



The Santa Barbara September 2007
MESSENGER

CONVENTION UPDATE

“WE SURRENDER TO WIN” – 2007 Convention

The 2007 Convention begins in only a few weeks. October will be here before we know it! Things are getting a little hectic for everyone involved in making sure that all the pieces are in place when the doors open. Can't wait to see you all there! Let's go over the important info:

WHAT: The 23rd Annual Santa Barbara Convention

WHERE: Elks Lodge, 150 N. Kellogg, Goleta, CA

WHEN: October, 12,13,14, 2007

ONLINE REGISTRATION:

Is available NOW! Check out the website at: www.sbaaconvention.org. Please register early to help defray the cost of putting the convention together.

SPEAKERS:

Shalaby N. from Lancaster, CA, on Friday night, John A., from Dallas, TX, on Saturday night and Mary Ann W., from Tulsa OK, on Sunday morning.

MEMORABILIA:

The coffee mugs are beautiful, and we have lots t-shirts, sweat shirts. Go to the website to see this years logo design.

GOLF:

Word from the golf committee is to plan on a great time of fellowship, fun and golf in the sun! Get your registration in now! Contact Michael W. at [Michael @ michaelwoodward.com](mailto:Michael@michaelwoodward.com).

MARATHON MEETINGS:

Hourly meeting will be held in the outdoor tent. If you are interested in leading a meeting contact

FOOD:

Friday night's menu is in place and promising a delicious BBQ with tri-tip, chicken, corn on the cob and garlic bread
Saturday night banquet will feature Baron of Beef or Chicken Picata, with mushroom sauce, saffron rice, green beans almandine and Mud Pie.

FUN:

Marquel will be hosting an amazing evening of Sober Bingo right after the BBQ so, be prepared for laughter, friendship and the possibility of calling out BINGO.

VOLUNTEERS

We are in need of more volunteers. We have many opportunities and jobs available. It will be fun and a great way to enhance your sobriety.

SPORTS FUN RAISER:

Prior to the convention, during the weekend of September 8 & 9th, we will be hosting our First Annual Santa Barbara AA Convention Sports Fun-raiser. There will be a Softball tournament on Saturday at Carrillo field (call Mike C at 430-2780) and on Sunday we are having a Beach Volleyball tournament at the East Beach Courts (Call Paul C at 896-0716) for further details. There will be a Bar-b-que on Sunday following the volleyball tournament. Tickets are on sale now for the BBQ – You can get them by contacting Beverly J. at 455-1012. The BBQ will be at the East Beach Volleyball picnic tables. Convention memorabilia will be on sale and there will be a Convention Registration Desk, so you can register early for the convention.

SILENT AUCTION:

We will be having a silent auction during the convention highlighting our talented artistic community. Last year, our first annual convention art auction, was an overwhelming success.

Contact Beverly J. @ 455-1012. if you have something you want to go into the auction.

The 2007 Committee would sincerely appreciate your early registration. That's what lets us pay the bills that start coming in long before the doors open for the convention. THANK YOU, especially to those who support the convention with early registration!! Of course, you can go on line to register again this year – just go to www.sbaaconvention.org.

So don't forget: October 12,13 and 14th. All our planning and hard work won't mean a thing if you are not there!!

GO TO www.sbaaconvention.org for more information.



Old Home Week

They say that in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting you might be sitting next to a bank president, a bank teller, or a bank robber. I have seen the truth of this demonstrated more than once. And the great thing about that is, unless they tell you who and what they are, you might never know. I remember, when I needed letters of support for something I was working on, I was able to procure them from a couple of judges, a police officer, two or three lawyers, some 'average' citizens, and more than one ex-convict. The great thing about **all** of them was that every one of them was a respected member of their community. Both in AA and in the world.

