

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



*The Santa Barbara*

*November 2011*

# MESSENGER

## Gratitude

Reprinted from Grapevine Magazine, May 1973

Around the tables, the wonderments of AA spill forth, only to be surpassed by more wonderments. This morning, when I was thinking of what I owe to each of you, I realized that words fail to express the abiding gratitude I have to you. Prayers of others led me to AA, which led me to God, who led me right back to AA, which led back to prayers. Only you, each of you, by attempting to find your own solution, could have done it for me. If some of you hadn't, who would have been there to help me? Those of you whose last drink was after my last drink have helped me by letting me help you. Those of you who are just arriving are helping me in a way that is not clear to you yet. But it will be when you understand, as I do now, how much I helped those awaiting me when I appeared.

My family and I (and we're a family because of you) had planned to work outside today; the forecast held such promise for yard work. It has poured all day today. Our house (thanks to you) has been leaking (not your fault). We couldn't go outside, but it didn't bother anyone; we delighted in doing things indoors. I finished a ceiling. My wife baked a low-calorie (3,000 calories to the square inch) cake. My son did all sorts of things. We were together (thanks to you). All this "one day at a time" day (thanks to you), we lived, we laughed, we loved, we did. A couple of extra people dropped in at dinnertime. We had enough (thanks to you), but they had already eaten.

I kissed my son good night; he can stand my breath (thanks to you). I drove 1.2 miles to my home group; Tony C. gave a marvelous talk (he's thankful to you, too). Sat around and shot the breeze and came home. Had another piece of the low-cal cake. Read some of the Big Book – always new and refreshing.

Just another beautiful day. I'll get around to the leaks when the rains stop. Words fail, but God bless each and every one of you for making this day possible. I'm convinced tonight – realizing the miracle I am, and having seen thirty or so other miracles an hour ago – that if I keep trying to live as you have shown me, one day God will let me express in words what all of this means to me. For tonight, though, thanks. In my prayers tonight, you'll all be there. Till God shows me the words, prayer is the only way I know.

—D.W.R.. Detroit, Michigan

### ***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 AND THE POWER TO CARRY IT OUT.***

### **Suggestions about Prayer and Mediation from the Big Book**

- (1) Make no requests in prayer for yourself only.
- (2) Never prayer for your own selfish ends.
- (3) Select and memorize a few set prayers that emphasize the principles of the Steps.
- (4) Ask a priest, minister or rabbi about helpful books and prayers that emphasize the principles of the Steps.
- (5) Be quick to see where religious people are right.
- (6) Make use of what religious people have to offer.

(p. 87 BB)

**THE  
MANAGER'S  
CORNER**

**What do we do at your Central Office**

In accordance with the 9th tradition, the Santa Barbara Central Office is a service center that involves partnership among the groups in the community—just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals.

Central Office's purpose is to aid the groups in meeting Alcoholics Anonymous primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Your Central Office is open 44 hours per week, providing a safe, clean and friendly atmosphere, where alcoholics can come and feel welcome and be part of.

Our office is staffed with volunteers trained in the handling of all telephone duties. We also train the volunteers in the daily office duties, such as retail sales and taking of donations.

The phone lines are open 24 hours a day by coordination with our answering service.

We are constantly looking for ways to better meet our primary purpose of service to our AA community. Suggestions are always welcome.

If you are a member of alcoholics anonymous in Santa Barbara, have a big book or any other alcoholics anonymous literature, pamphlet, meeting guide or sobriety chip, you have already been touched by our service to the local community.

If you would really like to know what we do at your Central Office, please come by and visit. Or ask one of our volunteers why they volunteer here. Then maybe you will find out what it is that we do.

In my time as the manager at Central Office I have been blessed with people who come in and thank us for being there when they needed us.

We answer the phone, listen, care and get people to meetings and share with others what was so freely given to us. Our experience, strength and hope.

John S. Alcoholic and Special Worker at Your Central Office.

