

"The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines"

From Chapter Five of the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous."

The Point

April 2004

A publication
of the Intercounty Fellowship
of Alcoholics Anonymous

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The Point

is published monthly to inform
A.A. members about business and
meeting affairs in the Intercounty
Fellowship of Alcoholics
Anonymous (San Francisco and
Marin Counties). *The Point's* pages
are open to participation by all
A.A. members. Nothing published
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Fellowship Board, the Central
Office, or *The Point* Editorial
Committee. Letters and articles to
help carry the A.A. message are
welcomed, subject to editorial
review by *The Point* Committee.

God Bless the IRS

by Jean McK.

I got sober so that life would be better—at least MY life. My love affair with alcohol and all its little friends (cocaine, Quaaludes, acid, heroin and the like) had imploded rapidly and it was time to move on. I took to AA like a duck to water and, like many people, embraced this clean new life. I made good friends and gained a whole new outlook. The compulsion to drink seemed to be miraculously lifted—something that I initially took for granted. You drink too much, you go to AA and you sober up. Life gets better, right?

There were so many things that I wanted from life that were out of my reach as a drinker. A good job, a nice place to live, real friends, a new car and great clothes. I wanted a family and kids. Little by little, I got all those things. I showed up—went to meetings, worked the steps and helped newcomers. I got married and had two children. I started a small business and began to prosper financially for the first time in my life. I readily shared my story—sobriety was wonderful. Just look at me, getting all the things I ever wanted. A miracle!

I knew that I was marrying a man with "issues." He was great fun, but unpredictable. His sobriety was questionable, his honesty even more so. Previous illegal activities left him virtually unemployable, and he had gambling problems. He'd embezzled money from his first wife. The list goes on, but what stands out in my mind today, is that he told me most of these things on our first date!

Dragging a repertoire of similar relationships behind me, the only skills I brought into my sober marriage followed this familiar blueprint—have as much fun as you can until the thrill wears off, then endure the other person until you are driven to a spectacular, drama-ridden breakup. Years of drinking had perfected this model. I just assumed that marriage would be different, that sobriety would continue to "fix things" for me.

As time went on and business prospered, it only made sense that my spouse should join me in the growing family enterprise I'd begun. Although he had no real experience or marketable skills, he did possess an incredible education and bright mind along with a current subscription to Barron's and the Wall Street Journal. Together, we decided that he would manage the business, taking over the endless tasks of bookkeeping, bill paying, meeting with accountants, complex record keeping and tax requirements. That would free me up to work with clients and handle all of the...well...the actual work of the business. That only made sense.

(Continued on page 6)

April 2004....

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>Visit our website at: www.aasf.org!</i></p> <p>You'll find meeting schedules for Marin and San Francisco, the Service Meeting calendar, Trusted Service Registration & Group Information Forms, and much more!!!</p>				1	2	3 FIRST SAT Central Office Archives Committee Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 10 am
4	5 FIRST MON Spirit of San Francisco Committee Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 7 pm	6 FIRST TUE Special Events Committee: Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 7:30 pm	7 FIRST WED Special Needs Committee: Diner, 1050 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco 5:30 pm Intercounty Fellowship Board Orientation 6 pm Meeting 7 pm 1187 Franklin St., San Francisco 7 pm	8	9	10
11	12 SECOND MON SF Public Information Committee Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 7 pm	13 SECOND TUE SF Bridging The Gap 1111 O'Farrell, San Francisco 6:30 pm SF General Service 1111 O'Farrell, San Francisco Orientation: 7 pm Meeting: 8 pm Marin H&I Lagunitas & Shady Ln Ross 7 pm	14 SECOND WED 12th Step Committee Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 6:30 pm Marin Bridging the Gap 1411 Lincoln Ave., San Rafael 6:45 pm	15	16	17
18 THIRD SUN Mission Fellowship Steering Committee 2900 24th / Florida San Francisco 1 pm	19 THIRD MON SF Teleservice Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 6:30 pm Marin General Service 9 Ross Valley Rd San Rafael GSR Sharing: 7 pm District Meeting: 8 pm	20 THIRD TUE San Mateo General Service St. Andrews Church 15th & El Camino Real San Mateo 7:30 pm	21 THIRD WED Literature Review Committee Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 6:30 pm	22 FOURTH THU WEBSITE COMMITTEE Central Office, 1821 Sacramento San Francisco 6:15 pm Marin PI Committee 1360 Lincoln Ave (Alano Club) San Rafael 7:15 pm LAST THU SF H&I Old First Church, 1751 Sacramento San Francisco Orientation: 7:15 pm Regular Meeting: 8 pm	23	24 FOURTH SAT General Service CNCA Meeting 320 N. McDowell Petaluma DCMCs: 10:30 am Main Meeting: Noon
25 LAST SUN Living Sober Convention Committee 1668 Bush, San Francisco 5:30 pm	26	27 FOURTH TUE Marin Teleservice 1360 Lincoln / Maple (Alano Club) San Rafael 7:30 pm	28		30	

COMING EVENTS

2004	Call or visit the Central Office for copies of any flyers of interest to you or your group. Local events are in bold ; flyers of <u>current</u> local events, if available, are printed as space allows.
April 8—11	San Diego Spring Round Up, Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, Visit: www.sandiegospringroundup.com
April 9—11	North Shore Round-Up, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, BC, CANADA www.northshorroundup.com
April 14	12th Step Workshop, Central Office, 1821 Sacramento St., 6:30pm, Speaker & Discussion of 12th Step Volunteering
April 16—18	17th International AA Men's Conference, Marriott Oak Brook Hotel, Chicago, IL
April 17	PI/CPC Speaker Workshop, Central Office, 1821 Sacramento St., 10:00 a.m.
April 17	Dance The Night Away!, Women's Building, 3543- 18th St. 7pm Speaker Meeting/ Dance to Follow; Bake Sale
April 23	Mission Fellowship Anniversary Meeting and Potluck, 2900 24th St. (See Flyer on Page 11)
April 24	Flower Power Dance, Spirit of San Francisco, Saint Mark's Urban Life Center, 7pm Speaker/8pm Dance, \$15
April 30—May 2	Sober & Free Conference Wyndham Hotel, 1350 N. First St. San Jose; (408) 453-6200; www.soberandfree.org
May 7—9	Sober in the Sun 2004, Gay & Lesbian Convention, Palm Springs, CA, Visit: www.soberinthesun.com
May 14—16	20th Annual Tri-State Round-Up, Riverside Resort Hotel & Casino, Laughlin, NV, www.tristate-roundup.com
May 27—30	47th International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (ICYPAA), Orlando Florida, www.icypaa47.org

Secretaries: Please make these announcements: Pages two and three list local AA service and conference planning *meetings*, as well as any local AA related *events* of which the Central Office has been notified. Please call Maury at the Central Office (674-1821) by the 15th of the previous month if you would like



April
2004

This Month in AA Trivia April

1. What book was written about Dr. Bob?
2. What was the name of the group Bill Wilson belonged to before the founding of AA?
3. How many AA members were there when the First Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was published?
4. How many pages were in the first Big Book (not including stories)?
5. What is *The Grapevine*?

1. *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*
2. The Oxford Group
3. There were approximately 100 members, who helped write the book.
4. 164 pages
5. A small magazine put out by AA

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MEETING CHANGES

New Meetings

Tue	5:30 pm	Mission	SPIRIT MENDERS SPEAKER DISCUSSION (SD) 2490 16th St. nr. Capp
Tue	6:30 pm	Park Merced	STEPPIN' UP (SS) 777 Brotherhood Way, Church of Christ
Wed	1:30 pm	Financial	THE DIVINE COMEDY (SD) 215 Leidesdorff/ Commercial
Wed	8:00 pm	Pacific Heights	COW HOLLOW MEN'S GROUP (Di) (Me) 2325 Union/ Steiner, Church
Fri	12:12 pm	Financial	FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT (Di) 756 Mission, Church, McKenna Hall

Meeting Changes

Sun	10:30 am	Laurel Heights	MID-MORNING SUPPORT Pacific Medical Center, Buchanan, between Clay & Sacramento, Meeting Space A, (was 3700 California).
Sun	11:00 am	Castro	BE STILL A.A. 150 Eureka/ 18th, Church (was 12 noon)
Tue	12:15 pm	Financial	TRAVELERS 235 Montgomery St. (was 12 noon)
Wed	12:30 pm	Financial	WEDNESDAY FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT 756 Mission, Church, McKenna Hall (was 12 noon)
Wed	6:30 pm	Nob Hill	HUNTINGTON SQUARE Grace Cathedral, Gresham Hall, California & Taylor, on California (was McBean Chapter House)
Wed	8:00 pm	Dolores Park	FRIENDSHIP GROUP 19th & Dolores, Church (was Davies Med. Ctr., North Tower)
Fri	midnight	Outer Sunset	HOT JAVA 1396 LaPlaya/ Judah, Café (was 11:00pm)

No Longer Meeting

Wed	7:30pm	Mission	MEMORY 2900, 2900 24th/ Florida
Fri	12:10pm	Financial	WILSON STEP, 756 Mission, Church

Please Note:

The Central Office occasionally receives reports that meetings listed in our schedules are actually not there. Sometimes these reports turn out to be mistaken—and sometimes they are not. The office relies primarily on information that is given to us by AA groups, but when a group disbands, informing the Central Office is a common omission. **If you know anything about a meeting that is reported missing, please call the Central Office immediately (674-1821).** If we hear no objections during the month following publication here, the meeting will be assumed disbanded, and removed from the schedule.

Thank You!

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES !!

When I joined the Special Needs Committee of the IFB eight months ago I had no idea of the needs and concerns of the deaf and hard of hearing alcoholics in AA in San Francisco and Marin County. Through communicating with deaf and hard of hearing members of AA the past few months it has come to my attention that the deaf in recovery are seeking fellowship, sponsorship and a real desire to be part of the AA circle. In the spirit of the fifth tradition of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers I believe it is imperative that we start addressing the real needs of the deaf and hard of hearing and do a better job to include them in the AA circle.

I implore anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing or an interpreter to come forward and assist in creating meetings and groups directly for the deaf and hard of hearing. These meetings should have emphasis on sponsorship and fellowship so that deaf alcoholics in the Bay Area can feel a part of rather than a

separate entity outside of AA.

Friday All Groups and the IFB are cooperating in hosting and supporting the only ASL interpreted meeting in San Francisco. It is not a deaf or hard of hearing meeting per se. It is a meeting that happens to have an ASL interpreter and there is little AA feedback to the deaf.

If you have any knowledge or interest in the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing please contact the Special Needs Committee which will be meeting at Mel's Diner on Geary @ Van Ness, 5:30 p.m., April 7th.

You may also Email the committee @ sfaslaa@hotmail.com or phone Dan P. at 650.589.6402.

Grateful to be of service,

Dan P. 

Group Speakers for April 2004

TUESDAY DOWNTOWN

1101 O'Farrell, Urban Life Center, San Francisco

Tuesday, 8 pm

DATE	SPEAKER	HOME GROUP	DOS
04/06/04	Bill J.	Tehachapi Men's Stag	06/26/81
04/13/04	Lynne L.	San Carlos Beginners	12/08/73
04/20/04	Peter M.	First Place	05/01/95
04/27/04	Glen L.	Palm Desert Men's Stag	12/29/63

FRIDAY ALL GROUPS

1101 O'Farrell, Urban Life Center, San Francisco

Friday, 8:30 pm

Signed for the hearing impaired

DATE	HOST GROUP	SPEAKER
04/02/04	Haight St. Explorers	Cheryl T.
04/09/04	Reality Farm	Tim R.
04/16/04	Live and Let Live	Pauly
04/23/04	Bernal Big Book	Stephen H.
04/30/04	Any Lengths	TBA

BRISBANE BREAKFAST BUNCH

250 Visitation Way

(Community Center under the Library)

Brisbane, Sunday, 11 am

DATE	SPEAKER	FROM
04/04/04	Dean W.	SF
04/11/04	Pat K.	Brisbane
04/18/04	Harold B.	San Mateo
04/25/04	Hal R.	Millbrae

SPEAKERS WANTED!!

Carry the AA message to schools, professional organizations, the medical community, drunk driving classes, and into jails and prisons.

PI/CPC WORKSHOP

(Requirement: two years of continuous sobriety in AA)

Saturday, April 17, 10:00am

Central Office-1821 Sacramento Street
(Between Van Ness and Franklin)

For further information,
call the Central Office: 624-1821



A Fundraiser for
Living Sober / Western Roundup 2004
July 2-4
Bill Graham Civic Auditorium

Spring Fling Drag Thing

Saturday, May 1st

6 pm AA/AIAnon meeting — 7:30 pm SHOW

Ellard Hall, Most Holy Redeemer

100 Diamond @ 18th Street

Next Events:

Pink Saturday Dance, Saturday, June 26th

HMCRA, 4235 19th St. @ Collingwood; 7:00 pm meeting, 9:00 pm dance.

Pride Day Meeting, Sunday, June 27th

The Holiday Inn; 50 8th Street; 3:00 pm meeting

*** If ASL is needed for any event, please give 72 hour advance notice.

Www.LivingSober.Org

415.978.2478

CONTRIBUTIONS

to the Central Office were made through March 15, 2004 honoring the following members

ONGOING MEMORIALS

Bob
R.W.
Curtis C.

ANNIVERSARIES

Leslie C. — 14 Years
Carol R. — 18 Years
Jane McF — 43 years

Endless Summer:

Bobby — 1 Year, John — 1 Year, Kevin — 1 Year
Margaret — 1 Year, Pandora — 1 Year, Hank — 2 Years
Josh — 2 Years, John — 3 Years
Jimmy — 10 Years, William — 10 Years


Fear of Economic Insecurity will leave ME? By Anonymous

The longer I stay sober, the more things happen in my life that amaze me. I am amazed at how I don't freak out like I used to. I am accustomed to being fearful, anxious and living in a world of doubt and self-pity. One of my biggest fears, which comes up frequently, has to do with money: will I have enough to pay the rent and bills? That fear has left me more times than not—especially since getting sober. However, I was recently handed a twist in my economic security that brings up the old fear again.

I have been on disability from a chronic health condition for many years. I have had the luxury of having a very good long-term disability insurance plan from my employer that has assisted me financially during this time. Due to effective medication and quality of life improvement (i.e., putting down the bottle), my health has improved dramatically. My insurance company monitors my health condition and progress on a regular basis. I guess they feel that my health has improved so much that I am now no longer disabled. The letter I received a few days ago states that my insurance claim is no longer "approved," and that my benefit payments will stop in thirty days. Fear of economic insecurity

came flooding back at that moment. So did anger, resentment and self-pity (but that's another article).

When I opened the letter and read it, I was suddenly very calm and reacted in a way that would have been unheard of even a few months ago. I felt I could get through this and do my part in the areas that I could change. That darn Serenity Prayer came to me and it helped put things in a perspective that I don't normally have so automatically. I put down the letter, remembered to breathe and prayed about it.

I don't know what is going to happen or how it will all turn out. All I know is that my Higher Power has prepared me for this type of twist and has presented this to me at a time when he/she/it feels I am able to deal with it and do the next right thing. Of course I have concerns over my future health and issues around the appeal process, etc. But, I can do the next right thing to obtain help and guidance and not handle the whole thing by my own unaided will. I know that doesn't work. I am not alone anymore. The program of AA does work, and for that I am grateful. 

(God Bless the IRS, continued from page 1)

Here I was, a recovering alcoholic, prospering in business, meeting important people, raising two children and REFORMING MY HUSBAND!! Humility prevented me from saying out loud what I often thought to myself—that I was making a man out of him. Life just kept getting better.

Imagine my surprise when, within a few short years of our working together, I received a call from the IRS asserting that we had not filed income taxes for three years. The absurdity! I knew that we had filed—right on time!—and forked over gobs of hard-earned money to boot! I advised the agent to check his records more carefully before alarming a good citizen such as myself with faulty information. My spouse was quick to back me up—these losers in their government-paid jobs never got anything straight.

But the calls continued—first the IRS, then the Franchise Tax Board, until finally one day the State Board of Equalization actually showed up at our doorstep. One fact after another unfolded before me—sales taxes that had not been paid for over six months, employee withholding taxes nearly a year unpaid! All these government agencies making so many mistakes all at once! I began to check into our investment funds and bank accounts and discovered more inconsistencies: daily and sometimes hourly withdrawals, money transfers, cancelled accounts.

I recalled that scene from *The Shining* where Jack Nicholson's wife finally sneaks a peek at his long-worked-on manuscript—only to find thousands of pages with a single sentence over and over. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. I felt as if a bomb was detonating slowly inside me.

The end of that marriage marked the beginning of a seven-year struggle with the IRS. I was the one doing the struggling—the IRS just lumbered steadily forward with all the obtuse demeanor that massive bureaucracy can muster. Surely, I thought, once I explained the situation, once they saw how trusting I'd been, how totally conned...(how wronged I was!)...common sense would prevail and a simple, manageable solution would be arranged.

I soon learned that there was no "they" there. All my reasonable explanations, my long, impassioned letters, my proclamations of innocence, the documents from accountants, banks, and lawyers, my updated returns—as often as not were lost, misplaced or left to lie dormant while penalties continued to accrue. One agent told me that I owed twice what the previous one said, while another had no record of me at all. There was even an agent who threatened to have my mother audited to see if she was truly helping me out with household expenses!

A stack of forms was once returned to me to be signed in

(Continued on page 18)

Dear Alky

This is only one drunk's opinion. For a more in depth discussion, CALL YOUR SPONSOR!

Dear Alky,

The letter about the treasurer who went out but kept collecting his group's money touched a nerve in me. My home group's treasurer didn't go out; he has years of sobriety, but his partner has a gambling problem. We are a little nervous about where the 7th tradition money is going. Is there any way to find out if the contributions are being sent in? I am starting to get a resentment. I find myself not wanting to put money in the basket if it's going to pay for his partner's gambling habit.

Holding Back

Dear Holding Back,

I can't help you with the resentment – talk to your sponsor, pray, do some Tenth Step writing – you know the drill.

As for confirming your group's contributions, General Service in New York sends a receipt – to the treasurer. SF General Service and the California Northern Coastal Area are tiny organizations, which are not able to provide an individual with this information. However, *The Point* publishes a list of group contributions to Central Office. The time lag is about three months, and if the 7th tradition money isn't showing up, then your group's secretary might want to request a treasurer's report.

Alky

Dear Alky,

I have a sponsee who is just breaking my heart. She is a single mom with a lot of financial problems. I am comfortable financially myself and would like to help her out, maybe with a small loan. What about it?

Wants to Help

Dear Wants to Help,

This is a tricky area. In the early days of AA, the founding members often took drunks into their homes to aid their recovery and even gave them money. This isn't the way it is done so much now.

Ask yourself how you can help her help herself. Be there for her emotionally and encourage her to go to meetings and share with other alcoholics who may be having the same experience.

Read "Working with Others" in *Alcoholics Anonymous* and talk with your own sponsor. It may be better for your sponsee in the long run if she can work her own way out of her difficulties. Then she will have a sense of accomplishment, which she won't have if you rescue her. Many AAs are also co-dependent, especially if we grew up in an alcoholic family. Keep that in mind and pray that you do what's best for your sponsee.

I am with you on this!

Alky



Dear Alky,

When I was still drinking a little over a year ago, my parents bailed me out a couple times (literally). They didn't lose their money—I made my court dates. They also helped me with rent and let me use their gas credit card. I got a good job recently and I want to pay them back, but they won't let me. They say they love me and it makes them happy to see me sober and they don't want me to pay them back. What can I do? I want to make amends.

Grateful

Dear Grateful,

Look at page 253 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, part of the story entitled "The Man who Mastered Fear." Dr. Bob and his wife, Ann, took this alcoholic into their home. The newly sober drunk at first rebelled inwardly but finally accepted that his poor health and complete lack of money made him dependent on them. He stayed for a full year. Sixteen years later he remembers: "Long before I had any real opportunity to give, I had to learn the equally important lesson of receiving graciously."

You are in a similar situation with your parents. For us alcoholics, making amends often means having to say we're sorry. Amends may also mean having to say "Thank you." Thank you to the boss who gives us a second chance. Thank you to the judge who sends us to AA instead of jail, and thank you to the parents who keep showing up for us, even when we don't deserve it.

Let your parents know how much you appreciate what they have done for you. Repay them with letters and phone calls. Be there for them, as they grow older. Pass it on. Work with others in AA. If you become prosperous in sobriety, put your gratitude in the hat at meetings, support charities in your community, do volunteer work. Maybe even make a donation in your parents' honor. These are all ways you can repay what your generous parents gave to you; it's called "living amends." Stay sober. That's the best way of all of showing your gratitude.

Thanks!

Alky 

If you have a question for Alky, please send it to:

Alky C/O Central Office

1821 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94109-3528

OR E-Mail it to: ThePoint@aasf.org

Following is a list of the names and contact information for the IFB Officers and Chairpersons of most of the service committees.

If you are interested in doing service on a committee or if you wish to receive more information about a committee, please contact these committee chairs.

INTERGROUP OFFICERS:

CHAIR—

Danny F. dannyf112@earthlink.net

VICE CHAIR—

Marc D. 415.999-0290

TREASURER—

Patrick M. patrick_m30075@yahoo.com

RECORDING SECRETARY—

Janet B. 415.396-6125

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

CENTRAL OFFICE COMMITTEE—

Joe G. 415.350-0373

ORIENTATION COMMITTEE—

Bill R. 415.861-7355

LITERATURE COMMITTEE—

Doug F. 415.821-4049

SPECIAL EVENTS—

David B. David@turnershouse.net

SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE—

Dan P. 650.589-6402

WEBSITE COMMITTEE—

Michael R. 415.392-0458

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE—

Ray M. ramus@prodigy.net

SF TELESERVICE COMMITTEE—

Peter M. sfteleservice@aasf.org

SF PI/CPC COMMITTEE—

Laura N. 415.931-2567

12th STEP COMMITTEE—

Scott C. 415.614-0249

The IFB and Me

By David K.

I've always been a creature of habit and a guy who gets stuck in routines, so much so that my world can become really small. Although I travel often and have attended AA meetings around the world and in general try to "think globally," I know I still have the old alcoholic trait of isolating from time to time; and that is why being a member of the IFB has helped me to break out of ruts and think about AA on a bigger scale than just meetings I go to and people I know.

Like many of us, when I first got sober I took the advice of others and did 90 meetings in 90 days. Eventually I got comfortable with several meetings and attended those (and still do) almost exclusively. Yep, it was a nice, comfortable rut, but a rut nonetheless. Last spring shortly after I celebrated a year's sobriety, I found myself elected to something called the IFB. I really didn't know what it was, but I happily accepted the appointment. I thought it would be a one time meeting and was proud to represent my home group. When I walked into the room, it was full of alcoholics from all over the city. Although nervous at first, seeing a big room full of people, I was immediately welcomed. It was eye-opening to realize that the diversity in our city and in SF-AA is also its strength. I found myself up for election suddenly for an IFB position and was amazed that I got a few votes, considering everyone around me had years more sober time than me. I realized that despite my "newness," I counted and was part of the group. I suddenly realized that, "As Bill Sees It," I truly was part of the whole. Despite myself, and that at first participation in the IFB was uncomfortable, in time I began to focus on all the amazing similarities. I was astonished at how AA is organized on the larger scale, and it is truly amazing to see how it works first-hand. I've been told (and believe) that service helps you stay sober; there is no doubt in my mind that my IFB commitment has helped me that way. I have always tried to focus on being sober for myself and my relationship with my Higher Power and my family. Being a part of IFB has made me realize that my home group depends on me to represent them and vote their conscious. I can't do that and use. That makes me realize what an awesome responsibility I have been given; I have never taken my being selected for this responsibility lightly.

I now share the IFB position with another member of my home group, and both of us enjoy our common experience and are proud to be part of the whole—our own group and San Francisco Alcoholics Anonymous. ↑

WRITE TO THE POINT

The Point Committee values your input. You may write to us at: Central Office

1821 Sacramento Street,
San Francisco, CA 94109

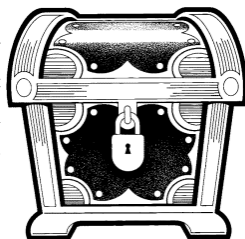
or e-mail us at: thepoint@aasf.org.

While we welcome (and request) your questions and comments, limited time and space make it impossible to reply to or publish every communication.

Treasures of the Twelve & Twelve

by Suzi K.O.

"Step Four is our vigorous...effort to find exactly how, when and where our natural desires have warped us." This is the true exercise of the faith we have found thus far in the Steps, the correct place to exert our will, and the only hope of further progress.



Sexual desire, desire for financial and emotional security, even the desires for success and prestige, are experienced by everyone, not only alcoholics. In the alcoholic these instincts run wild.

We drink to drown our feelings of fear, frustration and depression. "We have drunk to escape the guilt of passions, and then have drunk again to make more passions possible." With the right chemical combination, I am a rock-star-super-model-Oscar-winning-best-selling-author.

Of course, on the other hand, I am also sometimes the most deeply depressed of alcoholics, wallowing in despair, what the Twelve and Twelve calls "pride in reverse." My misdeeds are the worst of the worst, the blackness of my failures unbeatable. My sponsor reminds me that none of this is true. I am fairly ordinary in my misery. Like most alcoholics, I find being ordinary loathsome. If I can't be the best, I surely must be the worst.

Some members of the program see no need for an inventory: "We shall claim that our character defects... have been caused chiefly by excessive drinking. This being so, we think...that sobriety...is the only thing we need to work for." Fortunately, we have been advised to get a sponsor, and just as when we suggest that perhaps the other people in our lives need to do the moral inventory first (and perhaps apologize to us), our sponsor steps in and points out in the appropriate manner (Gently? Wallop to the proverbial buttocks?) that we are creatures of great self-justification, which has led to all kinds of crazy and damaging conduct. This is the stuff of which the Fourth Step is made.

First, something has to be done about our "vengeful resentments, self-pity, unwarranted pride," anxiety, bitterness, fear, frustration, depression, and anger. Rare is the person who comes through the doors of AA who can honestly say they are not plagued by these emotions. "We

learned that if we were seriously disturbed, our first need was to quiet that disturbance, regardless of who or what we thought caused it."

Inventory is about revealing our defects, however painful and humiliating. In high school I worked in a retail-clothing store. Even drunk, I still had to take inventory and reflect on the fashion choices we had made that were selling and not selling. It was humiliating to admit that the silver metallic blazers with the double high shoulder pads just weren't selling. Even below cost. We had to become willing to let them go.

Just starting a Fourth Step requires incredible willingness. It is a hero's journey to honestly face oneself, and one's defects, with the prospect of gaining true perspective and humility. The inventory reveals what does not work in one's character. People have many names for what these things might be. Some sound awfully religious. I personally

am uncomfortable with words like "violation of moral principle," and much more comfortable with expressions like "defects of character." The 12X12 is clear that the words are irrelevant, and that we agree only that there is something terribly wrong which requires urgent attention if we expect spiritual progress and sobriety to be ours.

As examples of character defects the 12X12 lists the seven deadly sins – pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth (pride and sloth are my personal favorites – "I must achieve perfection to display my superiority – ooh, this remote is heavy...must watch re-run that I've already seen because I cannot move" – are a typical internal dialogue). The Fourth Step dares you to look at yourself, and allow your character defects to be revealed.

This is but the beginning of a lifetime practice. Of each problem that we encounter as life goes on, sober or drunk, we must ask, "Did these perplexities beset me because of selfishness or unreasonable demands?" The Fourth Step is where we learn to recognize ourselves this way, and change the patterns of our lives and our behavior—where we learn to stop blaming the perplexities of life on our parents, the government, our spouses, the weather, money, the circumstances of our birth, and astrological phenomena. Step Four promises a life free of fear-based suffering. Who could ask for more? ↑

"...we agree only that there is something terribly wrong which requires urgent attention if we expect spiritual progress and sobriety to be ours."



A.A. On the Road: Loner In Laos

By Tim P.

Tim P., formerly of San Francisco, moved to Laos in 1999. He now lives in Thailand.

Of all the “program” words—“loner” hit me hardest the first time I heard it. It sounded so, well, lonely.

At the turn of the millennium, my road of happy destiny took me to Luang Prabang, Laos. This isolated city in the northern mountains, nestled in the jungle along a curl in the Mekong River, has an otherworldly beauty and charm that, along with its increasingly conspicuous drugs, leaves first-time visitors stoned.

It is also, I quickly learned, one of the world’s epicenters of alcoholism. The Lao love their drink. People whose invitations to drink beer I declined on Day One (BECAUSE I DON’T DRINK, GET IT?) were still making the same offer the day I left two years later.

I still laugh when I think of my first sponsor making the (entirely reasonable, in San Francisco) suggestion that the best way to deal with “normie” parties was to wrap my hands around a glass of something non-alcoholic and hang on for dear life. That didn’t cut it in Lao.

Saying no to a beer at a casual party is one thing, but turning down the hard stuff at an event of consequence is considered unconscionably offensive in most Asian societies. In Lao, I had to learn how to accept a glass of lao-lao, distilled from sticky rice. I learned to carry a glass of the potent stuff for an entire evening, and even to raise it to my lips for the frequent toasts. My companions got drunk so fast that they quickly became oblivious that the level in my glass didn’t change.

More important than carrying the glass was carrying the message. You never know when you’re doing service, and I can report that I have no idea when, if, or how I carried the message in Luang Prabang. I learned the Steps in Lao (the name of the language as well as the country and the people) in case the opportunity for a meeting with a local ever arose. It never did. A number of Lao friends eventually talked to me about their drinking, some breaking down and sobbing the way I did on the threshold of a new, sober life. As far as I know, they’re all still drinking.

Probably the best “training” for being a loner came from a Jesuit priest, on my first visit to Luang Prabang. On the way, in the Lao capital Vientiane, we arranged a meeting with another loner, Sandra Y. I was a mess that day, but as we jumped into the tuk-tuk (think taxi + gypsy + some other century), he said, in his booming baritone, “Let’s go take Sandra a meeting.”

I felt my molecules rearrange at that moment. In my chronic self-centeredness, I had thought that the purpose of loners was to provide travelers with meetings. It probably would not have occurred to me that loners were people *you took meetings to*. A spiritual awakening.

One of the most important things I heard in early sobriety was that recovery can be like the Buddhist monks who begin each day with an empty rice bowl and simply move through the day trusting that it will be filled with enough. Enough—as key a concept as recovery offers. My first morning in Luang Prabang, I witnessed the deeply stirring sight of thousands of such ochre-clad monks making their way through the morning mists, collecting the (non-fermented) sticky rice and other foods the faithful lined up to offer them. It’s the city’s number-one tourist photo-op, but it got to me as much the last time I witnessed it as it did the first.



For the first year I lived there, I was the city’s only designated recovering alcoholic (hence, loner). No meetings...no regular meetings, that is. Throughout the Twelve and Twelve, Bill writes about the perils of relying on others when only our Higher Power can take us off the cycle of dependence and dominance. If you want to get that at the cellular level, try being a loner.

Meetings (some of the most memorable in my experience) happened. My footwork was simple enough. Shortly after I moved to Asia,

I attended the Bangkok fellowship’s annual roundup and let everyone I met know they and other travelers could find me in Luang Prabang. I also put the standard “Friends of Bill W. (and Lois) call....” 3-by-5 cards on the town’s important bulletin boards. Then I waited, and prayed.

People came. We met. God conquered.

Visitors, sometimes desperate, frequently quarreling with their traveling mates, but always loving, eager, and sober, kept me sober that memorable year. I remember each one, and cherish them all. Some have become friends; others are indelible memories and examples.

One time I may have done service. A man appeared at my door. “I saw your sign,” he said. “I don’t go to meetings any more, but I wonder if you’d like to have dinner.” God, or Lois, jumped into my mouth and, involuntarily, I said, “I have time for a meeting, but not dinner.” We ended up having meetings four days in a row.

His parting words were, “Thanks. I had completely lost sight of what I was missing by not going to meetings.”

Tell a loner.

Beginners Packet


By Gary D.

The myriad of AA pamphlets on the literature table can be a bit overwhelming to an AA newcomer. They may ask, "Which pamphlets should I read for suggestions on how to stay sober? What are people talking about at these meetings? How does AA work?"

Recently, the Literature Review Committee of the San Francisco/Marin Intercounty Fellowship assembled a selection of basic pamphlets conveniently wrapped together in packet form. The new "Beginner's Packet" includes: *This is AA*, *44 Questions*, *Do You Think You're Different? A Newcomer Asks*, *Is AA for You?* *The Twenty Questions*, *A Message to Teenagers*, *How it Works*, *The Twelve Steps Illustrated*, *For Beginners*, *Daily Tips for Old and New Members*, and *Questions & Answers on Sponsorship*, as well as the most current San Francisco and Marin County Meeting Schedules.

Because of our diversity, not all of the material in the packet will apply or appeal to every alcoholic; but the strength of the packet is its inclusion of information designed to help anyone new to the fellowship. Some of the pamphlets are outlines of longer General Service Conference-approved pamphlets. Some assist in helping

a person to determine if he or she is an alcoholic. There are stories of the experience, strength and hope of AA members who achieved sanity and serenity in their lives. Some offer useful suggestions or "tools" to assist the newcomer in maintaining sobriety. Others explain how AA works, what the fellowship is, and what it is not. The newcomer is introduced to the history of AA, the Big Book, the Twelve Steps and Traditions, the importance of sponsorship and attending meetings on a regular basis. Finally, the myth that AA is a cult or religion is dispelled by explaining that AA is a fellowship of men and woman whose goal is to maintain sobriety and assist others in that same goal.

The "Beginner's Packet" is available at the Central Office for a price of \$2.39 per packet (as always, priced to cover the printing costs). I keep several with me to give to newcomers. My home group also keeps packets as a way to welcome newcomers. Check out the new "Beginner's Packet" and consider making it available for newcomers as a part of *your* group's literature. 

DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY!

AA Meeting and Dance

At the Women's Building, 3543-18th St.

On Sat. April 17th, 2004

Meeting at 7:00 PM

Speaker, Lord H.

DJ Dance to follow

Also featuring a:

BAKE SALE AND

HALF & HALF RAFFLE

\$10 donation at the door, no one will be refused for lack of funds

Donations of baked goods welcomed!!!

Please contact: Terri K, 415-647-0627

To volunteer to help at the event and/or to donate baked goods

We need your help!

Proceeds of dance and bake sale go to startup fund for the Alano Club of San Francisco


FOUR DRINKERS IN A BAR



Normal Drinker orders a drink, is drinking the drink, notices a fly in the drink. Disgusted, he puts down the drink, leaves the bar and doesn't drink for a month.

Problem Drinker orders a drink, is drinking the drink, notices a fly in the drink, looks around to see if anyone is watching, then scoops out the fly and goes on drinking the drink.

Alcoholic orders a drink, is drinking the drink, notices a fly in the drink, looks around to see if anyone is watching, then scoops out the fly, wrings it out and goes on drinking the drink.

Alcoholic of My Type orders a drink, is drinking the drink, notices a fly in the drink, looks around to see if anyone is watching, then scoops out the fly, wrings it out and goes on drinking the drink. After he finishes drinking the drink, he puts the fly back in the glass and calls the bartender over and demands another drink for free, since that one had a fly in it. 

AA Group Contributions - January 2004

Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous - San Francisco and Marin Counties

Name	Meets	Amount	Name	Meets	Amount
Fellowship Group Contributions					
Annual Christmas Meeting	Christmas 2003	\$25.00	Fireside Chat Th	Th 8pm	\$88.56
Brisbane Breakfast	Su 11am	\$25.80	Fireside Chat Tu	Tu 8pm	\$60.11
Contribution Box	Jan. 2004	\$98.07	Friday All Groups	Raffle F 8:30pm	\$46.00
Deer Park Discovery Group		\$4.67	Friendly Circle	Su 8:30pm	\$441.30
IFB	January Meeting	\$95.00	Haight Street Blues	Tu 6:15pm	\$75.00
Unidentified Group		\$221.40	Haight Street Explorers	Th 6:30pm	\$60.00
Total Fellowship		<u>\$469.94</u>	High Noon Tuesday	Tu 12:15pm	\$181.89
Honors			High Sobriety	M 8pm	\$168.00
Endless Summer	F 8:30pm	\$44.22	How It Works	Sa 2pm	\$125.01
Total Honors		<u>\$44.22</u>	Huntington Square	W 6:30pm	\$125.14
Marin Group Contributions			Joys of Recovery	Tu 8pm	\$127.31
A Vision For You	Su 7:30pm	\$68.25	Keep It Simple	Sa 8:30pm	\$86.85
Back to Basics	Su 9:30am	\$87.50	Light Brigade Discussion	Su 7pm	\$127.80
Beginners	W 7pm	\$500.00	Lincoln Park	Sa 8:30pm	\$68.50
Candlelight	Su 8:30pm	\$79.23	Live and Let Live	Su 8pm	\$119.76
Creekside New Growth	Su 7pm	\$75.00	Marin Sober Group	F 8pm	\$39.50
Fireside	F 8pm	\$35.50	Midnight Meditation	Sa 11:59pm	\$11.25
Freedom Finders	F 8:30pm	\$388.28	Millionaires Club	Th 6pm	\$70.00
Living in the Solution	F 6pm	\$233.00	Monday At A Time	M 12:30pm	\$36.00
Marin City Groups	M-F 6:30pm	\$100.00	Monday Men's Meeting	M 8pm	\$48.00
Mill Valley Original Smokeless Step Study	Th 8pm	\$50.00	New Highs	W 1:30pm	\$97.88
Newcomers Step	M 7:30pm	\$300.00	Newcomers	Tu 8pm	\$162.00
Rise N Shine	Su 10am	\$102.73	Pure & Simple	Su 6pm	\$28.15
Ross San Anselmo Group	M 8:30pm	\$30.00	Rose Garden Big Book	Th 12:05pm	\$19.44
Six O'Clock Sunset	Th 6pm	\$81.20	Rule 62	W 10pm	\$248.51
Streetfighters	Sa 9am	\$22.10	Saturday Serenity	Sa 8pm	\$362.00
Sunday Night Corte Madera	Su 8pm	\$400.00	Seacliff	Th 8:30pm	\$54.47
TGI Tuesday	Tu 6pm	\$20.40	Serenity House	Deposit	\$300.00
Thurs. Night Speaker, MV	Th 8:30pm	\$634.00	Sinbar	Su 8pm	\$70.84
Tiburon Women's Candlelight	W 8pm	\$39.76	Sober & Centered	Fr 7pm	\$168.27
Women's Big Book	Tu 10:30am	\$70.00	Step Talk	Su 8:30am	\$120.00
Women on Monday	M 7pm	\$69.67	Stepping Out	Sa 6pm	\$120.00
Working Dogs	W 12:05pm	\$313.25	Sunday Morning Gay Men's Stag	Su 10:30am	\$549.43
Total Marin Group Contributions		<u>\$3,699.87</u>	Sunday Rap	Su 8pm	\$132.00
SF Group Contributions			Sunset 11'ers F	F 11am	\$113.40
A is for Alcohol	Tu 6pm	\$34.20	Sunset 11'ers W	W 11am	\$24.00
Afro American	F 8pm	\$36.62	Sunset 9'ers Su	Su 9am	\$100.00
Amazing Grace	M 7pm	\$28.80	Sunset 9'ers W	W 9am	\$154.04
Any Lengths	Sa 9:30am	\$187.21	Sutter Street Beginners	Sa 6pm	\$213.64
Any Lengths	Sa 9:30am	\$687.00	Ten Years After	Su 6pm	\$474.72
As Bill Sees It	Th 6pm	\$47.60	Tiburon Haven	Su 12pm	\$120.00
Beyond 164	F 12:30pm	\$30.00	Too Early	Sa 8am	\$26.37
Big Book Study	Su 11am	\$47.57	Tuesday's Daily Reflections	Tu 7am	\$83.62
Boys Night Out	Tu 7:30pm	\$69.73	Waterfront	Su 8pm	\$276.00
Castro Discussion	W 8pm	\$242.00	Wednesday Sunrise Smokefree	W 7am	\$60.00
Cocoanuts	Su 9am	\$54.00	Weekend Workers	Sa 7am	\$60.00
Each Day a New Beginning M	M 7am	\$154.00	West Portal	W 8:30pm	\$246.50
Each Day a New Beginning Th	Th 7am	\$434.00	Women's Promises	F 7pm	\$148.80
Each Day a New Beginning W	W 7am	\$459.73	Women For Women	W 12pm	\$107.61
Fireside Chat Sa	Sa 9pm	\$198.83	Total SF Group Contributions		<u>\$9,458.96</u>
			TOTAL GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS		<u>\$13,672.99</u>

Gratitude Contributions: Nov. 2003—Jan. 2004

Date	Memo	Amount
Fellowship Gratitude Contributions		
12/16/03	Brisbane Breakfast	\$43.60
		<u>\$43.60</u>
Marin Gratitude Contributions		
12/11/03	Happy Hour F 6:30pm	\$85.15
12/9/03	Mill Valley 7am 7D	\$1,239.00
1/22/04	Mill Valley Original Smokeless Step Study Th 8pm	\$53.19
12/2/03	Monday Night Stag M 8pm	\$184.85
11/26/03	Newcomers Step M 7:30pm	\$35.00
12/5/03	On Awakening Daily 5:30am	\$192.00
12/5/03	On Awakening Daily 5:30am	\$25.00
1/5/04	Ross-San Anselmo M 8:30pm	\$59.00
12/8/03	Sunday Friendship 7pm	\$34.76
12/31/03	Women's Step Study M 12pm	\$55.66
		<u>\$1,963.61</u>
San Francisco Gratitude Contributions		
12/2/03	6am Marina Dock Daily 6am	\$423.25
12/12/03	A is for Alcohol Tu 6pm	\$25.09
12/5/03	All Together Now Th 8pm	\$78.54
12/4/03	Amazing Grace M 7pm	\$35.00
12/2/03	Any Lengths Sa 9:30am	\$280.66
12/2/03	As Bill Sees It Sa 11am	\$45.75
12/16/03	Bernal Big Book Sat. 5pm	\$101.92
12/2/03	Big Book Backwards F 10am	\$30.75
12/2/03	Big Book Basics F 8pm	\$67.30
12/2/03	Big Book Study Su 11am	\$35.00
12/23/03	BYOL Wed. 12:30pm	\$28.00
12/15/03	Castro Discussion Wed. 8pm	\$154.09
12/16/03	Cocoanuts Sun. 9am	\$113.00
12/16/03	Come N Get It! Fri. 6:30pm	\$39.00
12/8/03	Common Welfare Thur. 8pm	\$50.01
12/10/03	Design for Living Sat. 8am	\$106.93
2/3/04	Dignitaries Sympathy W 8:15pm	\$77.00
11/26/03	Each Day A New Beginning M 7am	\$103.50
1/9/04	Each Day a New Beginning Th 7am	\$135.00
12/4/03	Each Day A New Beginning Tu 7am	\$104.40
12/15/03	Each Day A New Beginning Wed. 7am	\$111.00
12/18/03	Early Start Fri. 6pm	\$137.50
12/4/03	Easy Does It Tu 6pm	\$50.00
12/9/03	Eureka Step Tues. 6pm	\$45.00
12/22/03	Eureka Valley Topic M 6pm	\$135.55
12/2/03	Federal Speaker Su 12pm	\$81.96
12/2/03	Firefighters & Friends Tu 10am	\$57.40
12/16/03	Fireside Chat Group Thur. 8pm	\$40.00
12/8/03	Fireside Chat Sat. 9pm	\$90.32
12/8/03	Fireside Chat Tues. 8pm	\$84.10
12/12/03	Fireside F 8:30pm	\$40.35
12/4/03	Friday All Groups F 8:30pm	\$171.29
1/5/04	Friday Morning 12 Steppers F 7am	\$149.95
12/10/03	Friendly Circle Sun. 7:15pm	\$123.50
12/8/03	Happy Hour Ladies Night Fri. 5:30pm	\$100.00
12/30/03	High Noon Fri. 12:15pm	\$138.45
12/15/03	High Noon Mon. 12:15pm	\$268.80
12/22/03	High Noon Sa 12:15pm	\$39.00
12/5/03	High Noon Thursday Th 12:15pm	\$120.04
12/4/03	High Noon Tuesday Tu 12:15pm	\$93.27
12/9/03	High Noon Wed. 12:15pm	\$100.21
12/2/03	High Sobriety M 8pm	\$75.00
12/23/03	High Steppers Wed. 7pm	\$22.30
11/26/03	Hilldwellers M 8pm	\$100.00
12/18/03	Home Group Sat. 8:30pm	\$121.00
1/27/04	How It Works Sa 2pm	\$43.36
12/11/03	Join the Tribe Tu 7pm	\$46.10
1/6/04	Keep Coming Back Sat. 11am	\$12.00
12/9/03	Keep It Simple Sat. 8:30pm	\$44.08

Date	Memo	Amount
San Francisco Gratitude Contributions, con't.		
1/20/04	Light Brigade Discussion Su 7pm	\$28.00
1/8/04	Lincoln Park Sa 8:30pm	\$96.00
12/22/03	Living Sober W 8pm	\$61.00
11/26/03	Meeting Place Noon W 12pm	\$24.00
12/18/03	Mid Morning Support Sun. 10:30am	\$200.38
12/10/03	Miracles Off 24th St. Wed. 7:30pm	\$63.20
11/6/03	Monday Men's Meeting	\$20.00
11/26/03	Monday Men's Meeting M 8pm	\$32.00
2/20/04	New Wednesday High Noon W 12:15pm	\$52.75
1/2/04	Newcomers Tu 8pm	\$13.50
11/26/03	No Reservation M 12pm	\$81.00
12/15/03	One Liners Thur. 8:30pm	\$65.49
2/20/04	Parkside Th 8:30pm	\$108.00
12/2/03	Pure & Simple Su 6pm	\$41.00
12/2/03	Saturday Afternoon Meditation Sa 5pm	\$16.00
2/9/04	Saturday Night Regroup Sa 7:30pm	\$142.39
12/11/03	Serenity Seekers M 7:30pm	\$212.43
2/4/04	Sesame Step Tu 7:30pm	\$232.57
12/12/03	Seven Seas Groups	\$232.53
12/9/03	Sisters Circle Sun. 6pm	\$23.70
1/13/04	Sober & Centered Fr 7pm	\$24.00
11/18/03	Sometimes Slowly Sat. 11am	\$12.50
12/9/03	Sometimes Slowly Sat. 11am	\$47.70
12/9/03	St. Francis Men's Fri. 8:30pm	\$22.00
12/9/03	Stepping Out Sat. 6pm	\$94.75
12/15/03	Stonestown Mon. 8pm	\$104.74
12/15/03	Sunday Bookworms 7:30pm	\$49.45
12/15/03	Sunday Night Castro Speaker Discussion 7:30pm	\$145.65
1/27/04	Sunday Rap Su 8pm	\$54.00
11/12/03	Sunday Sunrise 7am	\$18.18
11/18/03	Sunday Sunrise 7am	\$12.25
11/25/03	Sunday Sunrise 7am	\$10.51
12/2/03	Sunday Sunrise Su 7am	\$9.75
12/1/03	Sundown W 7pm	\$53.00
12/2/03	Sunset 11ers Su 11am	\$56.57
12/23/03	Sunset 11ers Thurs. 11am	\$58.00
12/22/03	Sunset 9ers F 9am	\$80.29
12/30/03	Sunset 9ers Sat. 9am	\$129.37
12/2/03	Sunset 9ers Th 9am	\$59.13
11/10/03	Sunset 9ers Thurs. 9am	\$22.30
12/19/03	Sunset 9ers W 9am	\$84.10
12/23/03	Sunset Reflections Thurs. 12:30pm	\$24.00
12/16/03	Sunset Speaker Step Sun. 7:30pm	\$49.00
12/2/03	Sutter Street Beginners Sa 6pm	\$148.80
1/22/04	Ten Years After Su 6pm	\$25.00
12/16/03	Thursday Night Women's 6:30pm	\$61.65
12/10/03	Too Early Sat. 8am	\$308.25
12/2/03	Tuesday Downtown Tu 8pm	\$98.39
12/4/03	Tuesday's Daily Reflections Tu 7am	\$55.00
12/11/03	Unidentified 2900 24th St. Group	\$29.00
12/22/03	Valencia Smokefree F 6pm	\$138.15
12/18/03	Walk of Shame Wed. 8pm	\$28.55
1/20/04	Washington Square M 7pm	\$170.56
1/13/04	Waterfront Su 8pm	\$58.12
12/2/03	We Care Tu 12pm	\$57.00
12/11/03	Wednesday Sunrise Smokefree W 7am	\$23.00
12/15/03	Weekend Worker Sat. 7am	\$71.42
12/8/03	West Portal Wed. 8:30pm	\$86.13
12/11/03	Women's 10 Years Plus Th 6:15pm	\$60.00
12/11/03	Women's Kitchen Table Group Tu 6:30pm	\$41.00
12/9/03	Women's Promises Fri. 7pm	\$40.00
12/15/03	Work In Progress Sat. 7pm	\$98.90
		<u>\$9,241.82</u>
Total 2003 Gratitude Contributions 11/03-01/04		<u>\$11,249.03</u>

Balancing Our Budget—A Note from the IFB Treasurer

By Patrick M.



I have been Treasurer for the IFB (Intercounty Fellowship Board) for a little over one year, and if there is one thing I've learned, it is that the finances of our fellowship need to be transparent to everyone. That means there shouldn't be any secrets about where we spend our money. Each month, the income and expense statement is published in *The Point*. While it's great to publish the numbers for everyone to see, it's also important to provide some insight about the finances, which is the point (pun intended) of this article.

Increase so much to cover the expenses? Nearly the entire reason is employee costs. During 2003, the IFB voted to increase the salaries of the two, full-time special workers to be competitive with the private sector. 2004 is the first year that we will incur the full impact. (Only a partial impact was felt in 2003 because the raises were not retroactive to the beginning of the year.) There are also significant increases in employee taxes, employee insurance and retirement benefits. Most of the non-employee expenses were budgeted an increase of 3%, which is in line with general inflation.

In 2003, we received \$238,746 in contributions and literature sales. After deducting the cost of the literature that was sold, there was \$179,472 left over to cover expenses. After paying our expenses, there was a small surplus of \$2,979 left over. Financially, 2003 was a successful year. We took in slightly more money than was paid out, we have 6 months of expenses saved in a special bank account as our prudent reserve, and we ended the year with \$28,000 in our regular bank accounts (which covers about 2 months of expenses).

With that kind of result, one might think that the 2004 budget would be easy. Wrong! In order to cover the 2004 expenses, the contributions and literature sales need to increase by approximately 8% over 2003. The average increase in contributions over the past three years has been approximately 3%. That means if history is any indication, there could be a 5% shortfall in the budget.

So why does income have to

Another logical question might be, why don't we reduce expenses? The fact is that most of our expenses are fixed. The two biggest costs are employee expenses and rent for the Central Office. Together they make up 82% of total costs. When you add in utilities, telephone and copier expenses, we are up to nearly 90% of total costs—which doesn't leave much room to trim expenses. Also, only a few costs aren't directly tied to serving the fellowship; so reducing costs would likely mean a reduction in services to the fellowship.

Finally, one statistic surprised me. Only 41% of groups in Marin and San Francisco made regular contributions in 2003. The easiest way to increase revenue to cover the anticipated shortfall is to get more groups to make contributions. You can help. At your group's next business meeting, ask if regular contributions are being made to Central Office. If not, share what you read here, and encourage your group to contribute. ↑

2004 Budget

Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Group Contributions	\$143,409.47
Individual Contributions	
Honorary Contributions	\$3,182.81
Individual -Unrestricted	\$11,472.96
Individual Contributions - Other	\$64.00
Total Individual Contributions	\$14,719.77
Gratitude Month	
Gratitude Month -Individual	\$21.52
Gratitude Month-Groups	\$13,252.59
Total Gratitude Month	\$13,274.11
Newsletter Subscript.	\$1,363.29
Sales - Bookstore	\$89,660.08
Total Income	\$262,426.72
Cost of Goods Sold	
Cost of Books Sold	\$66,348.46
Total COGS	\$66,348.46
Gross Profit	\$196,078.26
Expense	
Bad Checks	
Employee Expenses	
Wages & Salaries	\$90,840.00
Employer Tax Expenses	\$8,780.18
Benefits/Pension	\$8,533.20
Retirement/Annuity Expense	\$7,160.00
Workers Comp Ins.	\$1,809.30
Total Employee Expenses	\$117,122.68
ASL Expense	
ASL- Net - Tuesday Downtown	
ASL- Net- Fri All Grps	\$1,157.00
Total ASL Expense	\$1,157.00
Bank Charges	
Cr Card Fees	\$986.26
Bank Charges - Other	\$200.00
Total Bank Charges	\$1,186.26
Equipment Lease	\$7,114.89
Filing/Fees	\$375.25
Insurance	\$1,253.22
Internet Expense	\$255.75
Miscellaneous Expense	\$253.32
Office Supplies	\$3,938.16
Postage	
Bulk Mail	\$1,256.75
Postage - Other	\$816.95
Total Postage	\$2,073.71
Shipping	\$258.72
Printing	\$1,981.38
Professional Fees	
Accounting	\$700.00
Computer Consulting	\$550.00
Total Professional Fees	\$1,250.00

2004 Budget, continued

Rent - Office	\$43,452.97
Rent - Other	\$700.00
Repair & Maintenance	\$2,327.80
Security System	\$448.57
Special Events	\$1,000.00
Telephone	\$6,674.40
Travel	\$822.97
Training	\$0.00
Utilities	\$2,348.18
Uncategorized Expense	\$0.00
Total Expense	\$195,995.22
Net Ordinary Income	\$83.04
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
Interest Income	\$480.00
Total Other Income	\$480.00
Other Expense	
Depreciation Expense	\$4,898.00
Total Other Expense	\$4,898.00
Net Other Income	-\$4,418.00
Net Income	-\$4,334.96

CORRECTIONS

There have been a couple of errors in printing the Contributions. The February 2004 issue of The Point listed the individual Marin Group Contributions correctly, but the total was not added correctly. The correct total for February Marin Group Contributions is: \$2,367.37 .

The other error is that a number of Gratitude Month contributions were not listed. Therefore, this issue has all of the 2003 Gratitude Month contribution listed from November 2003 through January. Any Gratitude Month contributions that came in during February 2004 will be listed in the next (May) issue.

I apologize for the errors and will be more diligent about double checking the contribution report in future issues.

Maury P.

Central Office Manager ↑

Slips of the Lip:

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our *advice* had become unmanageable."

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become *unimaginable*."

"Our leaders are but *twisted serpents*."

"Our leaders are but *thirsty servants*."

"What? An order? I can't go through with it."

"...but our service centers may *enjoy* special workers."

"Each group as a whole should be *obnoxious*, except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole."

"Our public relations policy is based on *attrition* rather than promotion."

"Our public relations policy is based on *affliction* rather than promotion."

"Our public relations policy is based on *affection* rather than promotion."

"Humbly asked him to *restore* our shortcomings."

"AA is not *alienated* from any sect, denomination..."

"Having had a *sexual* awakening as a result of these steps..."

"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our *Moms*."

And finally, "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly *retaliated*."

Reprinted with permission from p.36 of the

AA Grapevine, September 1990.



Patrick M. of St. Louis, Mo. Wonders why he can never catch up with a car with an "Easy Does It" bumper sticker.

Reprinted with permission from p.36 of the

AA Grapevine, March 1990



IFB Meeting Summary

The IFB is the Board of Directors for our local AA Central Office (San Francisco and Marin Counties)

Regular Monthly Meeting Intercounty Fellowship Board 1187 Franklin St., San Francisco, California Wednesday, March 3, 2004

The following groups have registered Intergroup Representatives. Those marked "P" attended the most recent IFB meeting. If your group was not represented, consider electing an Intergroup Representative (IFB) and /or an alternate so your group's voice is heard.

Intergroup Rep	Group		Intergroup Rep	Group		Intergroup Rep	Group	
Ben N.	Past Chair	P	Haven K.	High Noon Friday	P	Nathan M.	Too Early	P
Bill R.	Early Start	P	Janet B.	As Bill Sees It, Saturday	P	Patrick M.	Treasurer	P
Carol W.	Miracles Off 24 th St.	A**	Jeff A.	Eureka Valley Topic	A**	Paul C.	Waterfront	A
Dan C.	Tiburon Haven	P	Jeremiah P.	All Together Now	P	Penelope P.	Amazing Grace	P
Danny F.	Each Day A New Beginning	P	Jen B.	Midnight Meditation	P	Ramona A.	Sunday 9ers, Monday	P
Dan P.	Second Chance	P	Joe G.	Beginners	P	Randall J.	High Sobriety	A
Dan Z.	Sunday Morning Gay Men's Stag	P	Johnny G.	High Noon Tuesday	A	Ray M.	Sunday Rap	P
David A.	Living Sober	A	Judi C.	Tuesday's Daily Reflections	P	Rebekah D.	Fell Street Step	P
David B.	Beginner's Warmup	P	Julie H.	Terra Linda	P	Robert D.	Gay Beginners Q&A	P
David B.	Federal Speaker	P	Kate B.	Friday All Groups	P	Russell G.	Regroup	P
David K.	Haight St. Blues	Alt.	Kim O.	Easy Does It	P	Sam W.	Monday Night Stag	A**
David McC	Fireside Chat	A	Kristine F.	Castro Discussion	P	Scott C.	New Hope Big Book	P
Dick T.	Attitude Adjustment Hour	P	Lesley F.	Cocoanuts	A	Steve R.	Valencia Smokefree	P
Don B.	Friday Fell Street	A	Lou H.	Mill Valley 7AM	P	Steven S.	Tuesday Downtown	P
Doug F.	No Reservation	P	Lynore G.	Walk Of Shame	P	Tasiah S.	Boys Night Out	P
Doug S.	As Bill Sees It - Thursday	A**	Marc D.	Bernal Big Book	A	Tedra M.	Sisters Circle	A
Francesca K.	West Portal	P	Mary Ellen D.	A is for Alcohol	P	Tim McC.	Join the Tribe	P
Gary D.	Work In Progress	P	Maury P.	Office Manager	A	Todd M.	Mission Terrace	P
Georgia L.	Friendly Circle Beginners	P	Michael R.	Huntington Square	P	Tom K.	Common Welfare	P
Grant D.	Ten Years After	A**	Michelle C.	Big Book Basics	A**	Zoe B.	Mill Valley 7am - Daily	A
Greg S.	Keep Coming Back	P	Monika H.	Back 2 Basics	P			
New IFB Reps Present			Non-IFB Liaisons Present					
Roger R.	Serenity Seekers		Omar C.	Marin Teleservice		Georgia L.	Hospital & Institutions	
Jeffrey H.	Boys Night Out		Shannon L.	Marin General Service		Peter M.	SF Teleservice	
			Stacy S.	San Mateo County		Peter M.	Spirit of San Francisco	
			Todd M.	SF General Service				

P = Present; A = Absent; R = Resigned; Alt. = Alternate. The * above indicates an absence; more than one indicates the number of consecutive absences. A Board member who has three consecutive absences from IFB meetings is no longer a member of the Board, as stated in the Bylaws.

A. IFB Reports

Chair's Report: No report.

Treasurer's Report: Patrick M. submitted a written report of the balance sheet and profit and loss budget vs. actuals for January 2004. Group contributions and gross profit were both nearly 10% below budget. Gratitude Month was less than what we budgeted for. Our cash position is good. We are going to need to look at some ways to offset the shortfall. Quotes will be coming in for the Director & Officers liability insurance and the Dishonest Employee insurance policy. Patrick will let us know in April.

Central Office Manager's Report: Danny F. highlighted Maury's written report in her absence. The Winter/Spring 04 schedule will be available soon. The COC recommended that we sell out of the Fall 2003 prior to selling the new schedules. The March "Letter to the Treasurers" included the group update sheet for the web site committee. There are no open shifts but, as usual, Central Office can use phone volunteers with a lot of flexibility.

Central Office Committee: Joe G., Chair, reported that the 2004 budget will be published in the April issue of *The Point*. In March, the shipping charges for literature orders will be increased approximately 2%. Joe and Danny will present the COC's annual review of the Office Manager to Maury in

March. A pay increase for Maury was approved.

B. Special Orders of Business (Action Items)

1. *Select one new COC member:* Kim O. was elected for a 15-month term.
2. *Small group work to prioritize ideas to increase Central Office revenue.* Fundraising ideas were displayed on poster boards and members selected their preferences with stickers that were provided. Danny will tally the results and provide the board with results for further discussion.
3. *Vote on printing of "Why We Were Chosen" as a local pamphlet.* After discussion, motion was defeated.
4. *First reading of the revised By-Laws:* The revised By-Laws were distributed in writing to the board members for review, which is required 10 days prior to a regular Board meeting. The By-Laws will be read and voted on at the April meeting; and read and voted on at the May Board meeting, before the final vote to approve in June. The crossed out parts will be deleted and the underlined parts will be added.
5. *Vote on extending support for ASL signer for two more months.* Dan C., chair for the Special Events Committee, combined his monthly committee report with the presentation of this Action Item. A 15-minute panel discussion, to include a deaf member with an interpreter plus professionals and coun-

(Continued on page 17)

(IFB Summary—Continued from page 16)

selors working with the deaf community, will be presented at the April Board meeting. The committee is proposing a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness month in May where a second basket would be passed at meetings (similar to Gratitude Month). Send ideas to the committee via email: sfaslaa@hotmail.com. The next meeting is at Mel's Diner, Geary and Van Ness, on Wednesday, April 7, at 5:30 pm. New committee members are welcome; help is needed.

Dan recommended extending support for an ASL signer for two months. After discussion, a motion to extend ASL funding for two months passed; the motion, after hearing minority opinion, was re-voted and passed a second time. A second motion was made for 100% of money raised to go into the Central Office general fund and for the IFB to decide how the money will be spent. After discussion, the motion passed.

C. Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Literature Review Committee: Doug F., Chair, submitted a written report and announced that large print *As Bill See It, Came to Believe* and *Living Sober* will be available from A.A.W.S. this summer. Gary D. will write an article reviewing the Beginner's Packet for the April issue of *The Point*. The next committee meeting is Wednesday, Mar. 17, at Central Office at 6:30 p.m.

The Point Committee: No report. The committee meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 5 p.m. at Central Office.

Orientation Committee: Bill R., Chair, announced that the next meeting is Wednesday, April 7, at 6p.m., the same evening as the IFB meeting but an hour earlier. All new board members are required to attend an Orientation meeting before they have voting privileges.

Website Committee: Michael R., Chair, reported that the committee is working on a redesign of the website which will include the ability to look up meetings by zip code or by neighborhood. Group Meeting Update forms were handed out; they need to be taken to all the groups, filled out and returned. The form can be downloaded from the web site: www.aasf.org. The next meeting will be Thursday, March 25, at 6:15 p.m. at Central Office.

12th Step Committee: No report. The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 10, at 6:30 p.m. at Central Office.

Special Events Committee (SEC): Dave B, Chair, announced that there are \$45 of outstanding expenses from the bingo event plus the cost to replace a damaged coffeepot. Saturday, May 15, is the date set for the Secretary's workshop at Central Office, time to be announced; a date will be set for the upcoming Treasurer's workshop soon. The next committee meeting will be Tues., April 6, at 7:30 pm at Central Office.

Special Needs Committee: See Special Order of Business, Action Item #5, for report.

