

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

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

The Point

July 2004

A publication
of the Intercounty Fellowship
of Alcoholics Anonymous

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The Point

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A.A. members. Nothing published
herein should be construed as a
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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.

A Daily Reprieve for a Real Alcoholic

By the time I came into AA, I couldn't imagine a day without alcohol. Somewhere between the years of high school parties and the years of the fern bars, I stopped having a choice. I had one of those gradual descents. My daily alcohol intake increased an ounce or two every few months. I'd keep it together in social situations, drink moderately, and then slip away to drink the way I wanted to at home alone. I became a secretive, private drinker.

I didn't think the effects of my drinking showed on the outside. Sure, I awoke every morning with a sickening hangover. And my whole day centered on the moment when I came home from work and could pour a glass of wine and settle into myself. But I had a budding career, money in the bank, no obvious drama, no major binges. Just white knuckle restraint. I was normal, wasn't I?

I realize now that back then I never really felt alive unless I was drinking. I couldn't explain that feeling to someone who isn't an alcoholic but I suspect any AA member reading this knows what I mean. My parents were both sober alcoholics, so I knew where I was headed and I could see myself going there fast. Maybe it was my turn to go to a meeting.

I went to my first AA meeting in a state of hesitant hopefulness. I didn't really expect to quit drinking but just walking in the door for the first time felt like an important step in my life. It took me a while to introduce myself as a newcomer. Everything was fuzzy and a little weird. But I kept going to meetings, several times a week. Each time I'd buy a bottle of wine on the way home.


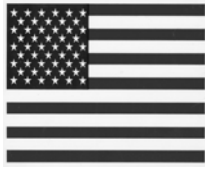

One day I was feeling so terrible I called one of the phone numbers in my wallet and got a hold of the woman who became my sponsor. She talked me through my first moments of sobriety. I later came to think of that 15 minutes on the phone with her as the time when I walked through an invisible wall to a parallel universe, alongside the life I'd lived as a drinker. Nothing looked different, but nothing was the same.

Despite the relief of being sober, I went right back into denial about being an alcoholic. True, I was doing everything I was told —90 meetings in 90 days, a service commitment, calling my sponsor, Step work like a little honor student—but still I had this nagging voice inside telling me that I was different, a cut above, not a real alcoholic. I've come to realize that it didn't matter what I thought or felt. After all, like we say, my best thinking got me here. What mattered was that I kept doing the footwork, taking the good advice and staying close to the people in the Program.

The voice of denial grew silent. I didn't hear it again until I was well over five years

(Continued on page 6)

July 2004....

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				July 1	2	3
4 	5 Fourth of July Holiday Central Office Closed	6 <u>FIRST TUE</u> Special Needs Committee Central Office, 6 pm Special Events Committee: Central Office, 7:30 pm	7 <u>FIRST WED</u> Intercounty Fellowship Board Orientation 6 pm Meeting 7 pm, First Unitarian Church 1187 Franklin St. at Geary San Francisco	8	9	10 
11	12 <u>SECOND MON</u> SF Public Information Committee Central Office, 7 pm	13 <u>SECOND TUE</u> 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 <u>SECOND WED</u> 12th Step Committee Central Office, 6:30 pm Marin Bridging the Gap 1411 Lincoln Ave., San Rafael 6:45 pm	15	16	17
18 <u>THIRD SUN</u> Mission Fellowship Steering Committee 2900 24th / Florida San Francisco 1 pm	19 <u>THIRD MON</u> Archives Committee Central Office, 3pm SF Teleservice Central Office, 6:30 pm Marin General Service 9 Ross Valley Rd San Rafael GSR Sharing: 7 pm District Meeting: 8 pm	20 <u>THIRD TUE</u> San Mateo General Service St. Andrews Church 15th & El Camino Real San Mateo, 7:30 pm	21 <u>THIRD WED</u> Literature Review Committee Central Office, 6:30 pm	22 <u>FOURTH THU</u> Website Committee Central Office, 6:15 pm Marin PI Committee 1360 Lincoln Ave (Alano Club) San Rafael 7:15 pm	23	24 <u>FOURTH SAT</u> General Service CNCA Meeting 320 N. McDowell Petaluma DCMCs: 11 am Business Meeting: 12:30pm
25 <u>LAST SUN</u> Living Sober Convention Committee 1668 Bush, San Francisco 5:30 pm	26	27 <u>FOURTH TUE</u> Marin Teleservice 1360 Lincoln / Maple (Alano Club) San Rafael 7:30 pm	28	29 <u>LAST THU</u> SF H&I Old First Church, 1751 Sacramento San Francisco Orientation: 7:15 pm Regular Meeting: 8 pm	30	31

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.
July 1-5	20th Annual South Bay Roundup, "A Design for Living," Torrance, CA, more info at www.southbayroundup.org .
July 2-4	Living Sober 2004 , Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, 99 Grove St., S.F., more info: www.livingsober.org , 415-978-2478
July 4	July 4th Alcathon , Frank's Ranch, 563 McClay Rd, Novato, 10am to 6pm, Swimming/ Barbecue, more info: 883-2592
July 9-11	Summerfest '04, Eugene Hilton Hotel & Conference Center, Eugene, OR, for info: www.aa-summerfest.org
July 12	PI/CPC Speaker Workshop , 6:30pm, Central Office, 1821 Sacramento St. near Van Ness (For New PI/CPC Speakers)
July 16-18	Tehachapi Mountain Roundup, Tehachapi, CA, info at http://www.tehachapiroundup.com
July 23-25	Freedom in Sobriety 2004, Tacoma, WA; contact fiscommittee@hotmail.com
July 25	Broads Without Booze IV , United Irish Cultural Center, 12pm Lunch/ 1:30pm Meeting, for info call: 650-341-8494
July 27	59th Anniversary Tuesday Downtown , Urban Life Center, 1111 O'Farrell St., Refreshments: 7pm, Speaker: 8pm
July 25-30	21st Annual Crested Butte Mountain Conference, Mt. Crested Butte, Colorado; contact cbconference@cbconference.org
Sept. 3-5	Spirit of San Francisco Convention , Ramada Plaza Hotel, S.F., for info: www.spirit-sf.org/
Sept. 16-19	19th Annual Northern California Big Book Seminar (Joe & Charlie), Sacramento, CA; 916-456-8836, BBSeminar@yahoo

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 your event listed.



July 2004

This Month in AA Trivia July

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1. Which one of our co-founders wore glasses?
2. In what war did Bill W. fight in, and really get involved in his drinking?
3. Did Bill W. ever do hard drugs?
4. What is Rule 62?
5. Where did Bill W. get the basis for the 12 Steps?
6. What magazine broke the first big story about Alcoholics Anonymous?



1. Dr. Bob
2. WWI
3. Yes
4. Let's not take ourselves too seriously
5. From the Bible—Book of Corinthians.
6. The Saturday Evening Post



MEETING CHANGES

New Meetings

Mon 7:00 am Castro
 Mon 12 noon Financial
 Tue 10:30 am
 Fri 12 noon Financial

THE 24 HOUR PLAN (Bk) (Di) (Gy) (Ls) 152 Church St., Conference, ring bell at gate
 MONDAY NOON DAILY REFLECTIONS (Cl) (Di), 660 California at Grant, enter thru bookstore
 MOM AND BABY A.A., (Bk) (Di) Call 672-4992 for location
 NEW FRIDAY BIG BOOK (BB) 660 California at Grant, enter through bookstore

Meeting Changes

Mon 7:30 pm Terra Linda
 Tue 8:30 pm Mill Valley

STEPS TO FREEDOM, 1100 Las Gallinas, (was 8:00 pm)
 "TIBURON" CLOSED 410 Sycamore & Camino Alto (back drive)
 (was in Tiburon)

Thu 1:30 pm Financial

THURSDAY AFTERNOON STEP STUDY 660 California at Grant,
 enter through bookstore (was 215 Leidesdorff/ Commercial)

Thu 3:30 pm Sausalito

THINKING MEN'S GROUP Sausalito Cruising Club on the Barge at the foot of Napa St.
 (was Little Log Cabin, Tennessee Valley Rd.)

Sat 12 noon Financial

NEW BIG BOOK STUDY
 660 California at Grant, enter through bookstore
 (was 1201 Fillmore/ Turk at 11:00 am)

No Longer Meeting

Effective immediately there are no A.A. meetings being held at the **Seven Seas Club**,
 215 Leidesdorff/ Commercial. Call 415-392-3330 for updated information.

7D 8:00 pm Mission
 5D 8:00 pm Mission
 Fri 5:30 pm Mission

SOLO POR HOY, 3548 Cesar Chavez
 MEXICO GROUP, 1560 Guerrero
 SOLO POR HOY NICARAGUA (English Speaking) 3548 Cesar Chavez

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: Corrections Correspondence!!