**October 2011 Donations**

	Oct 11	Sep 11	Jan - Oct 11		Oct 11	Sep 11	Jan - Oct 11
002 Courage To Change	150.50	0.00	150.50	120 Sat. Morn. Home Boys	150.00	0.00	923.00
003 Eye Opener	230.00	200.00	2,450.00	125 On Awakening	244.40	0.00	1,726.40
004 Monday At A Time	0.00	0.00	560.40	130 Saturday Night Sobriety	0.00	0.00	33.00
007 Sound Off	0.00	0.00	48.00	139 It's A Hell Of A Deal	0.00	0.00	949.44
010 Foundation Group	0.00	0.00	196.64	140 Gay Discussion, Sunday	0.00	121.00	507.07
011 Sundowner Group	0.00	0.00	140.00	141 Off Center	0.00	110.36	813.51
013 New Pair Of Glasses	50.00	0.00	150.00	144 Back To Basics, Young People	200.00	0.00	200.00
014 El Montecito Saturday Night	0.00	0.00	162.00	145 The How And Why Of It	0.00	37.00	261.60
019 Onward & Upward	0.00	115.00	310.00	146 Out Of Town Speaker, NH II	0.00	0.00	123.06
020 Cambridge Group	0.00	0.00	199.20	150 Goleta Sun. Night Speaker	0.00	0.00	30.00
021 Summerland Monday Group	0.00	0.00	255.00	153 Happy Destiny	100.00	0.00	1,291.86
022 There Is A Solution	180.00	0.00	422.00	156 Start Your Day Right	0.00	561.00	1,666.00
023 For Women Only	0.00	0.00	360.00	159 Speak Easy STep and Traditions	0.00	0.00	120.00
024, Mesa-Singleness of Purpose	0.00	40.00	240.00	161 Back To Basics Group	27.69	0.00	27.69
026 Carpinteria Study Group	0.00	33.00	269.00	163 Mustard Seed	0.00	0.00	38.25
030 Sisters In Solution	0.00	0.00	65.00	164 Men Who Have Lost Their Legs	240.00	650.00	2,765.00
034 Women of Change	0.00	0.00	388.47	165 Junkyard Dogs	240.00	0.00	660.00
045 Alternative Group	0.00	0.00	208.40	166 Serenity Sisters	0.00	0.00	111.63
047 Tuesday Men's Stag	0.00	0.00	544.28	167 Women's Big Book Study	0.00	0.00	100.00
051 Men's Group At St. Mary's	0.00	0.00	240.00	170 Barefoot Group	0.00	0.00	2.00
052 As Bill Sees It, Weds.	50.00	0.00	50.00	171 Gratitude Solutions	0.00	0.00	57.00
055 Staying Alive	0.00	79.00	400.20	173 Let it Go-11th Step Meditation	0.00	0.00	101.45
056 Women By The Books	0.00	48.55	48.55	177 Key Group	0.00	0.00	700.00
064 Women's Serenity Group	0.00	0.00	321.00	181 Keep Coming Back Group	269.77	0.00	703.67
067 Rigorous Honesty	20.00	538.00	849.00	182 Just the Black Print	171.28	0.00	618.03
068 Stepping Stones	0.00	127.20	478.11	183 Summerland/Montecito, Thurs.	120.00	0.00	414.00
070 Success Group	0.00	0.00	80.00	184 Jay Walker Book Study	0.00	0.00	51.00
074 Casa Serena (BB Study)	0.00	0.00	144.00	189 Friday Night Book Study	0.00	0.00	41.00
079 Harbor Group	203.65	0.00	2,287.78	190 Living Sober Book Study	0.00	47.14	47.14
083 Sober Students, Tues Eve	0.00	0.00	60.00	191 Men on a Mission	0.00	0.00	301.00
084, 83 - 87 Group	150.00	300.00	3,130.00	196 Montecito Book Study	0.00	24.00	130.00
089 Here & Now	0.00	0.00	125.00	197 Big Book Comes Alive Women's Meeting	0.00	0.00	204.00
093 Into Action, Thurs	0.00	0.00	147.00	201 Birthday Donations	0.00	29.00	1,245.00
094 Questions & Answers	9.00	0.00	42.60	202 Supporting Members	940.22	1,046.22	9,743.92
097 Almost Saints	210.00	0.00	1,126.17	204 Memorial Fund	0.00	0.00	250.00
098 Keep It Simple, Saturday	0.00	40.00	70.00	207 Gratitude Month	0.00	0.00	714.60
100 Student of Life	0.00	0.00	70.00	210 Convention Income	0.00	0.00	581.53
111 Carpinteria Canalino	0.00	0.00	498.00	211 Rent Received	24.00	28.00	733.35
112 Montecito/Carpinteria	300.00	0.00	800.00	212 Special Events	0.00	0.00	3,596.00
113 Sought Through Prayer & Meditation	18.00	6.00	141.37	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$4,396.01</b>	<b>\$4,180.47</b>	<b>\$52,312.21</b>
114 Schooner Group	97.50	0.00	295.50				
117 Way Of Life	0.00	0.00	1,206.84				