Archives Committee: Lynnore G, Chair, reported the next meeting is Saturday, March 6 at 10a.m. at Central Office. There are three members on the committee; they would welcome new members.

D. IFB Standing Committee Reports

1. SF Teleservice: Peter M, Chair, informed us that Teleservice is in need of new volunteers with 19 open Teleservice shifts. Overnight shifts for Wednesday and back-up shifts are in need of volunteers. The email address through Central Office is sfteleservice@aasf.org. The next meeting is Monday, March 15, with orientation at 6:30 p.m. and the monthly meeting at 7pm.

2. PI/CPC: No report.

E. Non -IFB Liaison Reports

1. General Service, SF: Todd M. reported that the Archives will have an Open House on April 3, the Saturday evening of the Conference Assembly.

From District 06, agenda topics were discussed. CNC Area meeting is Saturday, March 27, in Petaluma. An archives Workshop is March 28, noon to 4 pm in Walnut Creek. Pre Conference assembly is April 3 and 4 in Antioch.

2. General Service, Marin: Shannon L. announced that Bridging the Gap has just succeeded in infiltrating county jail and has been granted access for presentations. They have had 30 hits to the contact system. The Agenda Topics Workshop is Saturday, March 13, at the Corte Madera Lutheran Church, 649 Meadowsweet at Presidio from 9a.m. to noon.

3. Teleservice, Marin: Omar C. announced Marin County Teleservice's 11th Annual Spaghetti Feed is Saturday, March 6, at the Masonic Lodge, 1010 Lootens Place in San Rafael with meeting and dinner. He has advanced tickets, \$5, to sell. Doors open at 5:30 pm.

4. PI/CPC, Marin: No report.

5. Bridging the Gap: No report.

6. H & I: Georgia L. reported that H & I still needs help. The 32nd Annual H & I Conference is in Chico April 16 - 18. The next meeting is March 25 at Old First Church, 1751 Sacramento with orientation at 7:15 p.m. and the regular meeting at 8pm.

8. Spirit of San Francisco: Peter M. reported that convention prices will be lower this year, pre-registration will be \$20 and registration at the door will be \$25. There are five committees who presently do not have Chairpersons. The next meeting is Monday, April 5, at 7 pm at Central Office. The committee's web site is www.spirit-sf.org.

The next IFB meeting will be held Wednesday, April 7, 2004, at First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1187 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA, in 7 pm in the chapel. ↑

Mission Fellowship Anniversary Meeting

**Come and help us
celebrate our fourth birthday**

Friday, April 23, 2004

**Roast Chicken
Potluck 7:30 PM**

**Speaker Meeting and
Raffle 8:30 PM**

**2900 24th Street
at Florida Street**

(God Bless the IRS, continued from page 6)

BLUE ink rather than BLACK—triggering yet another six-week delay. My bank account was seized in error a number of times, which I was only to discover later when checks began to bounce. My business suffered. My credit was ruined. I made phone calls, went to hearings, spent long hours contacting banks, recovered missing records—desperate to set things straight and make amends. The amount of money they wanted seemed staggering.

My ex returned quickly to a life of under-the-table wage earning, leaving the IRS to bestow their rather cumbersome attentions upon me, the one with documented income.

It went on for another six years, like a dog chasing its tail. The everlasting cycles of IRS review were always outpaced by penalties that accrued, so that an entirely new set of documentation would be required. Each time an affordable settlement was negotiated, the bar would once again be raised just out of reach. The cycle of calls and letters and forms would begin anew each time. I learned that all consequences of IRS delays and errors were mine.

I was wrong until I could prove I was right, guilty unless I could prove I was innocent. Few of my assumptions about being a decent human being and a good citizen held up against this behemoth arm of the government.

But it was my assumptions about being a recovering alcoholic that were truly put to the test. Torrents of self-pity alternated with sheer rage at the mindless INJUSTICE of it all. Years of recovery hadn't made it much easier to be told that I was wrong, even when I was. But to be treated like a criminal seemed the most colossal outrage of all time. How could this be happening to ME? A hard-working woman! A mother! A RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC!

Is this what I'd gotten sober for? Wasn't my life supposed to get better? I never felt so helpless, so put-upon and afraid. I would awaken to the sounds of my children playing and think, Who left their kids here and forgot to come and get them? As fear ruled every waking moment, I wondered, Who is taking care of me-e-e?

Listen, God, Higher Power, or whatever You call Yourself—I'm SOBER! I've done the STEPS! I go to MEETINGS! I've worked with NEWCOMERS! Is this the thanks I get?

Self-centered fear had reduced me to thinking that my sobriety was my own personal favor to the universe—in return for which I expected things to go my own way forevermore. The pain, the fear and the outrage became more than I could bear. My only prevailing morsel of sanity got me back to meetings almost daily. Drinking was no longer an

option, but the Steps were. I admitted I was powerless—this time over the IRS—and that my life had become unmanageable. I prayed for the trust that a Power greater than myself would restore me to sanity. Once again I became willing to turn my will and my life over...the Serenity Prayer again became my mantra.

Eventually an agreement was reached with the IRS to repay a reduced amount—reduced by their standards—but still a formidable amount. As business improved, I eventually was able to pay off every last back tax.


I'm a slow learner. It took most of those seven years of emotional and financial trauma to realize the true miracle of sobriety. It was never manifested in the THINGS I got, nor by the happiness that I experienced when life was going my way. That was the easy part. Having the courage to slog forward in the face of sheer humiliation, yet experiencing actual moments of serenity and acceptance along the way, became the true miracle.

My fortunes have improved considerably since that time, and just as easily, have gone back into decline. I expect there will be more financial contortions along the way. Money comes and goes, but sanity (i.e. sobriety) is a one-way street. The sanity that has been restored to me is exactly as promised in the Ninth Step—freedom from financial insecurities. I know that I will never, ever be that frightened or alone again.

Life doesn't always have to go my way in order for me to enjoy it. I only regret the pain of my own resistance to receive that truth deeply into my being. To this day, whenever I am writing checks, especially the ones to undeserving scoundrels or those that make me feel as if my money is too precious to part with, I say this simple prayer,

“God, bless this money and all with whom it comes in contact.”

Think of it. Maybe somebody else is paying their bills, or maybe they're going to the movies or buying a boat. Maybe some child is putting it in his piggy bank or maybe his mother is buying a new hat...and maybe it's purple.

Today I accept responsibility to be financially accountable. Beyond that, I have to let it go. It's only money, and I do imagine that it can bless all of the people with whom it comes in contact. I can even say, with some sincerity, God Bless the IRS. 

Financial Statement

JANUARY 2004 - Intercounty Fellowship of AA

	Jan 04	YTD		Jan 04	YTD
Ordinary Income/Expense			Telephone	511.83	511.83
Income			Training	94.67	94.67
Group Contributions			Utilities	296.28	296.28
Honors	44.22	44.22	Total Expense	18,651.21	18,651.21
Group Contributions - Other	13,628.77	13,628.77	Net Ordinary Income	-196.45	-196.45
Total Group Contributions	13,672.99	13,672.99	Other Income/Expense		
Individual Contributions			Other Income		
Honorary Contributions	904.00	904.00	Interest Income	37.23	37.23
Individual -Unrestricted	812.00	812.00	Total Other Income	37.23	37.23
Total Individual Contributions	1,716.00	1,716.00	Other Expense		
Gratitude Month			Depreciation Expense	408.17	408.17
Gratitude Month-Groups	1,112.61	1,112.61	Total Other Expense	408.17	408.17
Total Gratitude Month	1,112.61	1,112.61	Net Other Income	-370.94	-370.94
Newsletter Subscript.	108.00	108.00	Net Income	-567.39	-567.39
Sales - Bookstore	7,841.87	7,841.87			
Total Income	24,451.47	24,451.47			
Cost of Goods Sold					
Cost of Books Sold	5,996.71	5,996.71			
Total COGS	5,996.71	5,996.71			
Gross Profit	18,454.76	18,454.76			
Expense					
Bad Checks	21.54	21.54			
Employee Expenses					
Wages & Salaries	6,833.34	6,833.34			
Employer Tax Expenses	1,059.55	1,059.55			
Benefits/Pension	664.00	664.00			
Total Employee Expenses	8,556.89	8,556.89			
ASL Expense					
ASL- Net- Fri All Grps	352.80	352.80			
Total ASL Expense	352.80	352.80			
Bank Charges					
Cr Card Fees	92.74	92.74			
Bank Charges - Other	41.20	41.20			
Total Bank Charges	133.94	133.94			
Equipment Lease	565.10	565.10			
Insurance	100.55	100.55			
Miscellaneous Expense	2.49	2.49			
Office Supplies	230.58	230.58			
Postage					
Bulk Mail	200.00	200.00			
Postage - Other	87.00	87.00			
Total Postage	287.00	287.00			
Shipping	-53.44	-53.44			
Rent - Office	7,167.50	7,167.50			
Repair & Maintenance	214.98	214.98			
Security System	33.50	33.50			
Special Events	135.00	135.00			

The Point Committee meetings are for present and prospective committee members. The Point Committee meetings are working meetings. They are not to be used as a forum for voicing opinions on content of the newsletter or articles contained therein. The Chair has ultimate responsibility for managing the meetings. We welcome opinions and feedback and request that it be submitted to the Central Office in writing.

The Point
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April 2004

ISSUE 0404