We'd like to bring to your attention an important service opportunity—Corrections Correspondence. It is organized by the Correctional Facilities Desk at our General Service Office in New York and pairs up A.A. members with inmates from around the country to correspond and share their experience, strength and hope with each other. In a recent letter they asked for our help in reaching members of the fellowship who might be available to serve as a correspondent. The letter stated that "There are over 200 male inmates on the waiting list to be linked with an A.A. member on the "outside"."

General Service in New York receives more requests than it can handle and is always looking for volunteers to help with this service in order to insure that the hand of A.A. is extended to those that seek our help.

Please call the Central Office if you would like more information, or visit the GSO website at www.aa.org where you can find a Corrections Correspondence pamphlet (type "corrections correspondence" into the search field). There are also some suggested guidelines such as:


"I know how important our Twelfth Step work is and I enjoy writing to men who are locked up. It is one of the tools that I use to keep me sober. I myself found A.A. in prison almost 20 years ago. And it hasn't been necessary for me to return to prison since I was released in 1979.

—Outside Correspondent"

≈ We try to let the inmate know that writing, like all forms of sharing, helps us as much as it helps her or him;

≈ We let the inmate know that he or she is not alone;

≈ We share sobriety and sobriety only.

Correspondence may be sent you in care of Central Office, rather than your home address. Once you have signed up, let us know. When we receive a letter for you we will contact you and let you know it is here. 

Group Speakers for July 2004

TUESDAY DOWNTOWN

1101 O'Farrell, Urban Life Center, San Francisco
Tuesday, 8 pm

DATE	SPEAKER	HOME GROUP	DOS
07/06/04	Joe H.	Valencia Smokefree	05/09/87
07/13/04	Liz G.	Rule 62	03/13/92
07/20/04	Coy D.	How It Works	03/13/83
07/27/04	Tom C.	Cocoanuts	07/02/87

FRIDAY ALL GROUPS

1101 O'Farrell, Urban Life Center, San Francisco
Friday, 8:30 pm
Signed for the hearing impaired

DATE	HOST GROUP	SPEAKER
07/02/04	TBA	Nick T.
07/09/04	Women Who Drank Too Much	Lorraine
07/16/04	One Liner (Fell Street)	Renne B.
07/23/04	Ten Years After	Edmund
07/30/04	Serenity Seekers	Ann Q.

BRISBANE BREAKFAST BUNCH

250 Visitation Way
(Community Center under the Library)
Brisbane, Sunday, 11 am

DATE	SPEAKER	FROM
07/04/04	Dan P.	San Bruno
07/11/04	Stacey S.	San Mateo
07/18/04	Bob M.	San Francisco
07/25/04	Gary B.	So. San Francisco



The Point is now online!!
Visit www.aasf.org—and
tell a friend!

4th of July Alcathon

Sunday – Sunday - Sunday
10am – 6pm

Frank's Ranch
563 McClay Road, Novato

Take Novato Blvd to McClay Road
563 McClay Road is on the right towards the very end
—before you go 'round the bend.

Some Parking is available at Frank's.

for information call Jerry 415-883-2592

Bring the Kids

Swimming ~ bring your own towel

No Pets, please

Bar-B-Que from 1-3pm

Burgers, hot dogs, beans and refreshments

Potluck ~ please bring salad, desert or
side dish

LIVING SOBER / WESTERN ROUNDUP 2004

Friday, July 2nd - Sunday, July 4th
Bill Graham Civic Center Auditorium
99 Grove Street, San Francisco

Meetings – Workshops – Dance – Musical – Art

Archives – Bingo – Raffle – Fellowship

Sobriety "Def" Jam – Childcare – Meditation Room

For more information & to register, go to:

www.Livingsober.org

Release from Bondage

By Carlos S.

My name is Carlos. I'm an alcoholic and a junkie. I was born in Puerto Rico and I spent twenty years in the merchant marines. I've been drunk and high in every port in the world. When I came back to the States I got in trouble with the law and was in and out of prison for thirty years.

I got clean and sober for the first time with Alcoholics Anonymous in prison. After I was released I stayed clean for a while. But if I drank, I would be back on the heroin. The drink always led to the drug. I couldn't get any clean and sober time. But I kept going to meetings.

When the secretary of a meeting asked me to read How It Works, I would make an excuse and say I forgot my glasses. I was ashamed because I couldn't read or write. Then somebody in AA told me about Project Read, at the San Francisco Public Library. They have volunteers there who teach literacy to

adults. A lady named Michelle taught me. Now when I go to meetings and the secretary asks me to read, I don't have to make a phony excuse. I can't express in words my gratitude to Michelle and everybody at Project Read.

When I was sober, my life became better. I learned to read and write and I had a job and a car. I even met some important people, big shots. They asked me to be on an advisory board. I was invited to parties at City Hall. Cocktail parties. One thing led to another and I drank and used again. Then I was off the advisory board but I was back in the rooms of AA.

I have some sober time now, just for today. I don't drink. I don't use drugs. I quit smoking cigarettes one day at a time. Every morning I get up early and go for a walk along the San Francisco waterfront. Then I go to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. ↑

Celebrate our 59 Year Anniversary

***Tuesday Downtown Meeting of
Alcoholics Anonymous***

July 27, 2004

Refreshments @ 7:00pm

Meeting @ 8:00pm

Speaker Tom C.

**St. Mark's Square
1111 O'Farrell Street**

***No Beginners Meeting That Evening
Free Parking, enter on Gough Street***

SPEAKERS WANTED!!

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

(Requirement: two years of continuous sobriety in AA)

PI/CPC WORKSHOP

Monday, July 12, 6:30pm

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

**For further information,
call the Central Office: 674-1821**

(Continued from page 1)

sober. One evening on a business trip to L.A., I was sitting on the outdoor patio of a lovely restaurant. Perfect weather. Great menu. As I was applauding my good fortune, I happened to notice the waiter opening a bottle of white wine for the couple next to me. As he was setting the bottle into an ice bucket (which I could tell they'd need from their ridiculously mild interest in the wine), I heard a voice from nowhere, for the first time since those early months of sobriety. It said, "I think I'll have a glass of white wine. Why not?" I was so surprised I almost looked around to see who was talking.

Happily, I didn't order that glass of wine. Although a bit rattled at the thought, I didn't even have to try that hard to fend it off. In that moment, I knew in a whole new way

what my Step work, service commitments and regular meetings had bought me. Just like the AA people had promised me when I was a newcomer, we have "a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." When my best thinking thought a glass of white wine would go well with dinner, the simple tools of Alcoholics Anonymous kept me from drinking. I didn't even have to trust them much, or like them at all, for the tools and Steps to work in my life.

Once I got it in my bones that I was a real alcoholic (as opposed to a normie who drinks too much), I knew AA had to become the touchstone for everything in my life. The more I remember this, and act as if I believe it, the better my life becomes. The further afield I go, the closer I come to the insanity that precedes the first drink. ↑

Dear Alky

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

Dear Alky,

After I gave up alcohol I started eating and I haven't stopped. I eat when I am nervous or tired or bored. I notice a craving for sweets and especially chocolate. Is this a substitute for alcohol? I know that alcohol has a lot of calories, so I thought when I stopped drinking I would lose weight. I gained twenty pounds in a year and I can't get into any of my clothes. My face is broken out and this is making me depressed. I feel as if my metabolism is adversely affected by sobriety. No one told me about this.

Feeling Fat

Dear Feeling Fat,

Somewhere in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, it is recommended that the alcoholic have candy, especially chocolate, available to satisfy cravings without resorting to alcohol. This may not be the best substitute for you. Think about the AA acronym HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired). If you are hungry, eat. But if you are angry, make an amends. Lonely, pick up the phone. Tired, take a nap. Talk to others about what they do. You may need to see a doctor to be sure there is nothing else affecting your metabolism and to set up a healthy weight control program. For now, buy yourself some new clothes. You're sober, you're worth it!

Hang in there,

Alky

Dear Alky,

What do you do with a stubborn sponsee? He was making progress until he got to Step Four. Now he doesn't call me. He didn't show up the last time we were supposed to meet. We had been talking regularly on the phone and meeting once a week to go over what he had written, and then he balked. The last time I talked to him he said he needed more time. How much time should you take to do your Fourth Step? My own sponsor had me do a step a month and I was finished with all twelve in my first year. I feel like an old timer saying what is it with these young alcoholics? They just don't have the willingness I guess. Or am I being too harsh?

Stood up Sponsor

Dear Stood Up,

I asked several people what they would do in the same situation. It turns out to be surprisingly common that a newcomer slows down drastically at some point while working the steps, usually at Steps Four and Five and then again at Eight and Nine. Not surprising. These are challenging steps. As long as your new alcoholic wants to stay sober, continue to talk with him on the phone and arrange to meet with him whether or not he has anything to read to you. Working with another alcoholic keeps you sober. On the other hand, if you sincerely believe that he doesn't want to work the steps, then you may need to let him go



his own way, and use your time to work with someone who really

wants to get sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Keep up the good work!