**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 finding my monthly newsletter in the mail 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 \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to: **AA Central Office, S.M.C.  
1213 State Street, Suite H  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101**

## An Attitude of Gratitude

My sobriety started back in New York. On Sunday mornings there was a large meeting at Jones Beach, with a few hundred people of all ages and lengths of sobriety, all celebrating recovery. There was a man whose name I don't recall, but I do recall his favorite phrase. Whenever he shared, in a loud booming voice, he'd always add '**...And I'm having a gratitude attack!**' At the time I thought it was corny, but over time, I've come to appreciate it. I became appreciative for Johnny's key line- **"I came for my drinking, I stayed for my thinking."**

An attitude of gratitude reminds me that I was lucky enough to 'get' it – to 'get' the desire to stop drinking, and then to 'get' the incentives to stay stopped. I didn't struggle and fight it. When I came in, I was done. My last drunk was as unremarkable as the five or 10 before it, but I was finished. And for that, I am grateful.

I am grateful that enough people helped me discover-trust-rely upon a Power greater than myself. One time when I was scared that 'my God' wouldn't help me through a particular crisis, Babette put her arm around me and said, **'Then you can use my God, because he never lets me down.'** What relief! I am grateful for my first sponsor, Kerrie, who lovingly shared her experience, strength and hope as I shared the big dark secrets of my 4<sup>th</sup> Step and my newcomer craziness. Sixteen years later, I'm grateful for my sponsor, Luwana, who continues to help me get out of my craziness. I'm grateful for sober friends and past sponsors who guided me, even when it seemed like they were torturing me. **"How important is it?"** Kathy B. always asked.

Then there was Kevin. We met when I had four months, definitely liked each other, and then I never saw him until after I had my year. I thought it was a coincidence until he explained that out of consideration for me to establish a solid foundation, he consciously avoided our paths crossing. What a display of respect. Thank you, Kevin, for allowing my early sobriety without the **avoidable distractions** of romantic emotional entanglement. Entanglement is the right word for early sobriety relationships. My **unavoidable distractions** were enough. (After that, I did try to take him hostage- I might have had 'a year,' but I didn't yet have 'the tools' for a healthy relationship.)

I'm grateful for Kathy G, whose **'So what!'** brought me back to Steps 6 & 7 when I relentlessly complained about people, places and things. From her, I learned the joys of General Service and the value of accountability. At an Intergroup meeting one night, I made myself available for a commitment. Then I (magnanimously) raised my hand and explained that I was too busy to give that commitment the appropriate amount of time, blah, blah blah, so please excuse me. At the end of the meeting, I started to explain to Kathy why I changed my mind, and she said she didn't want to hear it. **"There's a difference between being unwilling and being unavailable.** You were clearly unwilling." Thank you, Kathy, I remember that clearly. Today I'm more willing.

And Stacy, who reminded me to **'Allow people their human-ness.'** To Donita, for honest sharing- when she was in the car with her family, and said she was tired, her son remarked, **"Yeah, Mom, it's because you're so busy minding other peoples' business."** With more than 20+ years, thanks for sharing, so that your 'look-good' doesn't take over you desire to feel good. To J. Ronald Bean, who suggested to **'make your decisions based on a combination of your sponsor, yourself and your God.'**

When I was so wounded in a divorce process that I could barely get out of bed, I am grateful to the women inmates of Utah State Prison who welcomed me there each week and reminded me of my worth. It will always be a toss-up of who benefitted more. They may think it was them, but I believe it was me. I deserved those orange jumpsuits as much as you all did. You just got caught. In Salt Lake City, I shared at a Mormon bible study, **"Every day I stand at the turning point; I can choose to live on character defects or spiritual principles."** My Mormon friends were impressed, wanted me to repeat it so they could write it into their Bibles. (Just like I'd write great phrases in my Big Book.) When they asked *where* I'd heard that, I wanted to brag that it was A.A., and in the spirit of anonymity, I said I'd simply heard it from some wise folks. (I didn't even add *sober* wise folks.)

I'm grateful for my ability to write. If anyone ever thought about 'the article I always wanted to write,' and hasn't gotten around to it, I'd be glad to help get it out of your head and onto paper. It was a thrill to see my first published writing years ago, and I'd enjoy helping you get over your hesitation. Contact John S. at Central Office to get in touch with me. To April, who told me that **"If someone wants to get sober, anything you say will help. If someone doesn't want to get sober, nothing you say will help."**

And to my wonderful sponsees, who can alternately be as crazy as bedbugs and then be as spiritual as I one day hope to be. I learn from them. With their wild-eyed wonder, they remind me about the simple joys of our program. They are amazed at learning to live without alcohol, elated to discover that sobriety is fun. Ready and willing to put in the effort for recovery. When I have answers, it's because I've heard them from someone before me. I am so grateful to trudge the road with you- Happy Destiny is a pretty cool journey.