What made me think of this is that last night I was in a meeting with, perhaps, more than its normal quota of self-acknowledged bank robbers. It was almost like a class reunion of guys who got their AA inside the walls. To a man they acknowledged their involvement in AA, both inside and out, as being the one thing that has allowed them to live comfortably as free men. And that comfort showed in the way they carried themselves, and in the way they spoke. The other thing that stood out to me was that they were all grateful for their sobriety. You could hear it in their voices and you could see it in their eyes. It was one of those very special AA meetings for me, and it helped me to re-commit and re-dedicate myself to my own recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. So, special thanks to the alumni of the "We Do Recover" Group who showed up last night to carry the message to me.

Tim

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! Encloses in 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

Every AA group ought to be fully self supporting, delining outside contributions. – Seventh Tradition (short form), reprinted by permission of A World Services, Inc.

WILL NOT REGRET THE PAST

We will not regret the past. Those words are pretty tough for this alcoholic to swallow at times. I understand the context in which they were written and at times I do believe that in my drinking, I needed to suffer in order to get well. I believe the paradoxes as well as the promises. I have been blessed in Alcoholics Anonymous with a host of friends who I love very much and who love me in return. AA has given my life meaning and purpose. This is not to say that all my days are good ones. I often struggle with a sort of self pity and depression. I believe I try to corner the market on regret just because I sleep in a cell every night. Yes, I am serving a lengthy prison term, but I am sure that times get difficult in sobriety on occasion for everybody. We all have regrets. The difficult part some days is to see the value in my experience. I know that I am in a unique position to help others to recover behind these walls, only because of my past. This includes my criminal past along with my alcoholism. I still regret the fact that I gave 20 years of my freedom, in the prime of my life, just to find how that experience can benefit others. Would I change that? Most days I would and some days I say no. I have come to realize that I have had to go through every single little thing in life-good and bad-in order to become closer to being the man God would have me be. I probably needed some time away from society to work on myself and apparently God thought I needed plenty. I guess I was really messed up!

On June 21st I will celebrate 7 years of sobriety and I want to specifically thank the members of Santa Barbara H&I for carrying the message to me behind the walls of the USP in Lompoc. Although I left that prison 5 and a half years ago, I could mention each of you by name to this day. I would like to mention my sponsor from Santa Maria and thank him for his dedication to H & I throughout the years. Also Santa Barbara Central Office who has made sure I still get the Messenger (I know it is you!), even though it has been over 5 years now that I have been in Phoenix. These folks are my inspiration and I hope to one day be a part of a service structure that does equally good works. Right now I am sponsored and I sponsor others. I read the literature because I need to understand about recovery-I cannot teach what I do not know and I cannot give away what I do not possess. I guess that today I do not regret the past and I see how my experience can benefit others, today is a good day.

Take care and God bless, Shane M., Phoenix, AZ

WHAT HAPPENED?

That question is being asked by a lot of alcoholics lately. What happened to our high success rate? 30 & 40 years ago, we were keeping 75% or more of the alcoholics who came to us for help. Today, we aren't keeping even 5%. What happened?

What happened to that wonderful A.A. Group that was around for 20, 30 or 40 years? There used to be 50, 75, 100 or more at every meeting. It is now a matter of history, gone! More and more groups are folding every day. What happened? We hear a lot of ideas, opinions and excuses as to what happened but things are not improving. They continue to get worse. What is happening?

Bill W. wrote, "In the years ahead A.A. will, of course, make mistakes. Experience has taught us that we need have no fear of doing this, providing that we always remain willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly. Our growth as individuals has depended upon this healthy process of trial and error. So will our growth as a fellowship. Let us always remember that any society of men and women that cannot freely correct its own faults must surely fall into decay if not into collapse. Such is the universal penalty for the failure to go on growing. Just as each A.A. must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole Society if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well." (A.A. Comes of Age, PG 231) With so very few finding lasting sobriety and the continued demise of AA groups, it is obvious that we have not remained willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly. Seems to me that the Delegate of the Northeast Ohio Area, Bob B., identified our mistakes and our faults when he talked to a group of AA's in 1976. He said, in essence, we are no longer showing the newcomer that we have a solution for alcoholism. We are not telling them about the Big Book and how very important that Book is to our long-term sobriety. We are not telling them about our Traditions and how very important they are to the individual groups and to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. Rather, we are using our meeting time for drunkalogs, a discussion of our problems, ideas and opinions or "my day" or "my way".