Alky

Dear Alky,

I am sure you have never heard this problem before! I am on Step Nine. I believe I should make amends to my drug dealer. He gave me drugs on credit, and then I got clean and sober when I still owed the man a lot of money. My sponsor says I do not need to make amends to my dealer. The dealer was not the type who would come after me in any kind of violent way but I feel bad paying my other bills but not paying him. Should I pay him back regardless of what my sponsor says? Is this a ridiculous question?

Ex-Customer

Dear Ex-Customer,

Not ridiculous, but original. Step Nine says, "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, *except when to do so would injure them or others.*" The Big Book also reminds us not to do unnecessary harm to ourselves, like the man whose ex-wife has a warrant out for him for non-payment of alimony - if he turns himself in to the judge, he'll be in jail, unable to pay her anything.

Think about it. How are you going to make your amends? Write a check? Pay a personal visit? If you write a check and send it to the dealer's last address, it would be traceable to you, which might harm you legally. If you go find your old dealer in person, assuming you know where he is, then you will be in a slippery place, with all the temptations. Your sponsor is right. The cost of this amends is too high.

Write it off,

Alky ↑

September 3rd - 5th, 2004 - Labor Day Weekend

The Spirit of San Francisco 12th Annual

Alcoholics Anonymous Convention
With Al-Anon Participation

"Carrying the Message"

Ramada Plaza Hotel

1231 Market Street @ 8th Street/Hyde Street
San Francisco, California

Register Online: www.spirit-sf.org or mail registration form to:

The Spirit of San Francisco, P.O. Box 423832,
San Francisco, CA, 94142

Please make checks payable to The Spirit of San Francisco

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

The 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. dbelectric@turnershouse.net

SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE—

Dan P. 650.589-6402

WEBSITE COMMITTEE—

Michael R. michaelr@aasf.org

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE—

Lynnore G. lynnorel@aol.com

SF TELESERVICE COMMITTEE—

Peter M. sfteservice@aasf.org

SF PI/CPC COMMITTEE—

Laura N. 415.931-2567

12th STEP COMMITTEE—

Scott C. 415.614-0249

A Call to Help

By Kira Y.


At the end of my first AA meeting I was surprised to be almost instantly surrounded by women introducing themselves, welcoming me to Alcoholics Anonymous. They handed me their business cards and other sweaty scraps of paper with their phone numbers written on them. I collected those numbers, unsure of what to do with them. Like I was going to call a complete stranger! And say what?

I went to another meeting, the next day, where they read "Suggestions for Beginners." One of the suggestions was to get phone numbers and to use them. At the end of that meeting welcoming women, again, encircled me. I tried hard to match faces to the names on the cards. It was suggested I put notes on the numbers, "the red-head knitting," "pregnant," "scared, but sober," etc... The first number I connected with, name, face, message, hope, was the woman who told me, "Call me, you'll help keep me sober."

When I am bogged down in self-centered fear and the drama of my life, quite often I find myself not wanting to pick up the phone *afraid* of bothering someone with my petty problems. What's the use? But I do it anyway, because I know it will save my life by saving me from my alcoholic thinking and my feeling of loneliness. My disease wants me to be alone, isolated from others. I am reminded that if I can feel alone, there is probably another alcoholic out there, feeling alone, someone who needs a "God Shot," a surprise reminder that someone cares about them. (Okay, enough, I don't want to get too "Hallmarky" here.)

On the flip side, I know that receiving a call is one of the best things that can happen to me in my day. I had an experience a little while ago; I was losing my mind with frustration, on the edge of rage, juggling two toddlers. One was dumping cereal on the dining room rug (on purpose) while I tried to wrestle a poopy diaper off of the other one. "God, help me!" I demanded out loud. Breathe. The phone started to ring. My initial thought was to let the machine pick it up. I hardly seemed to have the time, energy or patience to deal with someone else. I managed to answer the call and it was a sponsee. She was relatively new and was having a hard time dealing with life on life's terms. We spoke for ten or fifteen minutes and found some solutions together working the AA program. Miraculously, the phone call settled down and grounded everyone including my boys. What was it? Was it being reminded of where I'd come from? Was it recalling the changes in outlook I got when I did what was suggested to me? Passing it on? I think it was getting out of the problem and into the solution. H. P. was working through another alcoholic.

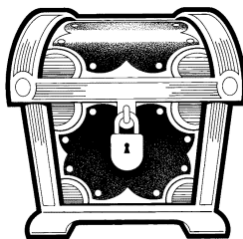
In this age of technology, I also have to remember not to be so completely reliant on my cell phone that I don't have a few choice numbers memorized. I used to be able to memorize whole phone books, though through disuse my memory has gotten shaky, so perhaps that is no longer true. Anyway, knowing at least a few pivotal phone numbers means everything when my cell phone is dead.

I know it's old fashioned, but I still believe that the A.A. I need to speak to most often is my fellow woman. Men are charming, funny, and know stuff. I am married to one. He's even in the program. But he's not who gives me the miracle phone call. For that I need my girls. The more of them the better. And the more often I use the phone, the more comfortable I am using it. Call early, call often, call your sponsor, call someone else. Just call. 

Treasures of the Twelve & Twelve

by Suzi K.O.

I am writing this at a non-AA retreat, the only AA here. As part of the retreat we are performing something very much like a Seventh Step exercise. Somehow we are striving to make a change "of our attitude which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God."



The first day of the retreat, probably in the first half hour, a woman I did not know said something like, "If I could have this, and this, and this, and this, then I would have a full life." Just the week before, someone I do know, in trying to convince me to go with her to a Madonna concert, said, "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity!" Every opportunity is once in a lifetime. Every life is a full life. But full with what? There is the question. As alcoholics, we spend much of our lives "lost in the dust of our chase after what we thought was happiness."

"We never thought of making honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and God the daily basis of living... this was true even when we believed that God existed." I refuse to believe that "God never gives you more than you can handle." Nor do I believe that we always get what we need, despite the assurances of the Rolling Stones. I am grateful that we do not always get what we deserve. I am convinced we always get what we get. That is something I can count on.

My self-centered fear tells me that happiness lies just over there, around the next corner, with a new lover, a different job (I didn't even have a job six weeks ago – but maybe that was better too). My fear tells me that happiness will arrive when I lose five pounds, or buy a new pair of pants or yet another pair of red shoes. My fear convinces me that I will be happy when I receive an invitation to participate in that group of laughing people over there who would surely never want me, or perhaps when I write a successful novel. My fear assures me that for happiness, just add more money, a better car, more cable channels, flatter abs, cats that change their own

litter box. My real, happy life is just waiting to start, any second now.

Meanwhile, in sobriety I have already experienced many once in a lifetime moments. I have married a sober husband I love; I have found out I am chronically ill; I have videotaped the birth of a dear friend's baby; I have watched people live sober; I have watched people die; I have spent two involuntary stays in the psych ward. These last two days of silent retreat, I have spent alone with only myself and God.

Before we went into silence, one of the women asked me, "Are you having a good day?" "They're all good days," I replied, "just sometimes they suck." Character building is no job for the faint of heart. You have to put your back into it. Get your hands dirty up to your elbows. Fortunately, we AAs have proven ourselves worthy of the Hero's Journey if we have gotten this far.

"We ask only for humility, for grace, to be relieved of self-centered fear and all that goes with it. We have already paid the price for its removal. No more is required."

We ask only for humility, for grace, to be relieved of self-centered fear and all that goes with it. We have already paid the price for its removal. No more is required. This does not mean that pain will not still come to us in life, in sobriety, in the course of our days. Pain is the price of admission to the human race. You get what you get. Life itself is a gift of sobriety, but it comes with imperfections. Life may bring infirmity and, if we are lucky, old age.

Success may be getting what we want, but happiness is wanting what we get. We practice the Seventh Step over and over for a lifetime. "We put our lives in order to be of maximum service to God and to our fellows." Grief and pain are good, honest and true feelings. We feel them for others and for ourselves. Our suffering is relieved, every time we turn our thoughts outward, toward the community of our fellows, and ask how we can serve them. Sometimes we serve by helping them. Sometimes we serve by letting them help us. Either way, we find true success. We stop waiting for life to start. Start now. Where you are. With this very breath. ↑

Excerpts reprinted from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

**BROADS
WITHOUT
BOOZE
IV**

4th semi-annual extravaganza

Sunday, July 25th

United Irish Cultural Center, 2700 Sloat Boulevard, in San Francisco.

Fellowship begins at 11:30 a.m.

Lunch will be served at 12:00 noon sharp

For information and tickets call Linda W. (650-341-8494)
or Gerry H. (650-654-7666)

Act now—tickets must be purchased no later than July 17th!





