

January 2005

The
Santa Barbara

Memories

Published Monthly by
the 23rd District Intergroup
of Alcoholics Anonymous
1213 State Street,
Suite H, Santa Barbara,
California 93101
(805) 962-3332
www.santabarbaraAA.com



THE MISSING PIECE FOR ME:

THE SPIRITUAL MALADY



From "The Doctor's Opinion" to the end of "More About Alcoholism" the Big Book discusses the first part of Step 1, which states, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol". We've discussed, studied, and internalized material from the "Doctor's Opinion" to page 23 to see how we're powerless over alcohol *bodily*. We've used pages 23 - 43 to help us experience how we've been powerless *mentally*. Now I'd like to talk about a part of our "disease" which is seldom discussed in meetings nowadays: the "spiritual malady."

We often hear people say something like, "I have a three-fold disease: body, mind, and spirit." When you ask them to describe what they mean by that statement, they seem to have a firm grasp on the fact that we alcoholics suffer from "an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind" - that once I put any alcohol in my system whatsoever it sets off a craving for more alcohol. And when I'm stone-cold sober, at my very best, the thought will occur to me to take a drink - or sometimes I think very little about it or not at all, and I come-to out of a blackout after having experienced what page 42 refers to as a "strange mental blank spot." And of course this vicious cycle of my mind continuously taking me back to a drink and my body dooming me to not drink like "normal" people puts me in a senseless series of sprees and it makes it virtually impossible to stop.

It is agreed that the "mental obsession" is the part of our "disease" which leads to the first drink; and it's the first drink that triggers the "phenomenon of craving." But, what about the part of my "disease" that triggers the mental obsession in the first place? Why is it that people who have remained abstinent from drinking in Alcoholics Anonymous for 1 year... 2 years... 5 years... 10 years... and in some cases even 20 years or more, go back to drinking?

We know the physical craving does not cause these people to drink because it's been medically proven that after a few days of not drinking the alcohol is processed out of the body. And, if you've been in the AA Fellowship for a while, for most people, the mental obsession dissipates. So why is it that after a long period of sobriety many people in our

fellowship return to drinking - **EVEN WHEN THEY DON'T WANT TO?** What is the third fold of our illness that triggers the mental obsession - **WHEN NOT DRINKING - HAVING BEEN SEPARATED FROM ALCOHOL FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME?**

Through closely examining our Big Book, along with much experience and practice with our Twelve Steps, as well as vigorous work with other alcoholics, the "missing piece" of Step 1 appears to be what is referred to on page 64 as the "spiritual malady."

How about the second half of Step 1: " - that our lives had become unmanageable." For a long time I thought my life was unmanageable because of all the crazy insane things I did while drinking - like the car accidents, hurting people when I didn't mean to, failed relationships, loss of jobs, family dysfunction, jails, asylums, etc.

Finally, someone explained to me that those things are not the insanity that the Big Book talks about; nor are those things why the alcoholic's life becomes unmanageable.

Of course those things can be classified as "unmanageability" - but they are external unmanageability. The unmanageability that the 1st Step is pointing to is the **INWARD** unmanageability of our lives - the restlessness, irritability, and discontentment that most alcoholics have even **BEFORE** they ever picked up their first drink. There are many names for this "inward unmanageability". Some refer to it as "untreated alcoholism." Others use the term "bedevilments", which comes from page 52 of the Big Book. Page 64 simply refers to this "inward unmanageability" as "the spiritual malady."

Our book promises us that "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." The mental and physical factors of alcoholism are put into remission **AFTER** the "spiritual malady" is overcome - which means I'm still in danger of drinking until I have a spiritual awakening - whether I think so or not.

Two key points I'd like to focus on from this point forward: (1) What really is this "spiritual malady" and how, if left untreated, can it drive an alcoholic back to drinking? (2) What is the remedy

for it?

The Big Book answers both of those questions in detail in Chapters 4 - 11.) What is this "spiritual malady" we alcoholics suffer from and how can "untreated alcoholism" cause an alcoholic to return to drinking - **EVEN WHEN HE/SHE DOESN'T WANT TO?**

Imagine three layers. The first layer is our bodily reaction to alcohol when we ingest it - the physical craving. Under that is the second layer: the insanity of the mind just before the first drink - the mental obsession. Under that is the third layer: the inward condition that triggers the second layer, which in turn triggers the first - the "spiritual malady." Symptoms of this "third layer" as described in the Big Book include: being restless, irritable, and discontented (page xxvi), having trouble with personal relationships, not being able to control our emotional natures, being a prey to (or suffering from) misery and depression, not being able to make a living (or a happy and successful life), having feelings of uselessness, being full of fear, unhappiness, inability to be of real help to other people (page 52), being like "the actor who wants to run the whole show" (pages 60-61), being "driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity" (page 62), self-will run riot (page 62), leading a double life (page 73), living like a tornado running through the lives of others (page 82), and exhibiting selfish and inconsiderate habits.

