "I've never had a drop in my life!", answered the nun. "If you have never drank then how can you say it's evil?" asked Tim. "Why don't you have a drink and then you will know if you are correct?", Tim questioned. "Well, I would be willing to try but what would people walking by think of a nun in a beer garden drinking alcohol?", the Nun asked. "I'll have them put a shot of whiskey in a coffee mug, and no one will be the wiser." The Nun reluctantly agreed and Tim walked inside and asked the bartender for a shot of whiskey in a coffee mug. "Is that Nun here again!", asked the bartender.

An Englishman, a Scotsman, an Irishman, a Welshman, a Latvian, an Hungarian, a Turk, a German, an Indian, several Americans (including a Hawaiian and an Alaskan), an Argentinean, a Dane, an Australian, a Slovak, an Egyptian, a Japanese, a Moroccan, a Frenchman, a New Zealander, a Spaniard, a Russian, a Guatemalan, a Colombian, a Pakistani, a Malaysian, a Croatian, a Uzbek, a Cypriot, a Pole, a Lithuanian, a Chinese, a Sri Lankan, a Lebanese, a Cayman Islander, a Ugandan, a Vietnamese, a Korean, a Uruguayan, a Czech, an Icelander, a Mexican, a Finn, a Honduran, a Panamanian, an Andorran, an Israeli, a Venezuelan, an Iranian, a Fijian, a Peruvian, an Estonian, a Syrian, a Brazilian, a Portuguese, a Liechtensteiner, a Mongolian, a Hungarian, a Canadian, a Moldovan, a Haitian, a Norfolk Islander, a Macedonian, a Bolivian, a Cook Islander, a Tajikistani, a Samoan, an Armenian, an Aruban, an Albanian, a Greenlander, a Micronesian, a Virgin Islander, a Georgian, a Bahaman, a Belarusian, a Cuban, a Tongan, a Cambodian, a Canadian, a Qatari, an Azerbaijani, a Romanian, a Chilean, a Jamaican, a Filipino, a Ukrainian, a Dutchman, a Ecuadorian, a Costa Rican, a Swede, a Bulgarian, a Serb, a Swiss, a Greek, a Belgian, a Singaporean, an Italian, a Norwegian and an African, walk into a bar.

"I'm sorry," says the bartender, after scrutinizing the group. ....."You can't come in here without a Thai."

# By Michele B. of Newbury Park

Twelve ways to use the AA Grapevine to strengthen and insure your sobriety

# 4. IT IS YOUR PERSONAL REPORTER.

How is AA developing in prisons and hospitals?

What is the General Service Conference and what does it mean to the individual member? How about AA overseas?

The Grapevine brings worldwide AA to your living room, keeps you up-to- date all the time.

# At Wit's End

# **Good Guess**

I didn't know which glass of beer was mine, so I drank them both. I am a problem solver.

# It makes sense to me

A drunk was standing before a judge. The judge said, "You've been brought here for drinking."

The man looked at the judge and said, 'Ok ,so let's get started!"

# Puzzle submitted by - Steve F.

ACROSS 1 From where Napoleon returned	DOWN 2 Ultimate		
3 So sorry	4 Drink for a storm?		
6 Took stock	<b>5</b> Made a list, checked it twice		
8 Sobriety	7 Number 1's old friend		
11 Opinion giver	<b>9</b> Beginnings of AA		

# **Recycle Your Copies of** The Grapevine Magazine

The Grapevine is timeless! Articles written ten or twenty years ago are still fresh and inspiring. Central Office provides a box for collecting back issues of The Grapevine. These issues are picked up by H & I and re-circulated in institutions and jails. So . . . before discarding your back issues, bring them in for use by another recovering alcoholic! Recycle and help spread recovery!

# 14 Grass or booze? 10 Group one **15** Full of holes 12 Drinker to excess **16** Give in to urge 13 Nice guy's alter ego **17** State of perfection **19** 365 **18** Motto **20** Very little 22 Process used in No. 10 21 Night before the day after down

# AA BIRTHDAY CLU Celebrate Sobriety

# **CELEBRATE YOUR AA BIRTHDAY HERE!**

Celebrate your annual sobriety anniversary with us. To participate in this tradition, just send in the form provided in this column or submit it to vcaaco@verizon.net with your Birthday information. Member's birthdays submitted will be published in this section the following month.

Join the winners and celebrate your recovery.

# **March & Previous AA Birthdays**

# HAPPY SOBRIETY BIRTHDAY

**APRIL 2017** 

Mike A. - 29 **Thousand Oaks** 

> Ron B. - 37 Camarillo



# **Birthday Club Listing For:**

Name City Sobriety Date \_\_\_\_ Years **Voluntary Donation Amount \$** 

Please mail to:

**Ventura County Central Service Office** 321 N. Aviador Street, Suite 115 Camarillo, CA 93010



Meeting Info	301
Twelve Step Calls	22
Other Twelve Steps Programs	13
Activities	53
Directions to Office	14
Other Type Calls	<u>192</u>
TOTAL	595

# AA TRIVIA QUESTION Of The Month

# **APRIL QUESTION:**

There were no correct answers to last month's trivia question, so it will be repeated.

When patients, that Sister Ignatia's cared for, left St Thomas Hospital she would often give them a Sacred Hearts medallion or sometimes a St. Christopher medal. What did she ask of them in return?



# **MARCH ANSWER:**

No Correct Answers Last Month



Answers will be published the following month. Mail your answer to: Ventura County Central Service Office Inc., 321 N. Aviador Street, Suite 115, Camarillo, Ca. 93010.

The correct answer will win a free one-year subscription to this publication. If the winner already has a subscription, a gift subscription will be awarded to another member — winner's choice.

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Friends of Bill W., Paul H, Rosalie, Don, Allison, Linda, Bill C, Jessie and Visitors

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