

RECOVERY TIMES Vol. 45, No. 10, Oct. 2020

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

A.A. CENTRAL OFFICE GETS NEW OFFICE MANAGER – DAVID FIGUEROA



San Fernando Valley Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous has a new Office Manager! After twenty something years of seeing Bob F.'s smiling face at the front desk, Bob decided it was time to retire and in his place, the board voted in David F., a longtime member of A.A.

In accepting this position, David says, "Bob has been the face of A.A. in the Valley for the past 19 years. That was my attraction to him when I decided to change sponsors because of the way he conducts himself. He has always been someone I wanted to emulate. He's like a big lovable teddy bear and also very gregarious. One of his best qualities is that he's patient and understanding, and those are qualities that I want to bring into my role as Office Manager for

Central Office." He adds, "I am excited to serve in this role. It's a new challenge. As a business owner, I understand about providing good customer service. It's about good quality customer service and that's how I want to be able to serve our groups, our members and the general public at large."

- David F. is a New Yorker by birth. He got sober in March 1988 in Los Angeles at Life's in Session in Van Nuys, CA.
- Over the years, David has served as Director of H & I of the S.F. Valley (1997-1998).
- He has served as a General Service Rep for Area 93.
- He has served on many Hospitals and Institutions AA panel meetings for the past 30 years, including Prison AA panels.
- Served as General Service - Area 93 Audio/Visual Chair for over 1200 groups throughout Central California
- David has also participated in the SFV AA Convention and the Annual SFV H&I Committee Anniversary Dinner

One of his goals in serving as Office Manager for Central Office will be to improve Central Office's capability for credit card processing and also improving service to the groups in the area by providing a more user-friendly website for Central Office. (www.sfvaa.org). He looks forward to bringing a proposal to the board to upgrade the phone system, as well, so it provides more capabilities for volunteers providing phone service.

David will be officially taking his position on October 1, 2020. At the "Can't Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast" benefit for Central Office, held on Zoom on October 17, 2020, there will be an official handing of the torch from Bob F. to David F. This event will be held on Zoom. Zoom ID: 852 1016 6068 (Password: SFVAA).

Welcome David F. and Thank you for your Service Bob F. We will miss you but we will keep you in our hearts!

**SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE
MINUTES OF INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVES MEETING**

September 14, 2020, Conducted via Zoom

OPENING: Lyn W.

- Lyn opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer.
- David F. read "The Twelve Traditions."
- Sandy R. accepted a motion for approval of the August 2020 Intergroup Minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Tina K.

MTD is \$1,558 and YTD is \$3,147, as compared to last year's YTD, which was (\$559). Personal and group contributions are higher than last year, but sales continue to decline. Financials and Recovery Times are available at Central Office. Please call ahead. We will even bring them out to your car.

CENTRAL OFFICE MANAGER'S REPORT: Bob F.

Everything is running smoothly, under the circumstances. Central Office has a comprehensive list of Zoom meetings. Call for information. We have a "plethora" of good people answering phones!

Recovery Times (Pat K.): The Recovery Times is available on the Central Office website: sfvaa.org.

Snail-mail subscriptions to the Recovery Times are available. See sfvaa.org subscription form. Reminder: Stories of recovery are welcome; approximately 500-650 words. Deadline for submissions is 15th of the month. Send to Pat K. at email: xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Rick A.

- There were 3 new Intergroup Representatives this month:
Marta GM, The "Onion," Tuesday night book study; Scott B., "Quality of Life," Mon, Wed, Thu and Sat in Van Nuys; and Melanie A., "Saturday Morning Women's Meeting," at 9:30 am in Burbank.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- **General Service District 11: Ernie:** Area Assembly was Aug. 16. Another workshop is in the discussion phase. The last Area Assembly of 2020 will be in November.
- **General Service District 1:** Norm for Cece: Area 93 will be hosting the 2021 PRAASA on March 5-7. Whether it will be conducted in person or online has yet to be determined. Stay tuned!
- **San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee:** Marianna: H&I meets on the 3rd Monday of the month. New member orientation at 7pm, business meeting starts at 8pm. Meetings and panels are being conducted by Zoom. H&I is in need of panel volunteers, Zoom - savvy people and Delivery Angels to pick up Literature from Central Office and deliver to facilities To speak on a panel, contact jodyhandi2020@gmail.com. To facilitate Zoom panels, contact toddg2021chair@gmail.com.
- **San Fernando Valley 46th Annual AA Convention:** Josh S. for Bernard B.: The 46th Annual SFVAA Convention has been postponed until 2022. For 2021, we are planning an "Unconventional," which will be held entirely online January 29-31, 2021. The theme is "Not My Plan." More to follow!