Having been around for a few years, and reflecting on what Bob B. had to say, it would appear that we have permitted newcomers to convince the old-timers that they have a better idea. They had just spent 30 or more days in a treatment facility where they had been impressed with the need to talk about their problems in Group Therapy Sessions. They had been told that it didn't make any difference what their real problem was; A.A. had the "best program". They were told that they should go to an A. A. meeting every day for the 1st 90 days out of treatment. They were told that they shouldn't make any major decisions for the 1st year of their sobriety. And what they were told goes on and on, most of which are contrary to the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous! Apparently, what they were told sounded pretty good to the A.A. members who were here when the TC clients started showing up at our meetings. And a lot of the A.A. members liked the idea of the treatment centers because the centers provided a place where they could drop off a serious drinker, if he/she had insurance. That eliminated some of the inconveniences we had been plagued with before; having to pour orange juice and honey or a shot of booze down a vibrating alky to help them "detox". When A.A. was very successful, the folks who did the talking in meetings were recovered alcoholics. The suffering and untreated alcoholics listened. After hearing what it

(WHAT HAPPENED, CONTINUED)

takes to recover, the newcomer was faced with a decision; "Are you going to take the Steps and recover or are you going to get back out there and finish the job?" If they said they "were willing to go to any length", they were given a sponsor, a Big Book and began the process of recovery by taking the Steps and experiencing the Promises that result from that course of action. This process kept the newcomer involved in working with others and continued the growth of our Fellowship. Our growth rate was approximately 7% and the number of sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous doubled every 10 years. With the advent of the rapid growth of the Treatment Industry, the acceptance of our success with alcoholics by the judicial system and endorsement of physicians, psychiatrist, psychologist, etc. all kinds of people were pouring into A.A. at a rate greater than we had ever dreamed possible. Almost without realizing what was happening, our meetings began changing from ones that focused on recovery from alcoholism to "discussion or participation" types of meetings that invited everyone to talk about whatever was on their mind. The meetings evolved from a program of spiritual development to the group therapy type of meeting where we heard more and more about "our problems" and less and less about the Program of Recovery by the Big Book and the preservation of our Fellowship by adhering to our Traditions.

What has been the result of all this? Well, never have we had so many coming to us for help. But never have we had such a slow growth rate which has now started to decline. For the first time in our history, Alcoholics Anonymous is losing members faster than they are coming in and our success rate is unbelievably low. (Statistics from the Inter-Group Office of some major cities indicate less than 5% of those expressing a desire to stop drinking is successful for more than 5 years; a far cry from the 75% reported by Bill W. in the Forward to Second Edition). The change in the content of our meetings is proving to be misery-traps for the newcomer and in turn, misery-traps for the groups that depend on the "discussion or participation" type meetings.

Why is this? The answer is very simple. When meetings were opened so that untreated alcoholics and non-alcoholics were given the opportunity to express their ideas, their opinions, air their problems and tell how they were told to do it where they came from, the confused newcomer became more confused with the diversity of information that was being presented. More and more they were encouraged to "just go to meetings and don't drink" or worse yet, "go to 90 meetings in 90 days". The newcomer no longer was told to take the Steps or get back out there and finish the job. In fact, they are often told, "Don't rush into taking the Steps. Take your time." The alcoholics who participated in the writing of the Big Book didn't wait. They took the Steps in the first few days following their last drink. Thank God, there are those in our Fellowship, like Joe & Charlie, Wally, etc., who have recognized the problem and have started doing something about it. They are placing the focus back on the Big Book.

There have always been a few groups that would not yield to the group therapy trend. They stayed firm to their commitment to try to carry a single message to the suffering alcoholic. That is to tell the newcomer "we have had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps and if you want to recover, we will see that you have a sponsor who has recovered and will lead you along the path the 1st 100 laid down for us".

Recovered alcoholics have begun founding groups that have a single purpose and inform the newcomer that until they have taken the steps and recovered, they will not be permitted to say anything in meetings. They will listen to recovered alcoholics, they will take the Steps, they will recover and then they will try to pass their experience and knowledge on to the ones who are seeking the kind of help we provide in Alcoholics Anonymous. As this movement spreads, as it is beginning to, Alcoholics Anonymous will again be very successful in doing the one thing God intended for us to do and that is to help the suffering alcoholic recover, if he has decided he wants what we have and is willing to go to any length to recover, to take and apply our Twelve Steps to our lives and protect our Fellowship by honoring our Twelve Traditions.

There is a tendency to want to place the blame for our predicament on the treatment industry and professionals. They do what they do and it has nothing to do with what we in Alcoholics Anonymous do. That is their business. That is not where to place the blame and also is in violation of our Tenth Tradition.

The real problem is that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, who were here when the "clients" began coming to our Fellowship did not help the "clients" understand that our Program had been firmly established since April 1939, and that the guidelines for the preservation and growth of our Fellowship were adopted in 1950. That they must get rid of their new "old ideas" and start practicing the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous as it was given to us. That until they had taken the Steps and recovered, they had nothing to say that needed to be heard except by their sponsor. But that didn't happen. To the contrary, the old timers failed in their responsibility to the newcomer to remind them of a vital truth, "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program." We have permitted untreated alcoholics and non-alcoholics to sit in our meetings and lay out their problems, ideas and opinions. We have gone from, "Rarely have we seen a person fail" to "Seldom do we see a person recover".

So there we are. We have had 30 years of unbelievable success by following the directions in the Big Book. We have had 30 years of disappointing failure by wanting to hear from everyone. We now have something to compare. We now know what the problem is and we know what the solution is. Unfortunately, we have not been prompt to correct the faults and mistakes, which have been created by what would appear to be large doses of apathy and complacency. The problem we are trying to live with is needlessly killing alcoholics.

The Solution? The Power, greater than ourselves, that we find through our Twelve Steps, promises recovery for those who are willing to follow the clear-cut directions in the Big Book.

Do you want to be a part of the problem or a part of the solution? Simple, but not easy, a price has to be paid.

Anonymous

New Items in Our Central Office

As Bill See's it Large Print. \$10.00

In Our Own Words. New Book from the Grapevine. \$10.00

(11" x 17") Poster Sets of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. \$4.00/set

Santa Barbara District 23
General Service Representatives
Responsibility Pledge

"I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that, I am responsible."

Reprinted from Pamphlet P-1, This Is A.A., page 24,
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Grapevine

"I more than ever realize the Grapevine's value to AA –
past, present and future. It is a chief means of
communication among us... So the Grapevine is not a
luxury. To AA as a whole it is a necessity."

-Bill W. from AA Mini Grapevine

A Group Grapevine representative is the group's
contact with the Grapevine Office. Group and District
GvRs are responsible for making their groups aware of
the value of the Grapevine as a tool for sober living and
ensuring the magazine is readily available for all who
want it.

Visit the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. website at

<http://www.aagrapevine.org>

For more information on becoming a Grapevine rep or
to have a Grapevine presentation at your meeting,
please contact the Grapevine chair at

grapevine@ccaadistrict23.com

My name is Kristin B. and I'm an alcoholic. When I think about my experience with H & I, I am reminded of where I stayed before I found recovery and AA. The lovely Sacramento County Mental Hospital. Let's just say I wasn't so lovely. I barely remember some very normal looking people coming in to talk to us about recovery and AA. I don't remember what they said, but I remember how they looked. They had life in their eyes. Something I did not see when I looked in the mirror.

As I left that hospital the doctor said he thought my mental state was stable. He said my problem was with alcohol and drugs. He suggested I go to recovery. My first thought was of those people who had come to visit with H& I. I wanted to feel how they looked. My way had stopped working so I was willing to do it another way.

That is what brought me to Santa Barbara and AA. I have found a life I never imagined I could have. So, when I had the chance to give back to H & I I jumped at the chance. I have had the opportunity to travel with some of the best people I know to California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo. If I didn't know what a spiritual awakening was before that meeting, I knew when I left. The recovery there is the most amazing I have had a chance to be a part of and I feel blessed.

I also have the opportunity to take a meeting in to Cottage Hospital one Saturday out of the month. I am reminded where I will end up if I do not stay sober. My hope is that they might see a light in my eyes that I saw when I was in there shoes. The light that I have found is because of this program, working with a sponsor, and showing up no matter what.

If you are looking for a very rewarding, simple way to be of service and carry the message H& I is the way to go. It has enriched my sobriety and my life.

Kristin B.



The Messenger is published monthly by:

23rd District Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous
 1213 State Street, Suit H
 Santa Barbara, California, 93101

805-962-3332

sbaa@santabarbaraAA.com

August 2007 Birthdays

Cheryl S	1
Victoria	1
Wade	1
Mike V	2
Cleaver	3
Laura R	4
Mandy	4
Helen A	5
Sam K	6
Ernie	10
Michael S	10
Dave B.	10
Steve Z.	10
Tom P	10
Amanda	11
Andy R	12
Cheryl B	12
Noah D	13
Chrissy B	14
Kevin B	15
Michael W.	17
John H	18
Kristen S	18
Marcial	18
Allison K	19
Earl U	19
Mary M	20
Doloris	25
Elinor	25
Ralph B	25
Joyce A	30
Robert	32
Kay H	35
George H	50
Gardiner L	59

Submissions Needed

The Messenger needs your submissions and letters. We are looking for any articles on A.A. or for articles on the step or tradition associated with the month of the same number. For the Tenth month, October we need writing on Step 10 and Tradition 10. Send submissions to **JohnS@SantaBarbaraAA.com**

Central Office Statistics

During the August 2007 your Central Office had:

AA Information calls	901
Al-Anon Referrals	46
Referrals to other programs	51
12step via answering service	65
Out-of-town visitors	19
12-step via office	15
Office walk-ins	748
Hits on our Web site	1,037

Service Meetings

General Service Representatives (GSR) Monday at 6:00pm meet at: Holy Cross Church Hall, 1740 Cliff Dr. Behind the Church

IGR's (Intergroup Representatives) meet at 6:00 P.M. the second Tuesday each month at First Presbyterian Church 21 East Constance in Santa Barbara

H&I (Hospitals & Institutions) meets at 6:00 P.M. at the second Monday each month at the Central Office.

PI (Public Information) meets the fourth Saturday of each month.

Call 687-7673 for more information.

22nd ANNUAL Santa Barbara Convention Committee – 2nd Thursday of each Month, 6:00 P.M. at 3523 Modoc Rd. Commitments Available!

