November, 2021



Your Santa Barbara Central Office

Presents

The Messenger

14 W. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 (805) 962-3332 www.santabarbaraaa.com

GRATITUDE MONTH

"Grateful people are happy people; and them that ain't, ain't!"

-Overheard at an A.A. Meeting

Supporting Member Donation Coupon

I would like to become a supporting member of the Santa Barbara AA Central Office, and help it continue to carry the message and be there
for the alcoholic who still suffers. I look forward to receiving my monthly newsletter by email each month!
Enclosed is my first contribution of \$
I will continue to donate this amount on a (circle one) monthly, quarterly, annual, other basis.
I am already a supporting member. This is my regular contribution of \$
Name
Street
City/State/Zip
Phone Email

To donate by check:

Please make check payable to: AA Central Office 14 W. Anapamu Street Santa Barbara, CA 93101

To donate by credit, debit, or ACH:

To set up a recurring donation by credit card, debit card, or checking account, please call or visit Central Office so we can assist you.

To donate by Venmo:

Search for: @SBCentralOffice or scan the QR code on page 2. Make sure to indicate who is making the donation.

Every AA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions. — Seventh Tradition (short form)

The Manager's Corner

BY TIM W.

I love Alcoholics Anonymous. It has given me a life that is rich and full. I also (now) love the month of November. This wasn't always the case, because this is the time, thirty-six years ago now, when I was truly bottoming out. Homeless, scared, sick, and drunk all the time. Little did I know that things were about to change.

It would take a couple more months, but when I was pitifully and completely demoralized by that good old white port wine, the miracle that is recovery entered my life.

And I have so much to be thankful for, especially all of you! My 'other' family. My weird, wonderful, fami-

ly. My funny, wacky, sometimes frustrating, always striving to be better family. An unlikely band of misfits that fits me just fine. I am one of you, and I'm always grateful for that fact, in spite of forgetting that sometimes.

So, while I am thinking about it, let me just tell you how much you mean to me. You nurture me and teach me and care for me during times good and bad. We do that for each other because we can. Also, I believe, because it is an accurate reflection of who we truly are when we're at our best. I give thanks for all of you.

Happy Holidays, Tim

Venmo for Central Office Donations

Your Central Office is now accepting Venmo donations. Scan the QR code below or search for: @SBCentralOffice

IMPORTANT: Please indicate what Group is making the donation or what individual member is making the donation



Scan QR Code for payment



February 10-13, 2022 58th International Women's Conference

To the 57th International Women's Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina who carried the message to over 19,000 women all over the world.

Once a pandemic hit our shores, the amazing, sober women of Charlotte completely changed their focus and put together the first Virtual International Women's Conference. We can all agree it was a huge success! Not only were there wonderful speakers, panels and workshops speaking the Language of the Heart, but we laughed and had fun at the Dysfunctional Family Feud, shed our inhibitions at the Dance Party, and was brought to tears during Amazing Grace on Sunday morning. Thank you Charlotte for making this one of the most memorable conferences in the history of the IWC.

I would like to invite you to make your plans to participate in the 58th International Women's Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2022. The in person conference is sold out and an amazing virtual event will also be held. The Santa Fe women are planning some wonderful speakers to carry the message around the world. Hope to see you there!

Member Submission

IT WASN'T ALL THAT BAD...

BY ALEX W. (SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA)

A warm summer evening in Southern California, it is the hot time of the year, fire season. While everyone is aching for some heat relief, us college kids are looking to celebrate a back to school party. Not much to say about this night, I barely remember anything. The next morning, however, I wake up 25 miles away from where I live (though "house" seems like a more appropriate term). Wearing only my boxers, I stand in the morning sun at this unknown place and smoke a cigarette trying to figure out where I was. Or where my pants went for that matter. After throwing up, I walk inside to discover my pants in one of the house's rooms, alongside three lightly dressed girls. Must've been one hell of a night.

Fast forward to the following June: committing a felony by taking cops on a high-speed chase during a weekday whilst black out drunk – not recommended. Upon being bailed out of jail, some windy LA attorneys explain the rather serious charges and possible sentences related to doing something like that. "You've got to get sober," one of them says, "preferably through in-patient treatment, and we should probably put an alcohol monitor on your ankle." Jesus dude. Relax. I am only 22. "Can I still get stoned?" I inquire carefully only to hear a prompt "would not particularly suggest that either..."

Here I was, stuck in a room with tweakers, some of whom were still tweaking. They talked about the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and how profoundly the program had changed their lives. Garbage, I thought. One of them, however, gave me his torn up Big Book after the meeting and told me to write my sobriety date onto the first page: 06/27/2018. Not in a lifetime did I expect to still have that date, a date that at the time seemed to have no relevance whatsoever in my pitiful existence, as my current sobriety date.

A couple, she highly pregnant, he with a nervous disposition, came up to me after my interaction with Mr. Big Book and said, "You are in the right place. Here is another meeting location, try to go there." And so I did. I had no choice, did I? I am too pretty for prison. So off to more meetings. What then happened is as remarkable as it is beyond my comprehension. Fighting for weeks in meetings, arguing at book studies how nothing there relates to me, how my situation is COMPLETELY different, a plant was seeded by the stories told from people entirely different from me. For one reason or another it seemed like I knew the men and women (and anything in between or outside of that) very intimately.

After my first time at a "men's stag" meeting, maybe two or three months in, one of the older white dudes (of whom there appeared to be plenty in the rooms), said that I looked better. Sure didn't feel any different, I wondered silently. Weirdly enough, other people made the same statement. I was irritated. Until, about a week or so later, I felt something had changed. A turning point indeed. I realized, this matter is "all or nothing" for me, so either I give up now or give AA everything I have. Starting to sense that I indeed may be one of those "alcoholics" I decided to do the latter. To this date, this has been the best decision I have ever made.

Now, I would love to get into the details of the hows and whys and whos of the following few months, but for the sake of readability I shall not bore you any longer than I have to. Important is only that as I opened up to AA, as I got myself a sponsor, as I started working the steps, my life changed so profoundly that anyone who knew me years ago would probably only recognize some of my outer features but not the person I have become.

Over time, every single one of those Ninth Step promises we read after some meetings, came true for me (pages 83+84). Which brings us back to the story I opened with. Any guesses what actually happened yet? Let me tell you.

For a solid year and a half after that night, I bragged about having the best party ever for I obviously woke up lightly dressed in a strange town with strange people and no recollection of what happened. My best friend who watched me grow in sobriety told me the real story, six months into my recovery. "It wasn't all bad when I was wasted, remember that night?!" I opened another attempt to get him to sign off on me grabbing a quick beer with him. "That night Alex, you passed out 30 minutes into the party, to which you were only allowed to go because you begged the house owners to let you, telling them that you would be on your best behavior. That night Alex, they had it with you, coming to their place and getting drunk beyond comprehension. That night Alex, they carried you outside and placed you under a pickup truck to hopefully run you over when it would leave in the morning. That night Alex, me and those girls at whose house you awoke, saved your life."

Needless to say, I was quite shocked. I thanked my friend for saving my life. And two months later, when I was on my Ninth Step, I met up with the owners of that house. And I apologized for passing out at their house again and again, and asked them how I could make this right. Because, Alcoholics Anonymous has taught me, that if I am losing the willingness to go to any lengths to get this, I am doomed.



October Birthdays

<u>Member</u>	<u>Years</u>
Kim D.	1
Brenda R.	1
Timmy M.	1
Bill B.	
Blake S.	
Chris K.	
Dustin K.	
Cathy H.	
Mel F.	
Val P.	
Joe G.	
Bob M.	
Kathy S.	
Diane F.	
Tom O.	
Peter	
Monny R.	
Al C.	33

The Messenger is published by YOUR Central Office.

Please send submissions to: manager@santabarbaraAA.com

Have an AA birthday? Please let your Central Office know so that we can print it in The Messenger.

Central Office Statistics

During October, your Central Office had:

AA Info Calls	60
Alanon Referrals	0
Other Referrals	0
12 Step Calls	2
12 Step Office	0
Out of Town Visitors	4
Office Walk Ins	181
Website Pageviews	6488

"He thought it better to give comfort than to receive it; better to understand than to be understood; better to forgive than to be forgiven."

Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, page 101

On Step Eleven

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

MANY STEPS TO PRAYER

A longtime agnostic member shares about his wonderful journey with Step Eleven and how he meditates while walking with his dog

BY ANONYMOUS

The speaker at my first AA meeting was a man named Harold. That was 33 years ago. I don't remember much of what he said, but one thing stuck in my mind: He described alcoholism as a threefold illness of body, mind and spirit. That made immediate sense to me.

I came to AA at age 45, but emotionally and spiritually I was still a stunted teenager. I had to start growing up. Physically, I was very sick. After my last drinking bout, I tried to kill myself and was rushed to the hospital. I was so weak when I was discharged that I had to use a cane and was too ill to go to the AA meeting I was invited to that night by the two men who Twelfth Stepped me.

Mentally, there was clearly something terribly wrong with me. I felt so abandoned and terrified of life that the only solution was suicide. I didn't want to die, but didn't know how to live. Spiritually, I was hollow inside.

When I was a teenager, I was intensely religious. I belonged to a Pentecostal church and preached in gospel halls, at Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park and to holiday seaside crowds. At age 17, I told my father he would burn in the flames of hell unless he was saved by Jesus. But then I was called up for national service in the Royal Air Force and was sent a long way from home and I found another "holy spirit," known as alcohol.

When I got drunk for the first time, I had a counterfeit spiritual experience. I experienced limitless expansion in my mind. I became a spiritual space explorer. I worshipped alcohol, but it proved a false, unfaithful god. Disguised as a benign Higher Power, alcohol actually sought my destruction.

After 25 years of uncontrollable drinking, I reached that state of "pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization" that the Big Book describes. I reached the jumping off point. I wished for the end.

The chapter, "Working With Others" in the Big Book points out that our prospect's "religious education and training may be far superior to yours." That applied to me the night I was Twelfth Stepped by those two AA members, a former bank executive and an unemployed laborer.

Among many attempts to control my drinking, I'd left a job where I faced dismissal because of my drunken irresponsibility and then I decided to train as a teacher. At university, I received a commendation from an examiner for an essay that I wrote comparing and contrasting the apocalyptic millenarianism of the synoptic gospels with the eschatology of the fourth gospel. Along with Christianity, I studied Hinduism and Judaism and I graduated with a qualification to teach religion.

Yes, I had academic religious credentials and letters after my name, but the men who Twelfth Stepped me were sober and I could not stop drinking. My problem was not lack of religious knowledge. My problem, the Big Book tells me, was lack of power.

Years later, when I was secretary of an AA Step group, I heard a member say he was a doctor of divinity. I asked him to share on the Eleventh Step. I said that being a doctor of divinity would give him a flying start on the topic. "The exact opposite," he told me. "With my superior religious knowledge and church attendance, I thought, What could I learn from a bunch of housewives, plumbers and bankers? My intellectual arrogance kept me drinking. It was only when I was absolutely beaten that I realized the difference between religious knowledge and church attendance and the spirituality of sobriety."

By the time I went to my first AA meeting, I'd turned my back on religion and was a skeptical, quarrelsome agnostic. The mention of God in the

(Continued on page 7)

Steps and Traditions, however, did not deter me. I went to that meeting a week after a determined suicide attempt and had become as "open-minded to conviction and willing to listen as the dying can be," as it says in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. I'd become "ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession" with alcohol. I had to "resign from the debating society" and become willing to accept advice and live experimentally.

I suffered terribly from neurotic anxiety in early recovery and said the Serenity Prayer like a mantra to get me through. Later, I adopted my own silent meditation: "Love's will not mine, be still and know." I repeated this continually until it became internalized. I repeat it while out walking my dog.

In 1952, when he was 27 years sober, Bill W. wrote in Grapevine, 'Whenever I find myself under acute tensions, I lengthen my daily walks and slowly repeat our Serenity Prayer in rhythm to my steps and breathing ... This benign healing process of repetition ... has seldom failed to restore me to at least a workable emotional balance." It works for me, too, because I still have psychological hang-ups and neurotic tendencies. Today, I know a drink won't solve them.

The Big Book says, "Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer," and, "Not all of us join religious bodies, but most of us favor such memberships." The AA group I joined met at a Quaker meeting house and I was intrigued by a poster I saw on their notice board, so I went to a Quaker meeting one Sunday and I've been going ever since. In recovery, I began attending spiritual retreats and quiet days organized by AA members. The first retreat I went to at a convent was an ordeal. I wasn't long sober and found it almost impossible to talk to other members. At mealtimes, I sat with my head bowed over my plate, avoiding eye contact.

Later, I overcame my fears and began to organize and lead retreats and quiet days myself.

Some years ago, my sponsor suggested I might find weekly Christian meditation sessions helpful and when the nuns who organized them moved, my wife and I agreed to lead the group.

The Eleventh Step is about our growing relationship with God. I am profoundly grateful that long ago, atheist member Jimmy B. insisted that the qualification, "as we understood Him," be added to the Third and Eleventh Steps. The phrase is italicized to emphasize its importance.

Today, I am a reverent, open-minded agnostic. AA does not require me to believe in a transcendent, metaphysical being to stay sober. When I pray, I believe I connect with that "unsuspected inner resource" and "great reality" deep within me, which the Big Book talks about. It is that source of power greater than my ego-self which I accessed when I admitted to my innermost self that I was an alcoholic.

To me, as the Bible says, God is love. Each morning, I ask to be shown the loving way ahead. I ask to be able to help another alcoholic and I always add, "If it be your will." Every time I enter an AA meeting, it is an act of prayer. I'm saying, "I can't do this on my own. I need help." Attentive listening to other members when they share is also a form of meditation because it takes my magnifying mind off me.

In that June 1958 Grapevine article, Bill W. wrote, "The other Steps can keep most of us sober and somehow functioning. But Step Eleven can keep us growing, if we try hard and work at it continually."

That has been true in my own experience. As the member whose story is called, "The Keys of the Kingdom," in the Big Book wrote, "We must have a program for living that allows for limitless expansion."

—From the November 2018 Grapevine

"This Tradition is a constant and practical reminder that personal ambition has no place in A.A. In it, each member becomes an active guardian of our Fellowship."

Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, page 183

CENTRAL OFFICE

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