At first, I was grateful to avoid the horrors of untreated alcoholism; today I'm grateful for the joys of recovery and to give back that which was so freely given me. Oh yes, here it comes.....I'm having a gratitude attack!

## Happy Thanksgiving 2011

## The Transformation

Let's not dwell on where I was too much. I'll skip right to the end and the incredible transformation I experienced thanks to A.A. At the end, I was an LSD and alcohol induced crazed animal. It seemed any shred of humanity I had been holding onto was lost. Everything I said I would never do I ended up doing. I made the county jail my home. I was in there more than I was out in the real world. I felt comfortable there. I fit in. They were animals, too. My last run to the jail got me sentenced to a program of recovery. I wanted nothing to do with it. I told the judge I'd rather go to prison. Could I just go to prison? I didn't think it possible to live life sober. I didn't know how to and the thought terrified me. Various times out in the real world, I tried proving to myself that i didn't have a problem, that I could stop when I wanted to, I just didn't want to. I forced myself to stop for a day or two just to prove it to myself that I could. or maybe if I just drink half I'll be half buzzed for half the time. Who is the mastermind behind these lines? The judge laughed in my face. She said no we won't send you to prison, you're going to go to a sober living and a recovery program.

For all my running and all my fighting, Alcoholics Anonymous brought me to my knees. I tried every imaginable remedy to keep me out of A.A. I firmly decided I would white knuckle sobriety for a year, complete my program, get the law off my back, and continue doing what I was doing. This was my plan.

I went to sober living. I pretended I was happy at the house. I didn't want anyone to get close to me for fear that they would see through me. Like the book says, I was like a little boy whistling in the dark to keep my spirits up. I was only fooling myself. Inwardly I would do anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with it.

After about five months going insane in my head from my untreated alcoholism, something happened. I decided to give A.A a shot. Like when I found drugs and alcohol, when I found A.A, I dove in and never looked back. At the first meeting I went to, scared out of my mind, I raised my hand and told these terrifying people I needed help. I was in a room full of nonthreatening, loving women, mind you. Why were they so scary? Perception is a strange thing.

I was pushed toward a young, incredibly happy girl my age who became my sponsor. She had unbreakable faith in me until I could have faith in myself. I was told this was a spiritual program, that i didn't have to believe in God, just anything I believed to be greater than myself. I could even make up my own god. I thought long and hard about this higher power business. I had forsaken any sort of faith in my drinking career. I had thought, "if there was a god how could he do this to me, give me this life?". The universe hadn't given me this life I had. I had all the skill and intelligence to do whatever I wanted and I chose a life of drinking and crime.

I found myself down by the ocean one night watching the powerful waves crash to shore. I realized there has to be something greater out there, and I dropped to my knees. I begged, "whoever you are, whatever you are to please help me, show me the path I'm supposed to be on, because I got lost somewhere along the way." I felt all the pressure and weight, all the negative horrible energy leave my body. I felt, for the first time in my life 100% sober, that everything was going to be okay. And the screaming in my head stopped. I was at peace.

I followed every step my sponsor and A.A advised of me. I found the strength to turn around and face myself head on. Me, my biggest enemy. Not only did I find the strength to do it, I found an unending amount of people at my back, encouraging me the whole way, ready to help pick me up and dust me off if I fell. I never did. I found when I was in faith, I was never in fear. I never had to fall again.

I looked myself in the eye and saw that I was at fault in all the situations I had felt I had been wronged in. My own selfishness lead to them. If I was to live, I had to be free of anger. I swallowed and digested huge chunks of information about myself, saw the patterns in my behavior and became willing to change them. I let go of all the resentment and fear I had stuffed down inside me, and the ice inside my soul started to melt. I started making amends to all those who I had harmed in my life, which was everyone I had come in contact with. I was rigorously honest. For the first time in my life, I felt remorse for the things I had done and wanted to do something about it. So I cleaned house with everyone, asking each morning in meditation that the universe show me the way to patience, tolerance, kindness, and love.

The Spiritual life is not a theory. I have to live it. I have learned that my substance abuse is but a symptom to a greater problem, an emptiness from a lack of spiritual connection. As a child of the God, I stand on my feet; I do not crawl before anyone. I am not cocky nor am I afraid. I comprehend the word serenity and all I know is peace. Every promise the Big Book told me has come true in my life, in a very short time. If you do the work I can tell you without a doubt you never have to live like you did ever again.