Donations by Group, August 2007

	Aug 07	Jul 07	Jan - Aug 07
001 Sunrisers	0.00	0.00	154.00
003 Eye Opener	285.00	240.00	1,845.00
004 Monday At A Time	0.00	156.80	536.00
006 Start Your Week Right	0.00	0.00	160.00
007 Sound Off	0.00	0.00	75.00
008 Beginner's Group	0.00	0.00	20.00
010 Foundation Group	140.00	112.00	386.50
011 Sundowner Group	0.00	516.00	2,108.00
013 New Pair Of Glasses	50.00	0.00	120.00
014 El Montecito Saturday Night	0.00	0.00	180.00
019 Onward & Upward	0.00	0.00	160.00
020 Cambridge Group	0.00	0.00	60.00
021 Summerland Monday Group	200.00	0.00	200.00
022 There Is A Solution	0.00	0.00	394.00
023 For Women Only	0.00	0.00	234.00
024, Mesa-Singleness of Purpose	0.00	0.00	35.00
025 Grateful Group	0.00	0.00	70.00
028 The Mother Group	50.00	0.00	110.00
034 Women of Change	0.00	0.00	147.00
045 Alternative Group	0.00	80.00	301.00
047 Tuesday Men's Stag	0.00	30.00	147.00
051 Men's Group At St. Mary's	0.00	213.00	386.00
053 Both Oars In The Water	0.00	0.00	160.00
055 Staying Alive	80.00	0.00	270.00
035 12 & 12 Study, Tues.	0.00	0.00	160.00
062 Do The Steps Or Die	51.75	55.94	478.39
067 Rigorous Honesty	241.00	37.00	836.00
068 Stepping Stones	61.00	36.00	358.26
070 Success Group	0.00	0.00	80.00
071 The Loft	0.00	0.00	250.00
073 Young People's	0.00	0.00	210.00
074 Casa Serena (BB Study)	0.00	0.00	137.00
077 Briefly Big Book	35.00	0.00	35.00
079 Harbor Group	688.00	498.00	3,500.20
083 Sober Students, Tues Eve	0.00	0.00	120.00
076 11th Step	0.00	0.00	160.00
089 Here & Now	60.00	0.00	145.00

	Aug 07	Jul 07	Jan - Aug 07
091 New Life	0.00	0.00	232.00
093 Into Action, Thurs	80.00	0.00	160.00
094 Questions & Answers	0.00	0.00	39.80
097 Almost Saints	0.00	201.60	1,237.00
099 Sink Or Swim	0.00	0.00	160.00
100 UCSB Discussion	0.00	0.00	110.00
103 Munch Bunch	0.00	0.00	41.22
111 Carpinteria Canalino	0.00	400.00	400.00
112 Montecito/Carpinteria	130.06	0.00	242.06
113 Sought Through Prayer & Meditation	30.25	0.00	166.85
114 Schooner Group	0.00	89.00	278.00
115 Eleventh Step Meditation	10.00	64.90	171.51
117 Way Of Life	0.00	0.00	300.00
118 Speaker Connection	0.00	0.00	231.58
120 Sat. Morn. Home Boys	0.00	226.80	830.40
122 Came to Believe Candlelight	0.00	0.00	60.00
130 Saturday Night Sobriety	0.00	0.00	72.00
133 Action Participation	0.00	0.00	1,280.00
139 It's A Hell Of A Deal	182.00	200.00	1,092.00
140 Gay Discussion, Sunday	0.00	0.00	147.00
141 Off Center	0.00	0.00	1,205.00
144 Back To Basics, Young People	0.00	0.00	78.00
149 Getting To Know You	216.00	0.00	376.00
151 Our Meeting	0.00	35.00	35.00
153 Happy Destiny	0.00	400.00	400.00
156 Start Your Day Right	0.00	250.00	1,300.00
158 Isla Vista Sobriety	0.00	0.00	43.65
163 Mustard Seed	0.00	0.00	15.00
164 Men Who Have Lost Their Legs	206.00	0.00	1,309.77
165 Junkyard Dogs	0.00	0.00	701.00
166 Serenity Sisters	146.30	0.00	243.15
170 Barefoot Group	57.00	61.06	493.56
177 Key Group	0.00	0.00	1,250.00
181 Keep Coming Back Group	0.00	392.18	1,118.69
183 Summerland, Thurs.	0.00	0.00	721.80
186 Sunday Night Alternative, NH III	263.60	0.00	263.60
Totals:	\$3,262.96	\$4,295.28	\$31,533.99

Central Office
1213 State Street, Suite H
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(805) 962-3332