OLD BUSINESS

Literature Sales: Only closed on holidays and the last Friday of each month. Always open on weekends. Even when literature is not being sold, Central Office remains open with phones answered. If your meeting changes, please send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

NEW BUSINESS

- Lyn W. announced that David F. has been selected as the new Central Office Manager, effective October 1, replacing Bob F, who is retiring. **BOB, YOU WILL BE MISSED!!!!**
- David F. introduced himself to the Intergroup Representatives. Congratulations and welcome, David!!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

Carla R., CAN'T Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast is the Central Office fundraiser this year (instead of the "Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast" event: This is Central Office's only fundraiser for the year. On October 17th, from 10 a.m. to noon, we will hold a virtual event with a speaker meeting as a substitute fundraiser.

Ernie C., Burbank Group: 30th Annual Thankathon will be held online on November 26 and 27. Flyers are available at Central Office.

Simmie, Dist. 17: GSO recouped over \$2M from an insurance policy for the cancellation of the International Convention, and the group members in North America have stepped up and more than compensated to recoup the \$3M drawdown earlier this year from the Prudent Reserve. Please thank your groups and let them know that their Seventh Tradition contributions have supported AA as a whole in a big way.

REMINDERS:

Lyn W.: Reminder that: 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 MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER: 120 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- David A., 6 years on 9/7;
- Scott B., 8 years on 9/26;
- Lyn W., 31 years on 9/2;
- Carla R., 33 years on 9/25; and
- Pat K., 42 years on 9/18.



VACANCIES ON BOARD - NONE

CLOSING:

- Carla R. will email Zoom information and Intergroup flyers for next month’s meeting.
- Josh S. thanked Bob F., once again, for his tireless service to Central Office and Alcoholics Anonymous!!!!
- A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm with *The Lord’s Prayer*.

Prepared and submitted by: *Sandy R., Recording Secretary*

To find an online meeting in the San Fernando Valley, call Central Office at: **(818) 988-3001** or go to: **sfvaa.org**. You can also look up meeting schedules on Group websites or Facebook pages, or go to this online directory: www.LAAAonlinemeetings.org and <http://aa-intergroup.org>.

The 7th Tradition States That We Are Self Supporting

Consider setting up a mailbox or Venmo (or other app) system to collect the 7th Tradition. Your group will still need to purchase supplies and you may still be obligated to pay rent. If you are able to make a contribution to the different entities that comprise Alcoholics Anonymous, please do so.

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.

SFV 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.



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.

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." I Am Responsible: The Hand of AA.*

"In AA we have no VIPs, nor have we need of any. Our organization needs no title-holders nor grandiose buildings ... Experience has taught us that simplicity is basic in preservation of our personal sobriety and helping those in need."
AA Co-Founder, Dr. Bob, Sept. 1948, "The Fundamentals in Retrospect"

"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., April 1959, "Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need."

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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).



Update us with your meeting information via email:

sfvco@la.twcbc.com, or stop by and pick up your medallions and literature at SFVCO, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

Visit our website: www.sfvaa.org for meeting information and copies of Recovery Times.

Do you have a story about sobriety to share? Please send it to Editor Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com. All submissions will be reviewed and if it meets our guidelines, we will contact you and let you know when your story will run.

"AA membership cannot depend upon any particular belief whatever ... our Twelve Steps contain no article of religious faith except faith in God - as each of us understands him." **AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,** September 1950, "We Came of Age", *The Language of the Heart*

AA SERVICE COMMITTEES CALENDAR: GS Area 93

All or some of the following meetings are temporarily on hold during the pandemic. Please consult the leadership of your district for further information.

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

District 16: Meets the 1st 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 1st Monday of the month at 5000 Colfax Ave., North Hollywood at 6 p.m. orientation; 6:30 p.m. general meeting.

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 3rd Monday of the month at 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana (St. Innocent) at 7 p.m. for orientation and 8 p.m. for the general business meeting.

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 at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. (6:30 p.m. for orientation; 7 p.m. for business meeting). On Hold for now.

Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary: ☆ ~ ♡ Lee A.: 10 years, Anonymous: 17 years, Frank K.: 36 years, and About 30 Men: 420 years. [H][A][P][P][Y][B][I][R][T][H][D][A][Y]!
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.

We remember: A.A. Deaths: **Allan L. – 49 years (Pacoima)**

Calendar of events: Call Central Office for details

October 17th, 2020: “Can’t Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast,” Central Office Fundraiser (Zoom)

November 26 - 27, 2020: Burbank Group’s Thankathon (Zoom)

January 29 - 31, 2021: San Fernando Valley A.A. Convention (Zoom)

March 5 – 7, 2021: Area 93: PRAASA (Zoom)

Quotable Quotes:

"I am feeling much better now, and I thank God for AA and my good friends. I have learned how to accept their help." "Carrying the Message," Queens, New York, February 1971, Emotional Sobriety II

"AA is spiritual, is the eye of the hurricane, it is my refuge and my comfort."

"Eye of the Hurricane," Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, December 1992, Spiritual Awakenings

"At my very first AA meeting ... I heard words of love, understanding and compassion ... I believe the hand of God reached down at that meeting and healed me. For from that day thirty-eight years ago to this, I have not had a desire to drink or escape from reality again." "From Handcuffs to Hope," Royal Palm Beach, Florida.