These name just a few of the symptoms of the "spiritual malady" that's described throughout our text. But still in all, these are just symptoms of the "spiritual malady." What is it really? What is the driving force of the symptoms?

On page 62 the text explains that "Selfishness-self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles." This "**SELFISHNESS-self-centeredness**" (or the "**ego**", as some people refer to it) drives us to respond to life situations with the above "**symptoms**" as well as disorders and addictions other than alcoholism.

If this selfishness-self-centeredness continues to manifest in an alcoholic's life - **EVEN IN SOMEONE WHO IS NOT DRINKING AND CONTINUES TO ATTEND MEETINGS** - and

(Continued on page 3)

The Managers Spot

*Happy
New
Year*

There are a couple of things I'd like to touch on this month. First, I would like to wish all of you the happiest of New Years. My wish for all of us is continued health, happiness, and prosperity in our recovery. It seems like it was not that long ago I was wishing everyone a good 2004. I can state with some assurance that the time seems to just be speeding by. I'm just attempting to enjoy the ride!

I also wanted to invite everyone to take a look at our (new) website at www.santabarbaraAA.com and give you the new email address of sbaa@santabarbaraAA.com so that you can update your address books. Both Peter J, who originally built the site, and Patrick G. who has taken over the care and feeding of it, are to be commended for the care, time, and attention they have given in the spirit of love & service. With time and diligence I have learned enough about computers to do what is needed for getting the office work handled. But the things Peter and Patrick can accomplish are way out of my league, that's for sure. So thank you both, on behalf of the AA community, for making all our lives easier.

And last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank the Santa Barbara convention for doing such a good job again this year that they were able to make sizable donations to the local Service Committees, as well as a \$3,000.00 donation to Central Office. When the convention was first started the goals were discussed and the main objective was the chance that enough extra money might be made to be able to donate toward the local service structure. As years passed by and for a variety of reasons, the convention committee did not have any extra to give. It certainly warms my heart to see things back on track, and here again, I would like to express the thanks of the entire local AA community to every-
Tim
one who helped make this possible.

If you can't help another alcoholic, at least don't hurt him.

H&I Jam-Fest & Chili Competition



A special thanks goes out to all who participated in our event! After the forces of nature had caused us to move the date to the following week we had a wonderful turn out with great fellowship, good food, and unbelievable music. The volunteers made such an impact as did each musician that contributed selflessly of their talent. The 50/50 raffle was split between the winner of the raffle and the winner of Chili Competition and each walked away with a nice cash bonus just in time for Christmas! We also had other gifts of sobriety such as a tape set of AA Comes Of Age and a collection of Grapevine writings from Bill W. Gift sets of the Big Book and 12&12 were also won putting a smile on the faces of several participants!

Although the rain delay may have had some effect on attendance we still

yielded enough to meet expenses and H&I did benefit thanks to the generous contributions.

Thanks to those who rose to the challenge, and helped make for a time to be remembered. Each one who contributed mattered. Every block of tickets and every single ticket made the difference. Everyone who took part can know that they made a real difference in getting this event to take place! Without everyone, as is one of our truths, there is no one. I look forward to our Recycle Day in February and to our Second Annual H&I Jam Fest & Chili Competition this September!

~ Dan F.
Activities Coordinator

Editors Note

Happy New Year to one and all. As the New Year starts I am reminded how everything changes in my life and how better off I am today compared to previous years. One of my favorite sayings in AA is that "things are just going to keep getting better and better", and that has been proven to me over and over again. Changes are sometimes very painful, but necessary for any type of growth on my part. As you can see there are also some changes in **the Messenger**. I hope you find them appealing.

We have all heard about having "an elephant in the living room - but no one wants to talk about it". **The Thirteenth Step**. This issue deals with the animal that is found to be "taboo" in the rooms. Although it runs rampant throughout AA, and can be very controversial, we, as responsible members of AA, need to be aware of it, and protect our newcomers. For if we lose the newcomers - where would the fellowship end up?

Thank you for the comments and praise over the past year and I hope that your life, like mine, just keeps getting better & better!

Jacque J.