A.A. On the Road: Tanzania, East Africa

By Inder B.

Sometimes I know that I take Alcoholics Anonymous for granted. In San Francisco and Marin there are hundreds of meetings to choose from. Our Central Office provides access to the A.A. literature I need to work the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous with my sponsor and my sponsees. Recently I have had an excellent reminder of how lucky we are here in the Bay Area and that having access to Alcoholics Anonymous is not nearly so easy in many areas of the world.

For about a year, members of the Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous have been in contact with a member of the A.A. fellowship in Tanzania, Inder B. and through Inder we have been in communication with Alcoholics Anonymous groups in this East African country.

Donations of A.A. literature including A.A. Big Books, 12 & 12's, and a variety of A.A. pamphlets were made by several groups including the Walk of Shame group and the Federal Speaker group. With the help of the Literature Review Committee, our Central Office recently sent off over 50 pounds of A.A. literature to the Alcoholics Anonymous groups in Tanzania.

We are hoping to continue to share our experience, strength and hope with the fellowship in Tanzania. I am grateful for the chance to learn about how the fellowship is taking shape there and for the Alcoholics Anonymous that we have here in the Bay Area. The following is a recent message from Inder describing Alcoholics Anonymous in Tanzania:



Alcoholics Anonymous in Dar es Salaam has been stable and new groups have started in rural Dar [short for Dar es Salaam] and this is very good to pass the message. We now have a meeting a day in both English & Swahili languages—lot different from 1992 when the fellowship had 2 members for a meeting a week!!

A research is being conducted by a Japanese Volunteer, Miss Mía Nishikawa and she has

done a very good job mobilizing alcoholics & addicts in an area, Temeke and help start meetings. The provisional results of this research are shocking as one small area in this township has 853 alcohol and drug abusers!! And the result for the country will be staggering. I am personally writing a report on alcoholism in Tanzania for which to-date there are no statistics and preliminary studies show a big connection between alcoholism/addiction and HIV.

Dar has had visitors of AA from up-country Tanzania mainly Arusha and also from abroad – we have had AA visitors from Ireland, England and very recently 3 alcoholics visited AA in

Dar from Oregon in The United States.

The literature from GSO had helped us in Dar and Mbeya groups very much and also a small consignment of literatures and AA books is promised by San Francisco Central Office in California. This is the second time they are assisting our group. AA in Dar is likely to be self-sufficient for future orders of AA literature.

Membership has increased and a several new members have been 12th Stepped and are happily sober.

Alcoholics Anonymous up-country seems to be growing too and regular AA announcements in the local newspapers and a periodical also helps. The announcement has caught the eyes of a local TV station and they are going to do a programme on Alcoholics Anonymous and recovery soon. This is a step forward for us and we are looking forward to a long-term relationship with lots of sober AA members countrywide. ↑

Can you please speak up?

In doing research on services to the deaf and hard of hearing, the Special Needs Committee found a SPECIAL NEED! Can you and your group help?

Hard of hearing members need to see the lips of the person sharing so they seek groups that welcome them, sit in a small circle, and are willing to ask members to speak up. We would like to compile a list of small A.A. groups that match this profile and are willing to create this access for hard of hearing alcoholics.

If your group has access for the hard of hearing please let the Special Needs Committee know by calling Dan P. at 650-589-6402 or emailing sfaslaa@hotmail.com.

If you prowl around and find other special needs that are barriers, and discourage members from using the tools of A.A. to achieve sobriety, let us know; our troops are ready to try to break down those barriers.

In other news, it is likely that sometime in July, ASL translation will no longer be provided at Friday All Groups, but will be provided at another AA meeting which has yet to be determined. Our committee has asked A.A. members who are deaf and in need of ASL translation what type of meeting would be preferable. They told us that a smaller, speaker discussion meeting, held on a Saturday and near BART and MUNI would be preferable. We are still looking for the right meeting to host an ASL interpreter. Stay tuned! ↑



Spiritual Awakenings—New from A.A. Grapevine By Peter M.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, . . .” the first part of Step Twelve has always seemed mysterious to me. How to know if I’ve had a spiritual awakening? When I got to Step Twelve with my sponsor, the first thing he asked me was, “So, are you spiritually awake?” With about 6 months of sobriety, my answer was “Huh? . . . I don’t know.” I knew that my new sober life was much different and better than the years of drinking. Plus I did have a connection to a higher power through my experience of A.A., but “spiritual awakening?” There hadn’t been any burning bushes, talking trees or bright lights that I was aware of. My sponsor’s response was to point out that I’d been practicing the first eleven steps, and it says, “as the result of these steps,” so, I must have had a spiritual awakening! That was way too simple for me. While I thought I could make sense of the rest of Step Twelve by trying to “carry this message” to alcoholics and to “practice these principles” in all my affairs, I wasn’t convinced I qualified as spiritually awake.

If questions like these bother you as they do me from time to time, I heartily recommend the new Grapevine publication: *Spiritual Awakenings: Journeys of the Spirit From the Pages of the A.A. Grapevine*. The book is divided into three main sections: Seeking, Finding and Practicing with a brief additional section, Beginnings, that includes selections from two early friends of A.A., Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Dr. Harry M. Tiebout, as well as A.A.’s co-founders, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S. Just as the Twelve Steps suggest “God as we understood” God, this book does not preach, but encourages exploration and openness. There are examples from A.A. members that follow organized religions, but also plenty of examples from those that are atheist or agnostic and how they have stayed sober and grown spiritually. The book includes a handy index if

you’d like to follow a particular topic.

For my tastes, this book is kind of dense, meaning it isn’t for speed readers (shouldn’t there be a pill to enhance spiritual awareness? No!), but should be savored, ruminated upon and, best of all, discussed with others. It’s perfect for groups already using Grapevine materials for their meetings. The selections are short (usually 2-3 pages) and thoughtfully written and many selections offer wonderful suggestions based on the practical experience of the contributing A.A. members.

I was especially pleased to find a selection from San Francisco’s own, Si P. (pg. 178-180). While I have heard Si’s share several times, I was still moved by the description of his recovery from a near fatal accident and the powerful remedy that working with another alcoholic provided in saving Si’s life and his developing a stronger relationship with his higher power.

My present sponsor likes to ask, “how’s your spiritual condition?” It’s his way of asking, “how are you?” These days, I can provide an answer to this kind of question, and I have become convinced that, as the Big Book (pg. 83, 4th Edition) declares, “the spiritual life is not a theory” and that I must have a spiritual practice to survive. This new book, *Spiritual Awakenings: Journeys of the Spirit From the Pages of the A.A. Grapevine* provides examples of the spiritual tools that many A.A. members have used both to stay sober and to develop their spiritual lives. This book should prove valuable for those open to how others practice the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and who are seeking to add to their own personal “kit” of spiritual tools. ↑

Spirit of San Francisco—Labor Day Weekend

This year’s Spirit of San Francisco Convention will take place September 3 – 5, 2004 at the Ramada Plaza Hotel at 8th and Market in San Francisco. As this is the 12th year of the convention, the theme will be “Carrying the Message” and a wide variety of speakers will share their experience, strength and hope over the 3 day convention.

The Spirit of San Francisco 2004 committee has addressed concerns over last year’s convention about costs and accessibility to the convention. Early registration which closes August 6 is \$20 for the three days. This low rate is possible this year because of arrangements with the hotel, but cannot be promised for future conventions. Everyone is encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to attend the convention by pre-registering. Anyone registering after August 6th will pay \$25 to attend the convention. Online registration is available at www.spirit-sf.org. Any questions

about registration or the convention can be sent to info@spirit-sf.org.

In addition, the committee is maintaining a scholarship fund that will assist those that cannot afford to attend the convention. Groups and individuals are encouraged to make contributions to the scholarship fund to make the convention more accessible to everyone.

At the same time, access to Marathon Meetings and Service Tables will be open to all depending on space availability in those areas. However, registration will be required of everyone attending the convention due to the security regulations of the Ramada Plaza Hotel. The Spirit of San Francisco Committee meets at 7pm on the first Monday of each month at Central Office. Everyone is welcomed to attend to help make this event a success! ↑

AA Group Contributions - April 2004

Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous - San Francisco and Marin Counties

Name	Meets	April '04	YTD	Name	Meets	April '04	YTD
Fellowship Contributions				Newcomers Step	M 7:30pm		300.00
Annual Christmas Meeting	Christmas 2004		25.00	Novato Spirit Discussion	F 12pm	142.18	142.18
Bingo Extravaganza	Bingo 7th Tradition		115.00	On Awakening	7D 5:30am	350.00	350.00
Brisbane Breakfast	Su 11am	34.80	117.60	Pathfinders	Tu 12pm		85.89
Contribution Box	March 2004		196.55	Rise N Shine	Su 10am		102.73
Deer Park Discovery Group			4.67	Ross San Anselmo Group	M 8:30pm		54.00
IFB	March Meeting	102.75	398.22	San Geronimo Valley	M 8pm		58.99
Marin Teleservice		682.00	1,282.00	Saturday Serenity	Sa 8pm	125.00	125.00
Spirit of San Francisco	2003 Convention		577.56	Saturday Women's Speaker	Sa 6pm		105.00
Sunday Step Study	Su 4pm		60.00	Sisters In Sobriety	Th 7:30pm	36.00	36.00
Unidentified		27.63	249.03	Six O'Clock Sunset	Th 6pm	164.00	245.20
Total Fellowship		\$847.18	\$3,025.63	Sober & Serene	F 7pm		250.00
Honors				Sober Moms	Fr 11:30am		18.00
Endless Summer	F 8:30pm	20.04	139.36	Steps to Freedom	M 7:30pm	178.83	474.85
High Noon	6D 12:15pm		36.00	Steps To The Solution	W 7:15pm	50.00	50.00
Sesame Step	Tu 7:30pm		6.00	Stinson Beach Fellowship	Th 8pm		220.60
Total Honors		\$20.04	\$181.36	Streetfighters	Sa 9am		22.10
Marin Group Contributions				Sunday Express	Su 6pm		143.84
11th Step Meeting	M 8pm	100.00	100.00	Sunday Night Corte Madera	Su 8pm		400.00
12 & 12 Study	Sa 8:15am		106.50	T. G. I'm Sober	M 6pm	26.00	26.00
7am Urgent Care Group	7D 7am	200.00	400.00	Terra Linda Group	Th 8:30pm		500.00
A Vision For You	Su 7:30pm		68.25	TGI Tuesday	Tu 6pm		53.20
Attitude Adjustment Fairfax	7D 7am	505.00	2,456.92	The Fearless Searchers	F 8pm	245.00	245.00
Awareness/Acceptance	M 10:30am		120.00	Three Step Group	Sa 5:30pm		400.00
Back to Basics	Su 9:30am		87.50	Thurs. Night Speaker, MV	Th 8:30pm		634.00
Beginners	W 7pm		500.00	Thursday Night Miracles	Th 8:30pm		39.00
Bounce Back	M 6pm		200.00	Tiburon Beginners	Tu 7:00pm	298.31	298.31
Caledonia	Su 8pm	432.08	432.08	Tiburon Haven	Su 12pm		120.00
Candlelight	Su 8:30pm		79.23	Tiburon Women's Candlelight	W 8pm		39.76
Candlelight Meditation	M 7:30pm	60.00	60.00	Wednesday Mid-Week	W 6pm		55.73
Creeside New Growth	Su 7pm	90.00	165.00	Wednesday Night Candlelight	W 8pm		152.00
Crossroads	Su 12pm		497.00	Wednesday Night Speaker Disc.	W 7pm		69.52
Day At A Time	7D 6:30am	180.00	180.00	Women on Monday	M 7pm		69.67
Experience, Strength & Hope	Sa 6pm		111.00	Women on Wednesday	W 7pm		64.86
Fairfax Friday Night	F 8:30pm	46.18	46.18	Women's Big Book	Tu 10:30am	82.50	152.50
Fireside	F 8pm		35.50	Working Dogs	W 12:05pm		313.25
Freedom Finders	F 8:30pm		388.28	Total Marin Contributions		\$3,637.72	\$14,406.68
Happy Hour	Th 6pm	122.49	233.49	SF Group Contributions			
High & Dry	W 12pm		75.00	12 Steps to Happiness	F 7:30pm		40.87
Island Group	Th 8pm		72.50	A is for Alcohol	Tu 6pm		80.70
Living in the Solution	F 6pm		233.00	AA As You Like It	Tu 5:30pm	149.89	149.89
Marin City Groups	M-F 6:30pm	100.00	200.00	AA Step Study	S 6pm		172.52
Marin Sober Group	F 8pm		39.50	Afro American	F 8pm		36.62
Mill Valley 7am	7D 7am		500.00	Afro American Beginners	Sa 8pm		59.53
Mill Valley Original Smokeless SS	Th 8pm		50.00	After Work	M 6pm		63.00
Monday Night Stag (Tiburon)	M 8pm	104.15	452.57	All Together Now	Th 8pm		198.66
Nativity Monday Night Big Book	M 8pm		100.00	Alumni	W 8pm		60.00

Continued on p. 13

Continued from p. 12

Name	Meets	April '04	YTD	Name	Meets	April '04	YTD
Amazing Grace	M 7pm		28.80	Join the Tribe	Tu 7pm		128.24
Any Lengths	Sa 9:30am		874.21	Joys of Recovery	Tu 8pm		427.31
Artists & Writers	F 6:30pm		431.28	Keep Coming Back	Sa 11am	1,194.75	1,194.75
As Bill Sees It	Th 6pm	90.44	138.04	Keep It Simple	Sa 8:30pm		86.85
Bernal Big Book	Sa 5pm		281.24	Light Brigade Discussion	Su 7pm		127.80
Beyond 164	F 12:30pm		30.00	Like A Prayer	Su 4pm	158.86	158.86
Big Book Basics	F 8pm	213.73	213.73	Lincoln Park	Sa 8:30pm	63.90	132.40
Big Book Study	Su 11am		47.57	Live and Let Live	Su 8pm		119.76
Boys Night Out	Tu 7:30pm		69.73	Living Sober with HIV	W 6pm		261.20
Buena Vista Breakfast	Su 12pm	327.60	327.60	Luke's Group	W 8pm		59.47
Castro Discussion	W 8pm		242.00	Meeting Place Noon	F 12pm		27.06
Castro Monday Big Book	M 8pm		329.15	Mid-Morning Support	Su 10:30am	207.10	831.19
Cocanuts	Su 9am		125.00	Midnight Meditation	Sa 11:59pm		11.25
Dignitaries Sympathy	W 8:15pm		150.00	Millionaires Club	Th 6pm		70.00
Each Day A New Beginning	5D 7am	236.79	236.79	Miracles Off 24th St	W 7:30pm	27.72	144.23
Each Day a New Beginning F	F 7am	313.00	313.00	Mission Terrace	W 8pm	60.00	202.33
Each Day a New Beginning M	M 7am		154.00	Monday At A Time	M 12:30pm		36.00
Each Day A New Beginning Su	Su 8am		163.24	Monday Men's Meeting	M 8pm		48.00
Each Day a New Beginning Th	Th 7am	189.88	623.88	New Highs	W 1:30pm		97.88
Each Day a New Beginning W	W 7am		459.73	New Hope Big Book	M 6:30pm	501.15	501.15
Early Start	F 6pm		375.00	New Wednesday High Noon	W 12:15pm		547.47
Easy Does It	Tu 6pm	673.00	673.00	Newcomers	Tu 8pm	64.20	226.20
Embarcadero Group	Daily 12:10pm		328.64	Park Presidio	M 8:30pm		87.00
Embarcadero Group	F 12:10pm	55.41	55.41	Parkside	Th 8:30pm		140.40
Embarcadero Reflections	Tu 12:10pm		89.06	Pure & Simple	Su 6pm		28.15
Epiphany Group	Th 8pm	25.00	25.00	Rose Garden Big Book	Th 12:05pm		60.67
Eureka Valley Topic	M 6pm		315.64	Rule 62	W 10pm		396.11
Federal Speaker	Su 12pm		135.57	Saturday Afternoon Meditation	Sa 5pm		61.00
Fellowship of the Spirit	Su 1:30pm	22.60	22.60	Saturday Night Regroup	Sa 7:30pm	30.00	230.24
Fireside Chat Sa	Sa 9pm		198.83	Saturday Serenity	Sa 8pm		362.00
Fireside Chat Th	Th 8pm		88.56	Seacliff	Th 8:30pm	85.15	139.62
Fireside Chat Tu	Tu 8pm		60.11	Serenity House			500.00
Friday All Groups	Fr 8:30pm Raffle	146.00	395.00	Serenity Seekers	M 7:30pm		784.39
Friday Lunchtime	Fr 12pm		140.00	Sesame Step	T 7:30pm	58.78	204.24
Friendly Circle	Su 8:30pm		441.30	Sinbar	Su 8pm		194.24
Friendship Group	W 8pm		125.00	Sober & Centered	Fr 7pm		168.27
Friendship House			9.36	Sometimes Slowly	Sa 11am		57.19
Golden Gate Seniors	Tu 1:30pm		107.00	Step Talk	Su 8:30am	120.00	360.00
Haight Street Blues	Tu 6:15pm		206.00	Stepping Out	Sa 6pm		120.00
Haight Street Explorers	Th 6:30pm		60.00	Sunday Bookworms	Su 7:30pm		115.01
Happy Hour	F 6:30pm		381.80	Sunday Morning Gay Men's Stag	Su 10:30am		549.43
High Noon Friday	F 12:15pm		397.96	Sunday Night 3rd Step Group	Su 5pm		100.76
High Noon Monday	M 12:15pm	197.38	419.45	Sunday Rap	Su 8pm	136.26	268.26
High Noon Saturday	Sa 12:15pm		78.70	Sundown	W 7pm		96.00
High Noon Thursday	Th 12:15pm	102.60	270.87	Sundown Steps	Th 6:30pm	102.00	102.00
High Noon Tuesday	Tu 12:15pm	128.02	384.72	Sunrise Sunset	Th 5:45pm	54.00	54.00
High Noon Wednesday	W 12:15pm		180.00	Sunset 11'ers F	F 11am	25.00	138.40
High Sobriety	M 8pm		168.00	Sunset 11'ers W	W 11am		24.00
Hilldwellers	M 8pm		166.80	Sunset 9'ers M	M 9am		148.50
Home Group	Sa 8:30pm	488.44	488.44	Sunset 9'ers Su	Su 9am		100.00
How It Works	Sa 2pm		125.01	Sunset 9'ers Tu	Tu 9am	120.00	120.00
Huntington Square	W 6:30pm	523.03	648.17	Sunset 9'ers W	W 9am	35.40	189.44

Continued on p. 14

Name	Meets	April '04	YTD
Sunset Speaker Step	Su 7:30pm	60.00	60.00
Sutter Street Beginners	Sa 6pm		469.49
T. G. I. Tuesday	Tu 6pm	28.40	28.40
Ten Years After	Su 6pm		474.72
They Don't Know Who We Are	Sa 7pm		150.00
Too Early	Sa 8am		358.07
Tuesday's Daily Reflections	Tu 7am		83.62
Valencia Smokefree	F 6pm		426.31
Walk of Shame	W 8pm	12.97	12.97
Waterfront	Su 8pm	129.72	405.72
Wednesday Sunrise Smokefree	W 7am		60.00
Weekend Workers	Sa 7am		60.00
West Portal	W 8:30pm		246.50
Women For Women	W 12pm		107.61
Women Who Drank Too Much	Tu 6:15pm		39.00
Women's 10 Years Plus	Th 6:15pm	96.00	96.00
Women's Promises	F 7pm		148.80
Work In Progress	Sa 7pm		64.87
Total SF Contributions		\$7,254.17	\$28,292.58
TOTAL		\$11,759.11	\$45,906.25

GRATITUDE CONTRIBUTIONS - APRIL

SF Gratitude Month

Epiphany Group	Th 8pm	25.00
Total Gratitude Month		\$25.00

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS - APRIL

HONORS

Honorary Contributions	30.00
Honorary Contributions	20.00
Honorary Contributions	24.00
Total HONORS	\$74.00

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Individual -Unrestricted	30.00
Individual -Unrestricted	43.00
Individual -Unrestricted	20.00
Individual -Unrestricted	25.00
Total INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$118.00

TOTAL

\$192.00

"We cannot skimp"

With the realization that A.A. must steer clear of outside contributions in order to maintain its autonomy and independence came the understanding that the money necessary for A.A.'s survival would have to come from individual A.A. members and groups."

Reprinted from "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix", p.5 with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.


Freedom from Dependence

By Anonymous

I eventually learned, after coming into AA, to abandon my old ways and become dependent on a Power greater than myself. "Independence comes from dependence, especially dependence on a Higher Power," I was told. Not for me.

I am an independent person and I don't need anybody or anything. I was a hard-headed newcomer and would hold on to that conviction for a long time. When I wrote-out my First Step, it took me awhile to grasp the independence by being dependent concept, but eventually I got it. What I failed to recognize at the time was that I had been dependent on many things—people or circumstances being two major ones—that I relied on to give me security and confidence. I was dependent on many things my whole life. My sense of security and "not needing anybody" was really a mask that I wore to hide my intense need for and obsession with other people and things to supply me with happiness, love and validation. When people that I abandoned myself to could not live up to the lofty expectations I placed on them and, inevitably, let me down, then would come my depression, self-loathing and resentment. It has been a rude and humbling awakening to realize that my real disease, the reason for my alcoholism and other addictive behaviors, is codependency.

The Twelve Steps of AA, The Big Book and a few really good sponsors have helped me a great deal in becoming aware of and willing to accept this unsettling revelation. My search for validation and love from people and things outside of myself has been a lifelong undertaking and will not go away overnight. I do not like that part of my recovery, of course. Being the alcoholic that I am, I want to have awareness, acceptance and action in about 5 minutes or less. I am a mover and a shaker and don't have time for things that slow me down. This attitude serves me little and has something to do with being that piece of crap the world revolves around. Recovery and change come in my Higher Power's time, not mine.

Prayer and meditation and focusing on the 11th Step also help me accept those things I cannot change overnight and to be willing to change under the Grace I get by practicing this Step. I surrender my powerlessness over my codependency daily and try extremely hard to cut-off the faulty emotional dependencies upon people and circumstances. True independence of my spirit comes in this surrender to my Higher Power and the result of this will be my ability to love. I am truly grateful for this type of dependency. 

Free As a Bird

By Peter M.

I learned early, like many AA's, how to deal with life's vicissitudes: "Have another drink!"

The "facts" of my story, the what-it-was-like, what-happened, what-it's-like-now, are simple: I drank to get drunk—from Jr. High until age 35—with plenty of "stops" of bad behavior along the way. The motivation to finally quit was simple: I was about to lose a marriage and thought sobriety would save it. Me? I was miserable without my two best friends, Alcohol and Romance, and would've continued the pattern of false confidence bolstered by a few drinks and a line of cocaine, but for the intervention of my first sponsor, who saw right through me—laughing at my attempts to justify the "need" (after a dry first month) to go out and drink again. His message was clear: "Follow the HOW of the program, call someone, go to a meeting and don't drink, no matter what."


No matter what...surely that wouldn't include (after five years' sobriety) the death of my father, aunt, two friends and my mother within 11 months, would it? No matter what...surely that wouldn't include a difficult career change, my first major sober relationship breakup and consequent homelessness (of the newly separated), also within those eleven months? No matter what just don't drink—counterintuitive—like a bird fearing flight.

I remember holding the bottle of kelly green liquid morphine over the bathroom sink, the treasure I was washing down the drain, the day after my father died. I remember pouring bourbon on the rocks for my mother, opening beers for cousins and siblings after the funeral, angry I wasn't able to mitigate my own pain. But I also remembered: "There's nothing so bad that a drink won't make worse." I knew that I couldn't do anything about my family—I could only look after myself through prayer and meditation.

I'd learned a simple Buddhist technique of taking in the suffering of others and sending out calm and peace in return. The net result benefits me—the self-centered

egotistical alcoholic—and perhaps others, too. It is freedom. No matter how bad things get, I can use my spiritual practice to help. I can write about my feelings and talk to friends in or out of the program. I can use techniques I have learned in personal and group therapy—I can think the drink through to its logical conclusion: A nihilistic, bitter dead end.

As I grew into sobriety, passing the decade mark, then notching off years like some anti-gunslinger, the overall effect is both cumulative and misleading. It's easy to feel safe, to consign my drunken years to memory's dust heap. But old age, sickness, and death await all who live long enough. This week marks a year since I completed the difficult Interferon therapy for Hepatitis C (picked up from street drugs/needle use). Having to inject myself with the cure, suffering horrible headaches, lassitude, and other unpleasant side effects gave me a convenient excuse (what alcoholic really needs one?) to feel sorry for myself and possibly load up on painkillers or, now that I've cleared the virus, to even start drinking again.

Instead, I can celebrate my younger brother's one year sober birthday next month. I now enjoy the type of real freedom I've always desired: no illusions, no unreasonable hopes, no crippling fears. It's not the life I would've planned when I finally admitted my alcoholism—but it's far better than I could've imagined. 

Recent Deaths

Bill A.

Bill A., who worked on the Conference assignment on staff at GSO, died on the evening of June 6. Bill was 50 years old and had just celebrated 20 years of sobriety.

"Bill's life was so full of love and service, we will remember him fondly and happily and with great gratitude for his life."

—Irene K., GSO Staff member

CONTRIBUTIONS

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

ONGOING MEMORIALS		ANNIVERSARIES	Endless Summer:
			Alex-1 year, Cathy-1 year, Jay-1 year, Jessica-1 year, Sandy-1 year, Sparkles-1 year, Jerry-2 years, David-3 years, Kent-3 years, Tod-4 years, Fred-9 years, Clark-12 years, Jason-13 years
	Bob		Afro-American Beginners: Herman B.-33 years
	R.W.		Diamond Heights Group: Karen K.-3 years
	Curtis C.		Marina Dock: Jim H.-16 years
			Easy Does It: Nancy R.-10 years, Fred R.-11 years
			Ken E.-4 years, Alice T.-5 years, Lee T.-5 years, Lauren H.-16 years, Bill J.-20 years, Ken M.-32 Years, Ann W.-35 Years

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, CA Wednesday, June 2, 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	A**
Bill R.	Early Start	P	Janet B.	As Bill Sees It, Saturday	P
Carol W.	Miracles Off 24th St.	A*	Jeff A.	Eureka Valley Topic	A**
Dan C.	Tiburon Haven	A**	Jen B.	Midnight Meditation	P
Dan P.	Second Chance	P	Jeremiah P.	All Together Now	A**
Dan Z.	Sunday Morning Gay Men's Stag	P	Joe G.	Beginners	P
Danny F.	Each Day A New Beginning	P	Johnny G.	High Noon Tuesday	P
David A.	Living Sober	A*	Judi C.	Tuesday's Daily Reflections	P
David B.	Beginner's Warmup	A*	Kate B.	Friday All Groups	P
David B.	Federal Speaker	P	Kim O.	Easy Does It	P
David E.	Sesame Step	P	Kristine F.	Castro Discussion	A*
David K.	Haight St. Blues	Alt.	Lesley F.	Cocoanuts	P
Dick T.	Attitude Adjustment Hour	A**	Lou H.	Mill Valley 7AM	Alt.
Don B.	Friday Fell Street	P	Lynnore G.	Walk Of Shame	P
Doug F.	No Reservation	P	Marc D.	Bernal Big Book	P
Doug S.	As Bill Sees It - Thursday	A*	Martha C.	449'ers	P
Eric R.	Eureka Valley Topic	A**	Mary Ellen D.	A is for Alcohol	A**
Francesca K.	West Portal	P	Maury P.	Office Manager	P
Gary D.	Work In Progress	P	Michael R.	Huntington Square	A*
Georgia L.	Friendly Circle Beginners	P	Mike H.	?	A*
Grant D.	Ten Years After	Alt.	Monika H.	Back 2 Basics	P
Greg S.	Keep Coming Back	P	Nathan M.	Too Early	P

P = Present; A = Absent; R = Resigned; X = Proxy. 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.

New IFB Reps Present				Liaisons Present	
Brian C.	Mission Terrace	Leslie G.	Saturday Serenity	Shannon L.	Marin Gen. Service
Dallas R.	Early Start	Michael H.	Some Are Sicker Than Others	Stacey S.	San Mateo Gen. Service
David P.	Goodlands	Mike A.	Tuesday Downtown	Steven R.	Living Sober Committee
Edward F.	Happy Hour	Morningstar V.	High Noon Saturday		
Greg B.	Cow Hollow Young People's	Pascal G.	Marin Stag (Mon. Night...)		
Karen Z.	Mill Valley 7am (Alt)	Sue K.	Saturday Serenity		
Kurt P.	No Reservation	Tracy R.	Sunset 9'ers Alternate		

Following is an unofficial summary of actions, information, upcoming business, and service opportunities discussed at the June 2004 IFB meeting. It is provided for your convenience, and it is not intended to be the complete or approved minutes. For a complete copy of the minutes, contact the Central Office.

Summary of IFB Annual Business meeting.

Annual Reports:

1. *Chair's Report:* Danny F. submitted his report. IFB successes included having many IFB reps actively participate on the committees; supporting the SF-Marín fellowship through special events; making the transition to the new schedule; and hiring a new special worker. We made progress but there is still work to do such as addressing the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing alcoholics, the financial gap between income and expenses; updating information on the website, and exploring ways to

cooperate with other AA service entities. Through the wonderful leadership of Maury P, Central Office (CO) is running excellently.

2. *Treasurer's Report:* Patrick M. submitted his report. At the end of the calendar year 2003, for the total year the IFB had net income (more revenue than costs) of \$2,979. The budgeted net income was \$703, so we were \$2,276 better than budget. Total income was \$238,746. Total costs were \$235,766. We ended the year with \$28,041 in unrestricted cash in the bank. In addition to the unrestricted cash, we had a prudent reserve of \$80,064, which represents six months of expenses (excluding literature purchased for resale). Our prudent reserve was increased by \$5,404 to a total of \$85,469 per current policy.

2004 budgeted costs are increasing 8% mostly due to higher employee expenses. For the four months ended in April, we are running a deficit

(Continued on page 17)

(IFB Summary—Continued from page 16)

(more costs than revenue) of \$2,012. Total income (group contributions, bookstore, etc.) is \$4,339 worse than budget. April was the first month where income was equal to budget. For the balance of the year, expenses are projected to be \$3,500 higher than budget due to the IFB's decision to fund one ASL meeting each week. 3. *Central Office Manager's Report*: Maury P. submitted her report. She implemented the "Letters to Treasurers" each month; implemented the changes to the schedule; organized volunteers to represent CO and Intergroup at the Living Sober West. Round-up, the Spirit of SF conference and both SF and Marin's General Service Unity Days. Also upgraded the software on the volunteer workstations insuring software compatibility between all three work stations. Hired and trained Peter M. to replace Lauren H.; completed an annual self-evaluation as well as evaluations for the Special Worker. Attended two No. Calif. CO Manager's meetings, the 18th annual CO/ Intergroup Seminar in San Diego, and the Post-Conference Assembly in Monterey. Organized an in-service seminar on Suicide Prevention training, attended a Small Business Fair, and completed a non-credit accounting class.

4. *Central Office Committee*: Joe G. gave the report. The COC had a one day onsite of past and present members of the COC to share experience and ideas about the COC and how to better improve its functions. They continued to work on reviewing and updating the Employee Handbook and the by-laws of the IFB. They looked at various ways to increase revenue for the CO. One of the pressing needs of finance was Special Needs. The COC is committed to finding ways to help the deaf community. Another concern is getting more participation from member AA groups. The Outreach Committee was formed to encourage increased membership. The COC and IFB are grateful for the excellent service of our present Treasurer, Patrick M., and our CO Manager, Maury P. They formulated the budget for 2004 and the COC presented the budget to the IFB for approval. Our Treasurer provided an Internal Controls Review for the COC. The COC reviewed the retirement plan and a revised plan is being implemented for the COC staff. Members of the COC assisted Maury with the hiring of the new Special Worker. Many members of the COC sat on at least one other committee.

5. *12th Step Committee*: Scott C. gave the report. The 12th Step list is retained and kept at CO to be used by phone volunteers and Teleservice. The purpose of the list is to introduce the suffering alcoholic to members of AA. The committee has created a set of working guidelines for 12th Step volunteers reflected in a pamphlet entitled "The 12th Step Call." The committee has hosted several successful 12th Step workshops, giving AA members the opportunity to be added to the 12th Step list. A new pilot program has been put in place to facilitate members taking on 12th Step shifts. The committee is in contact with Marin Teleservice and liaisons from Marin and SF attend and support each other's meetings.

6. *The Point Committee*: Maury P. gave the report. *The Point* is a monthly publication provided by the IFB. Service and recovery articles are mixed with CO financial information and Intergroup minutes. During the past year, editorial guidelines began to be established, parameters were established for content and story length, themes were developed for each issue, and the workflow was reorganized to be more efficient. Reader input has increased. Approved proposal to increase subscription cost in July 2004 and July 2005. *The Point* is now online. In January, they increased to 20 pages from 16. Additions in 2004: "Treasures of the 12 by 12", "AA on the Road", "AA Trivia", Service Opportunities and Committee Contacts.

7. *Website Committee*: Dan Z. gave the report. The Website activities have been centered on the IFB theme of extending the hand of AA. They have asked each meeting in SF and Marin to update their group information. They have also made several key forms available online, made *The Point* available, and initiated efforts with regional General Service to coordinate their meeting databases.

8. *Archives Committee*: Lynnore gave the report. The committee works on cataloging the boxes of meeting materials, pictures, flyers, etc., writing everything down on index cards and then compiling on an Excel spreadsheet. The plan is to transfer to Access so the Archives can be available on the Website. After all the materials are compiled, they will work on how to classify the information. They have lots of ideas - oral histories, written histories, etc.

9. *Literature Committee*: Doug F. gave the report. Some notable achievements were the rewriting and publishing the pamphlet "For Beginners"; designing and implementing Beginner Packets now available in the bookstore; developing and publishing a list of suggested literature supplies for people starting a new AA meeting; establishing contact with an AA group in Tanzania to which donated Big Books and assorted pamphlets were shipped; providing an article for *The Point* each month about some aspect of AA literature; developed a tri-fold pamphlet entitled "AA Service Opportunities; recommended that the CO bookstore carry *Spiritual Awakenings* and *Thank You for Sharing*.