"Thanks to my God, AA, and the Twelve Steps, sobriety has become the 'easier, softer way' for me." "A Power Greater Than Compulsion," Magalia, California, May 1992, Voices of Long-Term Sobriety

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Welcome to Singapore

How did he end up in the middle of a prison riot when all he wanted was to find an AA meeting?

In 1986, I was diverted by my company from Taiwan to Singapore. One tropical stormy Sunday, I found myself with nothing to do and a sense of boredom that was my signal to get with the program and at least try to find an AA meeting. After scouring the local newspaper, I found a simple one-inch square box in the classified section that stood out. In white letters written against a black background were the words "Alcoholics Anonymous" and a phone number.



I called the number and a Malaysian gentleman answered the phone. He directed me to meet him in the courtyard of St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral off Orchard Avenue in Singapore's commercial district. "Be there by 5:00 p.m.," he said.

At the appointed hour, a cab dropped me off in front of St. Andrew's and I found my way to the inner courtyard. My Malaysian AA host was there to meet me. He was leaning against a very large, black luxury sedan. Milling about were other men like me, foreigners needing a meeting: a retired dentist from Whitefish, Montana, a Texas oilman working the oil-drilling operations in Borneo, and two men from the U.K., one an Irishman, the other a Welshman. It was quite a diverse group, with different accents and backgrounds, but joined by the grace of AA.

Our host advised us that we were going to put on an AA meeting in a prison and that we would briefly tell our stories. He explained that in Singapore, to clean the streets of "undesirables," alcoholics were rounded up nightly. That was the reason every morning the city looked pristine.

We were further briefed that the inmates were composed of Malaysians, Chinese and some Japanese. Because our host spoke only Malaysian, our biggest problem would be translation. We would require inmates who could translate from English to Malaysian, then to Chinese and Japanese. Trying to put us at ease, he explained that this format could be a bit awkward, but it would work out.

When we arrived, heavily armed guards greeted us at the main gate. We were led into a room with garish fluorescent light. We were told to sit at a comfortable table raised on a platform. In front of us, bolted to the concrete floor, were approximately 50 steel chairs painted white. The rectangular wooden storm windows were fully open to the warm and humid nighttime equatorial breezes.

The prisoners, dressed in white muslin pajamas and crude sandals, shuffled in. Their footsteps were heavy, as if they were wearing invisible ankle irons. Their faces bore anger, hopelessness, heartache and fear.

My newfound friends and I looked anxiously at each other. What had we gotten ourselves into? The translator introduced us after our host made his opening remarks. The dentist from Montana spoke first. It was all very awkward going from English to Malaysian to Chinese to Japanese. However the inmates seemed to get it, and they were well-behaved, perhaps due to the number of armed guards standing around the periphery.

When it was my turn to speak, I had no idea what to say, so I blurted out, "My name is George, I'm an alcoholic from Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., and I drank like a pig!" With that the inmates and the guards all broke out in laughter, as the metaphor of a drunk drinking like swine hit a common chord.

Just as I was ready to launch into further remarks, a commotion broke out in the back of the room. Several inmates began screaming and yelling at each other. Other inmates joined in the melee. Then the guards, pointing submachine guns, exerted their force by corralling the 50 or so men. The guard in charge said something to our host who in turn said to us, "We have to go. Now!"

Jokingly, my friend from Montana said, "Nice going, George, look at what you've started with the pig comment." Although it was meant as a stab at lighthearted humor, we were very concerned for our personal safety. I had a horrible image of being flown back to Portland in a body bag; it was not a pretty picture.

This is when the gift of AA and a sober life occurred. Because the exit door was blocked by the riot, a short window of opportunity opened up for the alcoholic inmates in that room and they moved toward us, crying what must have been tears of sadness and hope. I did not fear their approach one bit because I could see in their eyes and in their faces the identification of one alcoholic with another.

Placing a hand on my shoulder, an inmate and I looked at each other with compassion, understanding and a sliver of hope. My fellow wayfarers also had similar experiences. These were men who wanted what AA offers—a sober life and freedom from drugs and alcohol. As quickly as this connection was made, these men were whisked away by the armed guards and herded out the door to their barracks.

Finally, the bottleneck broke free. The rioting inmates were grabbed by the shouting guards and taken away. We were quickly escorted out of the room and to our car. Once inside the car we were mostly quiet; each of us lost in his own thoughts. I asked our host, "Why the riot?" He ruefully advised, "A militant element in the population objected to the high taxes the Singapore government assesses on alcohol. Some of the inmates who wanted to be at the meeting confronted the instigators, then the guards stepped in and it just spiraled out of control."

We hung around for a bit in the St. Andrew's parking lot and discussed what we had experienced. Each one of us was filled with gratitude, but also with concern for our fellow AA travelers around the world who are locked up and shuttered from the life that we sometimes take for granted.

Thirty years later, I relive this scene with complete clarity—the experience has been seared into my memory. On that day, those men locked up in that awful prison, without knowing it, Twelfth-Stepped five men from halfway around the world. —George A., *Tigard, Ore.*

Central Office of SFV

**16132 Sherman Way
Van Nuys, CA 91406**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED