

RECOVERY TIMES

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The Fascinating History of Alcoholics Anonymous in Los Angeles

On Saturday, September 18, 2021, the Area 93 Archives held an A.A. History Symposium at the A.A. Archives, 3351 W. 5th Street, Oxnard, CA. This special event featured Joe, archivist of L.A. Central Office, who spoke about the history of early A.A. and how it spread to Los Angeles.

Among the artifacts displayed was the 1939 edition of "Big Red," the first edition of the Big Book, which was donated by the wife of Hal S., known as the 2nd person in L.A. to get sober in A.A. For that time period, Big Red was very expensive at a cost of \$3.50. (Below, the pay phone Bill Wilson used at the Mayflower Hotel).



Joe spoke about Cliff W. and other early pioneers of the Los Angeles A.A. movement who met early week at a downtown

location on 7th Street. At that point in time, this group sometimes used a "Goon Squad" to coerce potential members into getting and staying sober. 12-Step calls were also a frequent part of the outreach process with three people visiting each prospect: a good guy, a bad guy, and an observer. This process was said to work really well.

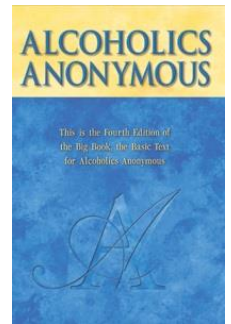


By the end of the first year of forming a fellowship, L.A.'s AA Group counted 140 active members. Their first sober New Year's Eve party was held in 1940 - 1941 with comedian Red Skelton providing the entertainment.

After Jack Alexander's article was published in the Saturday Evening Post, the Los Angeles fellowship experienced a boom as their meeting was overwhelmed with newcomers. Fortunately, some of the members had a year of sobriety under their belt and were able to show the newer members how to stay sober, despite most never

having read the early version of the Big Book.

Joe talked about Sybil C., L.A.'s first woman alcoholic, who came into a meeting in March 1941 and was, initially, not welcomed. Later, she would sponsor many of the women who came in after her and also take 12-Step calls involving women.



The first A.A. directory was published in the Spring of 1945 with 45 live meetings including 2 women's stags. However, at this point, there was no 12 Traditions, there were no elections being held, and the program started to become divisive. Joe noted that several A.A. members with differing opinions were 86'ed from the program or banished entirely for various reasons. However, when there is change, there also is new growth as those who left formed new groups: Cliff W. founded the Central Sunday L.A. Group, Pete C. started A.A. meetings in the Long Beach area, Al M. started the Arlington Group, and Hamlin B. (Continued, page 6)

AA Service Committees

GS Area 93: Please consult the leadership of your district for information on how to access your Zoom meeting:

District 1: See Zoom info on website. Meeting starts at 6 p.m. for orientation; 6:30 for general meeting.

District 11: : See Zoom info on website. Meeting starts 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 5:30 p.m. for orientation then meeting.

District 17: Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 5000 Colfax Ave., North Hollywood at 5:15 p.m. orientation; 5:45 p.m. general meeting.

San Fernando Valley A.A. Intergroup: Starting in August 2021, IGR Meetings go "Live" again at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana, CA Orientation for new IGRs: 6:30 p.m., meeting starts at 7 p.m. Intergroup always meets on the 2nd Monday of the month.

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.

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.

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):

H & I is carrying the message of A.A. recovery via Zoom (virtually) into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get to meetings.

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA: On hold for now.

Consider making a donation to Central Office of a dollar per year for your AA anniversary. In July, the following A.A. members celebrated their anniversaries:
Lisa S - 41 years

We remember those AA members who have passed on to the great meeting in the sky: **Rodney L., beloved member of the Dunsmore Group, H & I of the Foothills, and longtime SFV Central Office phone volunteer.**

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.

From the Founders:

“Most of us do follow, in our personal lives, the Twelve suggested Steps to recovery ... We do this from choice. We prefer recovery to death. Then, little by little, we ... conform because we want to.”

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., January 1947, “Will AA Ever Have a Personal Government?”, *The Language of the Heart*

“Though all alone out there, an AA from the Marshall Islands still claimed his group had three members, to wit: ‘God, the book Alcoholics Anonymous, and me.’” **AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,** September 1950, “We Came of Age”, *The Language of the Heart*

“The way our ‘worthy’ alcoholics have sometimes tried to judge the ‘less worthy’ is, as we look back on it, rather comical. Imagine, if you can, one alcoholic judging another!” **AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,** August 1946, “Who Is a Member of Alcoholics Anonymous?”, *The Language of the Heart*

“We who live in the haven of AA cling together with an intensity of purpose which the outside world seldom comprehends. The anarchy of the individual melts away. Self-love subsides and democracy becomes a reality. We begin to know true freedom of the spirit.”

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., July 1946, “The Individual in Relation to AA as a Group”, *The Language of the Heart*

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Please buy your meeting supplies from AA Central Office of the Valley.

By doing so, you are supporting your local AA Central office. (It’s also 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 sales are closed the last Fri. of the month for inventory and major holidays.

To find an online or in-person 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>.

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.

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.

Has there been a change to your meeting? Meeting changes must be made in writing please. Please email Central Office: sfvco@outlook.com.

Heard Around A.A.:

“There has to be something to be grateful for if I am only willing to change my attitude and look for it.” **Mesa, Arizona**

“Your perception of me is a reflection of you, and my response to you is my awareness of me.” **Anon**

“One day, after sitting alone, soaked in tears and feeling empty, worthless, and crippled in the smallest task, I reached out and gave my phone number to someone else – they were hurting, too. In that simplest of acts, my world changed.” **Salt Lake City, Utah**

“The next time you feel hurt, outraged, bitter or resentful – the beginning of many a slip as attested to by AA speakers – try to remember quickly that you haven’t been mortally harmed. In nearly all cases, it’s just a pain in your feelings!” **Elmhurst, NY**

“Ever so slowly, I could feel myself changing. Things that had seemed important were no longer important. There was inside me a warming, a softening, a stirring, as the petals of a rosebud stir almost imperceptibly into a blossom.” **Neoga, Illinois**

“Alcoholics Anonymous has given me something of real value that I can share with others.” **Tucson, AZ**

“With the help of the Fellowship, the Twelve Steps, and a Higher Power ... I do not have to be a newcomer again.” **Montpelier, Vermont**

The Fascinating History of Alcoholics Anonymous in Los Angeles, continued



was very involved in 12-Step work. With the combined efforts of its early members, by 1941 there were over 800 A.A. active members in Los Angeles.

November 5, 1943, was a big day for A.A. in Los Angeles when Bill W. came to speak at a huge meeting held at the Shrine Auditorium. Bill was aware of the conflict afoot in the city and later noted that nowhere were there struggles like there were in Los Angeles!

The first Central Office in Los Angeles opened July 1, 1944 at 2404 W. 7th Street and it brought some stability to the program here. Today, Los Angeles Central Office (which is the counterpart to the San Fernando Valley Central Office of A.A.) is located at 4311 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. near Hancock Park).

Archives and History

"We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian..."

"It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion..."

"We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full-length history to come..." — Bill W., 1957

Please Join Us for San Fernando Valley Central Office's Annual Fundraiser: "Can't Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast Again, Breakfast"

Taking Place Virtually on October 16, 2021.
Fellowship at 10 a.m., Speaker Meeting at 10:30 a.m.
Speaker: Bob F., former SFV Central Office Manager
Zoom I.D.: 832 5255 9094 / Password: Breakfast

All donations benefit SFV Central Office of AA!

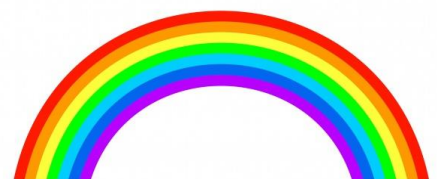
Being of Service Helped This A.A. Find Gratitude

My name is Rudy, I'm an Alcoholic feeling blessed after 28 years with a drinking problem. I can't express how happy I feel to be part of Alcoholics Anonymous. God is giving me a new opportunity in life and I will not disappoint him.

I was not tired of drinking, in fact, I didn't think I was an alcoholic. To me, an alcoholic was someone who lives under a bridge or people asking for a drink on the streets. I came to AA because a DUI. I can say now, without a doubt, this is the best thing that happened to me. I fell in love with service starting with the first week in my home group. I always wanted to be part of something and I found in A.A. what I was looking for.

I gave myself a chance starting as a GSR for my home group and then, I was a DCM for District 3. One day, I came to the Area and immediately fell in love with the fellowship. I became chair of the Translation Committee in Panel 67, I was Registrar in Panel 69, and I'm the current Alt Delegate for Panel 71. I feel blessed and honored to be in Service.

**Rudy M., Area 93
Alt Delegate, Panel 71**



The Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks



Dr. William D. Silkworth, according to Bill Wilson, was one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. He was not an alcoholic himself; he was the man who told Bill Wilson that his alcoholism was a sickness and not a sin.

Dr. Silkworth was born in 1873, did his undergrad studies at Princeton and his doctoral work at New York University and Bellevue Hospital. Bellevue had opened an alcoholic ward in 1892 and in 1899, he started working there. He was able to reach alcoholics when no one else could. When asked how he did it, he would smile and say that it was a gift. It was at Bellevue that he began developing his theory of the allergy to alcohol and the obsession to drink it we in AA know so well.

He later worked at an army hospital treating soldiers returning from the war with trauma from battle. He noted that while the trauma might cause heavy drinking, only those with the allergy became alcoholics. He also saw that these men were able to follow orders except the one to stop drinking.

After the war, he worked at the Neurological Institute of Columbia Presbyterian Hospital studying neurological disorders; he also found time to continue treating alcoholics.

In 1929, he went to work at Towns Hospital, a facility for well to do alcoholics and drug addicts to get dried out or cleaned up. Towns even offered a cure for alcoholism and drug addiction. The belladonna cure was a treatment using belladonna and other chemicals that cause delirium, hallucinations and confusion, other effects included purging and vomiting. The idea was to create an aversion to alcohol and drugs. Silkworth was against this method and reckoned there was only about a two percent success rate.

From 1932 to 1934, the doctor treated Bill Wilson three times. During the first two Bill learned about the hopelessness of his condition and the allergy and obsession. When he was there the third time, Bill had his “white light experience” and called Silky to ask if he was crazy. Fortunately for Bill and all of us, the answer was no and that Bill had better hold on to what he had.

After Bill left the hospital, he tried to carry the message, but was not successful. Six months later, he asked the doctor what was wrong. Silky told him to stop preaching and tell the truth. Tell about the hopelessness, the allergy and obsession. Then he could talk about the solution. 86 years later that is still working.

Dr. Silkworth continued working with , treating and counselling alcoholics until his death in 1951. In the face of opposition from the medical community, which was still looking for a medical solution, he saw that the spiritual solution worked for many of us. We today owe a great debt to Dr. Silkworth, which I believe is being repaid daily in our sober lives.

John S., Archives Chair Panel 71 Area 93

If you are looking to be of service in Alcoholics Anonymous, there are many ways to do so. See page 4 of Recovery Times for Service Groups or you can become a volunteer answering phones at SFV Central Office of A.A. To be a phone volunteer, you need to have a year of sobriety. Volunteers usually work in groups of two during regular office hours. After hours, phone volunteers can take calls remotely. Call: 818 988-03001 for more information.

Upcoming A.A. Events

Can't Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast Again, Breakfast: Sat., Oct. 16, 2021, 10:30 Virtual Event: Fundraiser and Speaker Meeting. **Go to: sfvaa.org for more info.**

Santa Barbara AA Convention: Friday, Oct. 15 – Sun., Oct. 17th, 2021.

San Fernando Valley AA 2022 Convention: January 28 – January 30, 2022 returns to in- person, at the Warner Center Marriott in Woodland Hills, CA.

58th International Women's Conference of A.A.: February 10 – 13, 2022, In-person: Santa Fe, NM and Virtual. <https://internationalwomensconference.org>

Serenity by the Sea, Oxnard, CA: April 22, 2022

If you are affiliated with an A.A. regional event, please forward information to both Recovery Times Editor Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com and SFVCO@outlook.com

"Most of us do follow, in our personal lives, the Twelve suggested Steps to recovery ... We do this from choice. We prefer recovery to death. Then, little by little, we ... conform because we want to." **AA Co-Founder, Bill W., Jan. 1947, "Will AA Ever Have a Personal Government?,"** *The Language of the Heart*

LONERS-INTERNATIONALISTS MEETING (LIM)

The Loners-Internationalists Meeting (LIM) is a confidential bimonthly bulletin sent to Loners, Homers, Internationalists, Port Contacts, and Loner Sponsors. Definitions:

Loner: An A.A. member who is unable to attend meetings regularly because there is no A.A. meeting in the vicinity where he or she lives.

Homer: An A.A. member who is unable to attend A.A. meetings because of physical incapacity.

Internationalist: An A.A. member working on a seagoing vessel for long periods.

Port Contact: An A.A. member serving as a contact for Internationalists when in port.

Loner Sponsor: An A.A. member active in local A.A. meetings; who shares his or her experiences and group activity with Loners, Homers and Internationalists through correspondence.

LIM began through the efforts of Captain Jack S., a sailor who found sobriety in A.A. and understood that to maintain sobriety he needed to reach out to other members through correspondence. Initially, Captain Jack was looking for A.A. contacts in port cities when he wrote a letter to G.S.O. dated March 28, 1946. Captain Jack requested information on A.A. contacts because he was "... still at sea on oil tankers, on which I have served for ten years. I have few contacts ashore with A.A., and have to rely on the Book and the guy upstairs."

A G.S.O. staff member provided Captain Jack with the names of A.A. contacts in port cities, and encouraged him to write to other seagoing members, which he did. After the publication of a three-part article, "A 'Loner' at Sea," by Captain Jack in the October, November, and December 1948 issues of the A.A. Grapevine, plans began to take shape to start an Internationalists meeting-by-mail.

Letters responding to that Grapevine article prompted another G.S.O. staff member to suggest to Captain Jack that he consider starting a "Round Robin Meeting" via letters. Captain Jack responded positively and suggested the name be "The Far East Internationalist Group." He said that name "... would leave it open to lone members stationed ashore in the Far East and also to men who sail these waters under flags of different nations."

Captain Jack died in December 1988 at age 91, a few months after celebrating his 42nd A.A. anniversary. He had remained active in the Fellowship, seeking newcomers in Portland, Maine – where he had retired – while continuing to answer the many letters that he received. A.A.'s phenomenal worldwide growth is attributed in part to Captain Jack and hundreds of Internationalists like him who, sailing the seven seas, carried the message wherever they dropped anchor.

To participate in LIM, an A.A. member needs to be able to read and write in English. A.A. members who fit a LIM category may contact: **Loners Assignment, c/o General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; or email: lim@aa.org**