**TRADITION 11**

***Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.***

**Journal Entry of an Alcoholic**

BIG DEAL?

I love my ex and always will. I hope that one day I will be able to offer another person the things I wasn't able to offer him... like love w/o contempt... the benefit of the doubt.... kindness...appreciation... the ability to communicate... patience... better self-control...

As a new member of good-standing in AA, I hope that I am able to make up the years I lost when other people my age were growing & maturing.

That is why it is really important that I didn't give into my craving to drink last night. It's not the drinking and getting buzzed in itself that would have been a big deal. It's what the meaning holds in the bigger picture. Alcohol robbed my of the personal growth that I need to enjoy life, to have healthy relationships, and to represent myself well in daily affairs. All & all, it took away my ability to take of myself- the one, simple, thing I heard my Higher Power, God, asks me to do.

What is the point of going back to it? Even drinking just for one night at home, on my own, is like saying, "Alcohol, it's OK that you've robbed me. I'll let you take hold again just for tonight. Its only one night. One night is no big deal."

The reality is that that way of thinking opens a door. Even if the drinking doesn't carry over to the next day, that way of thinking does- very, very subtly. Then, eventually, when I'm met with difficult people/ situations/things that are UNCOMFORTABLE, but pose an opportunity to grow, that way of thinking will overpower my desire to fully experience them sober. And I will turn to what SEEMS to be an easier way, being intoxicated, so that I do not have to be uncomfortable. Before you know it, I will be right back where I started- stunting my personal growth, road blocking my way to emotional maturity, and letting alcohol rob me ALL OVER AGAIN.

So even though drinking or not drinking last night didn't seem like a very big deal at the time, IT IS A BIG DEAL. I'll give myself a lot of credit for not giving in so foolishly, and especially for finally being able to deliver to my Higher Power. God wants me to take care of myself. I want to offer myself as the best person I can be- emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

God's will and my will are compatible and will continue to be so if I continue to not drink alcohol.

- Jenn S.

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Q.How can you tell the difference between a sponsor and a therapist?

A.The only time a sponsor uses the word "closure" is before the word "mouth".

- Andrew D., May 2001

**October 2011 Birthdays**

Name	Years
Fernando	1
Isabel J	1
Jay F	1
Marisa	1
Michael D	1
Noelle A	1
Steve O	1
Tiffany	1
Vickey	1
Jon S	2
Mel J	2
Amy F	3
Sandy M	3
Bill M	4
Frank D	4
John H	4
Lucy R	4
Michael M	4
Denise M	5
John H	5
Gail Jean	6
Jack C	6
Steve C	6
Troy O	6
Nina V	7
Cyndi S	8
Robert F	8
John DeL	9
Gayle S	10
Pat M	12
Joe G	13
Mike S	13
Bob M	14
Harold	14
Diane F	16
Pam I	16
Peter J	21
Al C	23
Karrie	23
Mike A	23
Tony N	23
Alison D.	24
Russ R	24
Leslie H	25
John D	31
Ellen B	32
Michael D	32



**Service Meetings**

**GSR** (General Service Representatives) meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 1st Monday of each month at Holy Cross Church Hall, 1740 Cliff Drive, behind the church.

**IGR** (Intergroup Representatives) meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the First Presbyterian Church, 21 East Constance.

**H&I** (Hospitals & Institutions) meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month at Central Office.

**PI** (Public Information) meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Central Office.

**Facilities Committee** meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 1st Wednesday of each month at Central Office.

**Submissions Needed**

*The Messenger* needs your articles and letters. We especially seek submissions on the step or tradition associated with the month of the same number.

For December, we need writing on Step 12 and Tradition 12. Send submissions to [johns@santabarbaraaa.com](mailto:johns@santabarbaraaa.com)

**Central Office Statistics**

During October, 2011, your Central Office had:

AA Information calls .....	535
Al-Anon Referrals .....	42
Referrals to other programs .....	30
12step via answering service .....	22
Out-of-town visitors .....	23
12-step via office .....	21
Office walk-ins .....	254
Hits on our Web site .....	1704

***The Messenger* is published monthly by:**

23<sup>rd</sup> District Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous  
 1213 State Street, Suite H  
 Santa Barbara, California, 93101  
 Phone: 805-962-3332  
 Email: [sbaa@santabarbaraAA.com](mailto:sbaa@santabarbaraAA.com)  
 Website: <http://www.SantaBarbaraAA.com>