AN ALCOHOLICS REDEMPTION

There is a curious phenomenon that occurs in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Hearts warm and eyes sparkle -- perspectives change -- and gratitude increases each day (when we pay attention!). Smiles bridge the distance between us -- dissolute isolation is transformed into a unity based upon our common problem -- and our common solution. Our defects are stripped of their power (sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly) over us; we use them instead as our bond -- we have all felt the lash of alcoholism.

So, my 'lone wolf' strategy of life ending in horror -- I found that it was okay to need help when I walked through the doors of A.A. -- Your stories were my stories -- and our shared suffering (past & present) allowed me to relax and say 'yeah, me too'.

The 12 Steps, service work, and a God of my understanding have brought me into contact with my true self -- growing as I hope and pray God wills me to. I liken this program as a Spiritual Philosophers Stone -- for I came in a very base element, and whereas I may never be golden, my eyes do sparkle on occasion. What a gift!

~ Dave B. USP Lompoc

Is it just coincidence that there are thirteen steps to the hangman's gallows?



Missing Link (Continued from page 1)

the ego is not smashed and re-smashed by continuous application of all twelve steps, the sober (or "just not drinking") alcoholic is sure to drink again eventually... or even worse, continue to live miserably being "undrunk" (better known as a "dry drunk"). This is why we

see people with 10 years in AA wind up in mental institutions - AND THEY HAVEN'T HAD A DROP TO DRINK!

You see, if I continue to act out with selfish - self-centered - ego-driven behaviors I will continue to experience the symptoms of the "spiritual malady." If I continue to experience this inward unmanageability, eventually my mind will seek out the "sense of ease and comfort" it thinks it can receive from taking a drink. Or, my ego can deceive me into thinking I'm doing perfectly fine. (i.e.: Fred's story in Chapter 3... Fred drank when there wasn't "a cloud on the horizon".)

Typically, we'll tell ourselves and others, "Well, at least I'm not drinking." All of a sudden, I can experience a "strange mental blank-spot" - otherwise known as a "sober blackout" - and before it even hits me I'm pounding on the bar asking myself "How'd this happened?"

So, ask yourself if you're suffering from the "spiritual malady" - particularly if you haven't had a drink for a while. What condition is your "inner life" in, currently? Are you experiencing any of the symptoms listed previously? Has it been a while since you've taken another alcoholic through the Steps? Has it been a while since you have gone through the steps? Have you ever taken all of AA's Twelve Steps? Have you done more than one 4th Step inventory? Have you completed all your 9th Step amends wherever possible? Are you working with the disciplines and practices of steps Ten and Eleven (self-examination, meditation and prayer)... consistently... EVERY DAY?

Page 62 says, "Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness ("the ego"). We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self (ego) without [God's] aid."

"There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings, which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed."

This "fourth dimension", which we find out in the 10th Step is the "world of the Spirit", takes us beyond the physically, mental, and emotional dimensions of life - and eliminates the selfishness (ego) of the "spiritual malady." The term "spiritual malady" does not mean that our "spirit" is sick. It simply means we are spiritually blocked off from the Power of God, which enables us to remain sober, happy, joyous, and free.

To conclude, it's not my body - my allergic reaction to alcohol - that's going to take me back to drinking. It's really not my mind - the mental obsession - that is the underlying root of what will take me back to drinking. It's the "spiritual malady", as manifested by my EGO (selfishness-self-centeredness), that can eventually lead me back to drinking or sometimes even suicide.

On pages 14 and 15 Bill W. writes, "For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that."

Thankfully, the "spiritual malady" is no longer a "missing piece" of Step One for me. It is a reality of my powerlessness and unmanageability and enables me to see why I so desperately need to seek a Power Greater than myself. And unless this malady is recognized, and a course of action (the Twelve Steps) is taken to enable God to remove it, the root of our alcoholic illness can lie dormant and burn us when we least expect it.

~ Mike L.

STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

TRADITION ONE

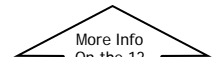
Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on AA unity.

CONCEPT ONE

Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

WARRANTY ONE

The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power.



More Info
On the 12
Warranties
in the

Service Manual Page 63 within
Concept 10

"Getting Active"

"Just stopping drinking is not enough.' Just NOT DRINKING is a negative, sterile thing. That is clearly demonstrated by our experience.

To STAY stopped, we've found we need to put in place of the drinking a positive plan of action. We've had to learn how to LIVE sober."



Living Sober -
page 13

Just Another Alcoholic Trying to Stay Sober ???

I was recently privy to a conversation between a gentleman of a year or so in "sobriety" and a young woman whom had picked up another white chip earlier that evening. He was asking her to dinner and upon being rebuffed stated, "Hey, I'm just an alcoholic trying to stay sober another day."

The Twelve and Twelve tells us that recovering AA's can join together but, as I must always remember, read on. "The prospective partners need to be solid AA's and long enough acquainted to know that their compatibility at spiritual, mental, and emotional levels is fact and not wishful

thinking" (page 119).

Over the years since my first meeting I too, have on occasion, sought out the companionship of newcomer women. They have always gotten drunk. With one exception, I have as well. I even married one, four months sober, and am now raising a 14 year old daughter on my own, as her mother still suffers with this disease.

Today, with the help of my sponsor, I understand that in early sobriety, it is so attractive to focus on anything but me. Certainly companionship of an attractive lady is more appealing than looking at the powerlessness, unmanageability, the

hopeless insanity and the unbearable loneliness my disease produces in my life when untreated.

And what about him or her, the "victim", the "prey"? Could there be a more selfish act than to jeopardize their chance to recover?

I can say that more than once in my short time here, I have seen members with more than a few 24 hours become involved with newcomers, only to see the new person disappear from our ranks. Let us be very aware of our actions with newcomers. Their very lives depend on it!

~ Lee K.

The following is a Christmas greeting from Bill W. and others in 1944.

TO ALL MEMBERS

Greetings On Our 10th Christmas 1944

Yes, it's in the air! The spirit of Christmas once more warms this poor distraught world. Over the whole globe millions are looking forward to that one day when strife can be forgotten, when it will be remembered that all human beings, even the least are loved by God, when men will hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace as they never hoped before.

But there is another world which is not poor. Neither is it distraught. It is the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, where thousands dwell happily and secure. Secure because each of us, in his own way, knows a greater power who is love, who is just, and who can be trusted. Nor can men and women of AA ever forget that only through suffering did they find enough humility to enter the portals of that New World.

How privileged we are to understand so well the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection; that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.

Knowing it's full worth and purpose, we can no longer fear adversity, we have found prosperity where there was poverty, peace and joy have sprung out of the very midst of chaos. Great indeed, our blessings!

And so,-- Merry Christmas to you all-- from the Trustees, from Bobbie and from Lois and me.

Bill Wilson

Unless you've made other plans,
have a great day.

One More Recovering Thought

I know 13 stepping goes on all the time *everywhere*. I do not believe anything anyone would write would have a truly significant impact on the problem as a whole. Myself, I've been no saint. In both situations though I knew how wrong I was and it weighed very heavily on my conscience. Thankfully neither of those boys got drunk when my "God-consciousness" was back in the driver's seat and I had to let them go. Had that not been the case I would have had to accept the fact that in some way I'd had a hand in it and the burden for me would have been that much heavier.

The bigger issue I would like to see addressed is the *double standard* that I so loathe. The one where women ~ just like men ~ go to any lengths for their booze and are so harshly judged for it. When's the last time you knew of a guy in the rooms (or *out* for that matter) who was labeled and who had built such a lowly reputation for himself because of his promiscuous sexual behavior that he was mercilessly ostracized by the whole? I have seen women with histories of loose sexual behavior that was neither better nor worse than many of the men who have never been able to recover from that stigma that clung to them like white on rice. And it was our men who perpetuated it. Yes I believe God had forgiven them and even wiped their slates clean... but no one else did!

The major complaint I had with a member recently, was (1) that the girl had relapsed, was *drinking* and while accountable for her personal consequences I do not feel she was *responsible*. The *alcohol* is responsible... and the disease! And (2), the fella was bragging to a half dozen guys about his sexual conquest! Now the girl's name is mud. She will never walk into a room there without at least one of the guys thinking to himself that maybe he can have her too.

It's this macho BS I really hate. Alcoholics, men and women *alike*, go to any lengths for alcohol in their pursuit of oblivion and escape. If it takes compromising ourselves sexually, then that's just what we do.

So is there any way we can approach this ugly double standard and maybe give people some food for thought? I'd like to see them reminded of the nature of what it's like to be sick and suffering. I'd like to see a seed planted in their minds that would help them open their hearts with a little more compassionate understanding for some of the women. I for one am tired of seeing them still getting kicked when they're already down. For the most part we (women) have so much more to overcome when we get to the rooms.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could look at more of the men as part of the solution instead of part of the problem?

~ Anonymous



GIVE THE GIRL A CHANCE

*This article was featured in the
February 1975 Grapevine*

I am a woman alcoholic. I didn't get to this Fellowship a saint, and if what you tell me is true (I have no reason to doubt it today), I'll never be one.

When I walked through the doors of AA, I was not a sex kitten, but I'm not too unpleasant to look at, either. I was anything but a lady, but oh, how I tried to act like one and to convince you I was!

I almost beat myself to death with alcohol. I was twenty-seven years old when I went to my first AA meeting, came back when I was thirty-four, and stayed around until I had my last drunk at age thirty-seven. Then I got into the program of AA. (There is a difference between being around and being in.)

I fought you, I resented you, I argued with you, and I refused to believe you until I was beaten to my knees and surrendered. I firmly believe - if my last drunk is any indication of the progressiveness of alcoholism - that this is my last chance.

When I finally gave up, I had to do what you told me. I had to put my sobriety first. You told me to find a God of my understanding. The only God I knew was one of vengeance, hellfire, and brimstone, and I wanted no part of him. (It's different today!) You slapped the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous down and said, "Read, it. Use it as a textbook. Study it." You told me the purpose of this book was to show me precisely how you had recovered.

You didn't condemn me for any past failures and sins, but told me to be honest with myself and others. You told me to stop doing destructive things. You told me to be willing to try to change my thinking and to give up the disordered life I had lived. You told me to stop coloring my attitudes toward life with alcoholic thinking. You told me I couldn't keep doing the things I'd done when I was drinking and expect to have happy, contented sobriety. You told me I had to change from my way of life to the AA way of life, and the choice was up to me. Did I want the very best, or would I settle for "just putting the cork in the bottle"?

Today, I'm that lady I wanted to be for so many years. I have the respect of my fellow AAs (male and female) and of their AI-Anon spouses (male and female).

Most of all, I have regained my self-respect.

The road hasn't been all interstate. I've had to take some long, curvy detours, but my destination has remained the same. I've been traveling, a day at a time, in the direction you told me to go.

I always wanted to be "a part of." I wanted what you had, but I was scared. How could I fit in without my friend alcohol? The first year, I was like a kid looking in the candy-store window, without a penny, wanting to be inside. Today, I feel I'm in there with the rest of you - with a fistful of pennies.

I'd like to share my experience in regard to "the Thirteenth Step." You don't have to be around too long to learn what this step is if you are single and not too unpleasant to look at. What I found was that it wasn't necessary to take this step to be "a part of." Thirteenth-stepping is here to stay, and nothing I can say will erase it. From reading AA Comes of Age, I gather that the early AAs worried whether our Fellowship would survive the sex problem. It has survived, and it will go on surviving. I have often expressed my concern, but I'm always referred to page 69 of the Big Book: "We want to stay out of this controversy."

I have been through some emotional roller-coaster rides with newcomers who are "searching for" and "starved for" love, and I have seen them fall for all the old lines before they have a chance to clean up their lives in an area that puts their sobriety in constant jeopardy. I have seen the emotional high when they are flattered into thinking they are something special - and the depths when they are dropped after the conquest and are avoided.

I've seen some beautiful and good things happen in my short tenure in AA, and I've seen some tragedy.

How many times I've heard "It's tougher for the woman alcoholic" or "I feel sorry for the woman alcoholic - it's not as easy for her" or "The woman alcoholic needs a little more love." For God's sake, let's define love to her.

I realize now, from experience, that I didn't know what love was during my drinking years. Love to me was the one-night stands, always hoping this time it would be different, this time someone

would care - then awakening to find it was over before it had begun. How many times, in a drunken haze, I had cried out to the walls, "If only I had someone to love me, to hold me, to tell me, 'It's all right, I understand!'"

Then I found love - not sex - in AA.

Thank God for the good AA men in my home group who treated me with respect, who loved me as an alcoholic and protected me (I don't think they really know how much), but also who taught me the hard facts of life. For a time, I was the only regular woman member of my group. I'll never forget my first experience finding out there were a few AAs (the good members far outnumbered them) who didn't walk like they talked. I was shattered, but thanks to the good AA men, I finally understood what they meant when they said, "If a drunk SOB puts the cork in the bottle and doesn't change, he or she is just a sober SOB."

A newcomer (a gal, in particular) is likely to believe, as I did, that AAs can and will do no wrong, that all of them really mean what they say. We're supposed to be honest, but a few fellows don't get rid of all their old ideas right away - some never do. I have heard the remark, "Her problem is not alcohol - it's sex." I say: Let her alone long enough to find out what her real problem is. If it's alcohol, there's a chance she may stick around long enough to grasp the program. If it's sex, she'll not stay anyway. (I wouldn't have stayed if sex had been my problem.) Instead of pursuing her and trying to make a conquest, AAs should be examining their own attitudes in the area of sex, as the Big Book tells us to, and encouraging her to stay sober.

Today, I can say to the new gals: if you put sobriety first, you can make it. In the area of the Thirteenth Step, here are a few of the lines I look for.

I run, don't walk, away from the glib orator who presents a beautiful program of solid sobriety at an AA meeting, but confides to me at the first opportunity, when we are having a cup of coffee, that I'm so understanding and if he had someone around like me, his life would be different (he's being understood far more than he realizes), or who says, "You're a beautiful person. I'd like to get to know you better."

I'm leery of a guy who puts too much emphasis on our wonderful slogan Live and Let Live. The slogans have been a lifeline to me, and I respect and use them (or try to) in the right context. But when I hear a member say over and over, "Where I go,

(Continued on page 6)

A Chance (Continued from page 5)

what I do, when I do it, and who I do it with is my business - I say, Live and Let Live," I know this dude's feeling guilty. He's doing something he shouldn't be doing, or he wouldn't be trying so hard to tell us to mind our own business.

Then there's the guy who very sweetly says, "I'd like to take you out to dinner or see you outside of AA - but how long have you been sober? I don't mess around with an AA gal who hasn't been sober at least a year. I wouldn't want to be responsible if you started drinking again." Does a year make it ethical? By whose standards? I've been without a drink, a day at a time, for thirty-seven months, and I'm not so sure that I could survive something that was not "good."

I am not a sanctimonious reformer. I am only saying, there are some guys who are contributing to the delinquency of minors. I don't care if she does have a beautiful, mature body - emotionally, she's an infant. Today, I'm only learning to crawl.

I would be the last to criticize male sponsorship of women. I do criticize men who go around using the guise of sponsorship. Thank God for two guys in particular (whose motives were right), who told me to grab their coattails and hang on.

As I said in the beginning, I'm not a saint, but neither do I condone tampering with someone's life. I love the AA men - the men who are interested in seeing me stay sober another day. I also know that a woman - if she is the way I was - has a tendency to criticize the sober AA women. (I had been looked down on by women for a long time.) Oh, but the wisdom these "old broads" have! I'm only forty, and I wear the "old broad" title proudly today.

When a new gal comes to your group, she should be welcomed by men and women, but she should be turned over to the "old broads" to help her get her life straightened out. Today, I have a beautiful lady sponsor (one I turned my back on when I was floundering, because she told me things I didn't want to hear), and I can turn to her with any problem. You want to know something? She was right all along. She doesn't always say what I'd like to hear today, but I know she's right, and I listen. I may be slow in acting, but with God working through her, I'm staying in the right direction. Let the good happen. If it's God's will, let two people find each other in AA and make a life for themselves. Don't ruin a gal's chance for happiness by helping to destroy her reputation in AA, too. She's at the last place she can go if she's an alcoholic, and if we lose her, she may never make it back. As a lady AA, I am responsible!

The Thirteenth Step



We know that there are only 12 steps in AA. We also know that sexual exploitation is nothing new in our fellowship: The first abuse occurred, by good account, on Anne Smith's kitchen table in late 1935.

But that wasn't a very good example. The two people involved both were newly recovering, probably confused and delighted that somebody -- anybody -- would have anything to do with them.

The true 13th stepper has more time in the Program and thus, because of the honest sharing of feelings and experiences that takes place in meetings, has learned how to take advantage of other people's vulnerabilities. He is usually male, but not always; is convinced that the next affair will fix everything that is wrong with him; is emotionally unavailable and terribly needful, and has a selective conscience.

The 13th stepper will ask such questions as: **a.** "What is wrong with two consenting adults getting together and doing whatever they want to do?" **AND b.** "Who's business is it?"

A. What's wrong with it is this. People come to us at the low point of their lives. They are in direful need of our help and support---the outstretched hand of A. A. The filthiest and most despicable thing we can do is use (misuse) them further, for our own gratification, with no thought as to their spiritual growth, their welfare, or their future. We become jackals in the flock.

B. It is the business of the flock. AA must protect its members, especially the newest and most helpless, from anyone who would pervert our healing Society and make it a sleazy version of "The Dating Game." We have the instrument: It's called Group Conscience, wherein is revealed the will and power of God. That is the tool we have been given, and we need to use it.

But until we stop practicing the 13th step, and begin confronting those who do, we are going to have to acknowledge that our hands -- and our consciences -- are not perfectly clean.

~ Reggie — Recovering Alcoholic

Happy Birthday



Jersey Dave	1 yr
Harry H	1 yr
Steven P	1 yr
Collette	2 yrs
Vince B	3 yrs
Matt D	4 yrs
Tim C	4 yrs
Chris D	5 yrs
Martha K	6 yrs
Natalie B	13 yrs
Ruth B	14 yrs
Scott H	19 yrs
Spencer W.....	22 yrs
Hank V	22 yrs
Joe R	26 yrs

143 Years!

Central Office Stats

- 448 AA Info calls
- 18 Alanon Referrals
- 21 Referrals to other programs
- 48 12 Step calls via answering service
- 6 12-Step via office
- 22 Out of town visitors
- 504 Office Walk-ins
- 11,484 Hits on website

Service Meetings

"...Give freely of what you find and join us"

GSR General Service Representative Meeting Goleta Valley Community Center 5679 Hollister, Room #7 Meets the first Monday of every month at 6:00 pm

IGR InterGroup Representative Meeting First Presbyterian Church 21 East Constance. Meets the second Tuesday of every month at 6 pm.

H & I Hospitals & Institutions Central Office 1213 State Street, Suite H. Meets the second Monday of every month 6:00 pm. *Donations to H & I are accepted at Central Office.*

PI Public Information Meeting Please call 687-7673 for location. Meets the fourth Saturday of every month.

December Contributions to Central Office

	Group	Dec.	Nov.	YTD		Group	Dec.	Nov.	YTD
202	Supporting Member	1,030.00	698.00	13,811.10	153	Happy Destiny	0.00	0.00	300.00
210	Convention Income	3,000.00	0.00	3,213.49	019	Onward & Upward	0.00	33.00	265.10
204	Memorial Fund	0.00	0.00	3,115.00	162	No Frills	25.00	0.00	244.00
212	Special Events	0.00	0.00	2,896.00	144	Back to Basics, Yng Pple	0.00	42.25	223.75
177	Key Group	0.00	500.00	2,800.00	130	Alternative Sat.	0.00	0.00	216.00
079	Harbor Group	292.50	270.00	2,662.80	170	Barefoot Group	14.00	20.00	202.05
117	Way of Life	460.70	250.00	2,560.70	133	Action Participation	0.00	0.00	200.00
120	Sat. Morn. Home Boys	185.25	194.91	2,428.08	166	Serenity Sisters	0.00	0.00	190.10
003	Eye Opener	200.00	0.00	2,384.00	052	As Bill Sees It, Wed.	0.00	0.00	190.00
211	Central Office Rent Rcvd.	145.00	163.00	1,926.00	140	Gay Discussion, Sunday	0.00	34.00	177.15
201	Birthday Donations	22.00	23.00	1,864.62	073	Young People's	69.20	66.00	170.20
164	Men Who Have Lost Their Le	200.00	197.00	1,523.00	089	Here & Now	0.00	70.00	170.00
183	Summerland Thurs. Night	558.68	0.00	1,472.74	034	Women of Change	50.00	0.00	165.57
141	Off Center	0.00	0.00	1,387.71	056	Women by the Books	0.00	0.00	164.00
209	Meeting Guide	139.10	82.00	1,086.10	148	San Ysidro	0.00	0.00	160.00
111	Carpinteria Canalino	300.00	0.00	1,075.00	070	Success Group	0.00	0.00	159.50
166	Start Your Day Right	300.00	0.00	1,000.00	026	Carpinteria Study Group	0.00	25.00	155.00
181	Keep Coming Back Grp.	0.00	0.00	940.43	158	Isla Vista Sobriety	0.00	0.00	147.50
067	Rigorous Honesty	87.00	87.14	926.72	150	Goleta Sun. Night Speaker	140.00	0.00	140.00
139	It's a Hell of a Deal	120.00	0.00	868.62	008	Beginners Group	13.00	0.00	116.72
149	Getting to Know You	160.00	0.00	768.10	020	Cambridge Group	100.00	0.00	100.00
010	Foundation Group	140.00	0.00	672.63	118	Speaker Connection	0.00	0.00	100.00
165	Junkyard Dogs	52.72	77.24	583.92	100	UCSB Discussion	0.00	0.00	99.00
114	Schooner Group	172.00	0.00	583.65	106	Woman to Woman	0.00	48.60	88.60
022	Summerland Mon. Night	180.00	0.00	570.00	028	The Mother Group	0.00	0.00	81.00
047	Tuesday Men's Stag	84.00	0.00	544.00	025	Grateful Group	80.00	0.00	80.00
062	Do The Steps or Die	71.20	57.85	543.10	196	Powerful Cement	0.00	0.00	80.00
004	Monday At A Time	121.85	0.00	541.85	113	Sought Through Prayer	20.00	10.00	77.00
200	Anonymous Donations	250.00	0.00	516.34	039	Gratitude Group	0.00	0.00	75.00
146	Out of Town Spkr, NHII	85.90	20.00	468.91	116	Eleventh Step Meditation	0.00	0.00	64.00
064	Women's Serenity Group	40.00	0.00	460.00	007	Sound Off	0.00	0.00	60.00
097	Almost Saints	73.42	0.00	458.42	016	Big Book Workshop	0.00	0.00	60.00
055	Staying Alive	148.00	0.00	449.00	093	Into Action Thurs.	0.00	0.00	60.00
022	There is a Solution	47.40	0.00	418.87	186	Turning Point	55.00	0.00	55.00
186	Sun. Night Alt. NH III	0.00	0.00	400.63	011	Sundowner Group	20.00	0.00	35.00
045	Alternative Group	60.00	0.00	400.00	013	No Shenanigans	0.00	0.00	20.00
091	New Life	0.00	0.00	400.00	034	Beginner's Steps 1,2,3	0.00	0.00	20.00
068	Stepping Stones	34.80	10.61	360.23	160	Quit Playing God 3rd Step	14.00	0.00	14.00
023	For Women Only	0.00	60.00	308.00	065	In Town Speaker	0.00	0.00	11.00
083	Sober Students, Tues.	0.00	0.00	307.00	036	Tuesday Trudgers	0.00	0.00	4.00
072	Discussion Gay Wed.	0.00	100.00	300.00					

Total Group Contributions \$ 4,775.62

Total 'Other' Contributions \$ 4,586.10

Treasurers, please keep in mind that monthly contributions, no matter how small, help with the financial planning at Central Office

The year end total contributions are listed in decending order of contribution not by Group Number.
Is *your* Home Group helping AA to be Self Supporting?

Supporting Member Donation Coupon

Yes, I would like to become a supporting member of the Santa Barbara AA Central Office, and help it continue 'carrying the message' and being there for the Alcoholic who still suffers. Please sign me up as a Supporting Member so that I may contribute on a regular basis throughout the year. I look forward to finding my monthly Messenger in the mail each month!

Enclosed is my first contribution of \$ _____, which I will continue to donate on a *(please circle one)* monthly, quarterly, annually, other _____ basis.

Name: _____ Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Please make checks payable to:

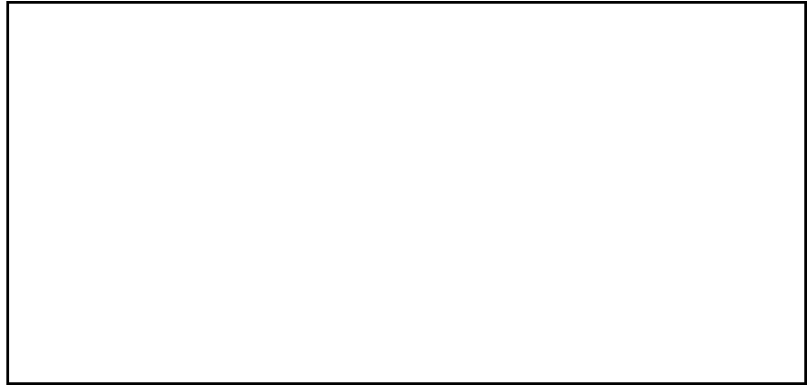
AA Central Office, S.M.C. 1213 State Street, Suite H Santa Barbara, Ca 93101

"Every AA Group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions" Seventh Tradition (short form) reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

this form can be
used for both new
sign-ups and
regular
contributions

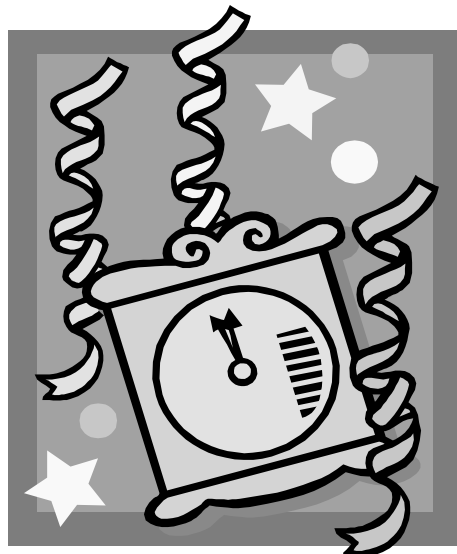
General Office

1213 State Street, Suite H
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Phone (805) 962-3332



Happy New Year !

*"change
nothing
and
nothing
changes!"*



*"In order to
get what
you've never
had, do what
you've never
done!"*