10. *Orientation Committee*: Bill R. gave the report. The Orientation committee now meets at 6:00 prior to the IFB meeting; attendance has increased. The Orientation Committee gives new members an information packet containing the by-laws, AA guidelines, CO guidelines, CO operations manual and the personnel policies handbook.

11. *Special Events Committee*: Dan P. gave the report. The Special Events Committee (SEC) was formed in October 2003. This committee was created to provide the IFB with suggestions and ideas in the form of special events designed to encourage fellowship and unity among AA groups in San Francisco/Marin Fellowship and to generate interest and group participation in the IFB. In Jan. 2004 the SEC hosted its first event - A Bingo Extravaganza. On June 19, 2004, the SEC will host its first secretary's workshop. This workshop will be soon followed by a treasurer's workshop. The IFB and the SEC are presently working on ideas on how the SEC can provide support for those with special needs in the AA community.

12. *Special Needs Committee*: Dan P. gave the report. The main issue before the Special Needs Committee for the past year has been funding for the one ASL meeting for San Francisco and Marin County, Friday All Groups. The IFB voted in May to fund one meeting with ASL interpretation on a permanent basis. A questionnaire will be circulated to help determine what meeting would best suit the needs of deaf members of AA. A new child care meeting was established at 1757 Waller Street on Mondays 12:30 pm. Many other special needs could use attention and have not been addressed- wheelchair, homebound, visually impaired, elderly, homeless, mentally disabled. The committee has opened up communications channels with Special Needs in New York and the Bay Area.

13. *Nominating Committee*: Bill R. gave the report. The Nominating Committee was activated whenever there was a vacancy on the COC. Nominations were made at the IFB meeting. A member of the Nominating Committee interviewed each of the nominees. The committee then presented the IFB with its recommendations. The IFB then voted on the recommended nominees.

14. *PI/CPC*: Laura N. gave the report. This year PI/CPC activities included; approx. 96 DUI classes; 50 classroom presentations, four health fairs, four conventions, Unity Day, Spirit of SF, two Public Service Announcements (PSAs) aired on Channels 7 & 4 (working on 5). A letter was sent to all K-12 public school health officers. A PI rep attended a half-day training session for SFUSD Community Based Organizations.

15. *Teleservice Committee*: Russ R. gave the report. The SF Teleservice Committee answers the phones for the AA Hotline when Central Office is closed. We are working closely with CO and the 12th Step Committee to provide assistance to the alcoholic who still suffers. We are reviewing

(Continued on page 19)

Financial Statement

March & April 2004 - Intercounty Fellowship of AA

MARCH 2004	Mar 04	Jan - Mar 04		Mar 04	Jan - Mar 04
Ordinary Income/Expense			Rent - Other	125.00	200.00
Income			Repair & Maintenance	178.00	548.98
Group Contributions			Security System	33.50	134.00
Honors	72.42	161.32	Special Events	0.00	135.00
Group Contributions - Other	10,393.14	33,985.82	Telephone	507.03	1,546.96
Total Group Contributions	10,465.56	34,147.14	Training	0.00	94.67
Individual Contributions			Utilities	298.14	594.42
Honorary Contributions	14.00	1,181.00	Total Expense	16,812.76	45,467.62
Individual -Unrestricted	110.50	1,486.96	Net Ordinary Income	-4,140.39	884.34
Total Individual Contributions	124.50	2,667.96	Other Income/Expense		
Gratitude Month			Other Income		
Gratitude Month-Groups	158.83	1,733.22	Interest Income	43.95	116.54
Total Gratitude Month	158.83	1,733.22	Total Other Income	43.95	116.54
Newsletter Subscript.	108.00	294.00	Other Expense		
Special Event Income	0.00	2,108.00	Depreciation Expense	408.17	1,224.51
Sales - Bookstore	8,449.16	22,710.80	Total Other Expense	408.17	1,224.51
Total Income	19,306.05	63,661.12	Net Other Income	-364.22	-1,107.97
Cost of Goods Sold			Net Income	-4,504.61	-223.63
Cost of Books Sold	6,633.68	17,309.16			
Total COGS	6,633.68	17,309.16			
Gross Profit	12,672.37	46,351.96			
Expense					
IFB Literature	123.25	123.25	APRIL 2004	Apr 04	Jan - Apr 04
Bad Checks	-48.61	-27.07	Ordinary Income/Expense		
Employee Expenses			Income		
Wages & Salaries	7,173.84	21,490.43	Group Contributions		
Employer Tax Expenses	788.58	2,861.86	Honors	0.00	161.32
Benefits/Pension	1,026.00	2,040.00	Group Contributions - Other	11,759.11	45,744.93
Retirement/Annuity Expense	0.00	-2,218.30	Total Group Contributions	11,759.11	45,906.25
Workers Comp Ins.	982.44	982.44	Individual Contributions		
Total Employee Expenses	9,970.86	25,156.43	Honorary Contributions	74.00	1,255.00
ASL Expense			Individual -Unrestricted	118.00	1,604.96
ASL- Net- Fri All Grps	793.80	1,499.40	Total Individual Contributions	192.00	2,859.96
Total ASL Expense	793.80	1,499.40	Gratitude Month		
Bank Charges			Gratitude Month-Groups	25.00	1,758.22
Cr Card Fees	90.79	282.67	Total Gratitude Month	25.00	1,758.22
Bank Charges - Other	-5.00	60.70	Newsletter Subscript.	84.00	378.00
Total Bank Charges	85.79	343.37	Special Event Income	0.00	2,108.00
Equipment Lease	565.10	1,695.30	Sales - Bookstore	7,716.27	30,427.07
Insurance	100.55	301.65	Total Income	19,776.38	83,437.50
Miscellaneous Expense	62.66	65.15	Cost of Goods Sold		
Office Supplies	294.44	1,802.93	Cost of Books Sold	5,829.44	23,138.60
Postage			Total COGS	5,829.44	23,138.60
Bulk Mail	0.00	200.00	Gross Profit	13,946.94	60,298.90
Postage - Other	136.00	223.00	Expense		
Total Postage	136.00	423.00	IFB Literature	50.00	173.25
Shipping	3.50	28.93	Bad Checks	0.00	-27.07
Professional Fees			Employee Expenses		
Computer Consulting	0.00	50.00	Wages & Salaries	7,200.00	28,690.43
Total Professional Fees	0.00	50.00	Employer Tax Expenses	714.84	3,576.70
Rent - Office	3,583.75	10,751.25	Benefits/Pension	712.00	2,752.00

Financial Statement

April 2004 - Intercounty Fellowship of AA

APRIL 2004, cont.

	Apr 04	Jan - Apr 04
Retirement/Annuity Expense	0.00	-2,218.30
Workers Comp Ins.	-2.59	979.85
Total Employee Expenses	8,624.25	33,780.68
ASL Expense		
ASL- Net- Fri All Grps	352.80	1,852.20
Total ASL Expense	352.80	1,852.20
Bank Charges		
Cr Card Fees	120.02	402.69
Bank Charges - Other	26.60	87.30
Total Bank Charges	146.62	489.99
Equipment Lease	565.10	2,260.40
Insurance	100.55	402.20
Internet Expense	215.40	215.40
Miscellaneous Expense	0.00	65.15
Office Supplies	-27.10	1,775.83
Postage		
Bulk Mail	200.00	400.00
Postage - Other	75.00	298.00
Total Postage	275.00	698.00
Shipping	-17.18	11.75
Professional Fees		
Accounting	0.00	0.00
Computer Consulting	622.93	672.93
Total Professional Fees	622.93	672.93
Rent - Office	3,583.75	14,335.00
Rent - Other	0.00	200.00
Repair & Maintenance	178.00	726.98
Security System	33.50	167.50
Special Events	0.00	135.00
Telephone	511.91	2,058.87
Travel	25.00	25.00
Training	0.00	94.67
Utilities	132.90	727.32
Total Expense	15,373.43	60,841.05
Net Ordinary Income	-1,426.49	-542.15
Other Income/Expense		
Other Income		
Interest Income	46.16	162.70
Total Other Income	46.16	162.70
Other Expense		
Depreciation Expense	408.17	1,632.68
Total Other Expense	408.17	1,632.68
Net Other Income	-362.01	-1,469.98
Net Income	-1,788.50	-2,012.13

(Continued from page 17)

out Teleservice Guidelines in order to come to an agreement about how rotation is to be conducted. Presently there are no fixed terms of service for volunteers. We are hoping to have a Special Event, perhaps a dinner and speaker meeting in order to promote fellowship and better communication among Teleservice volunteers.

16. *Outreach Committee:* Marc D. gave the report. This new committee will have their first meeting soon. The committee will go out to meetings to explain what the IFB does with the goal of increasing IFB participation so more groups are represented.

Action Items:

These items were discussed and voted on at the regular monthly meeting of the IFB, directly after the annual meeting on June 2, 2004.

1. *Vote on which logo to use for locally printed materials:* After discussion, a motion was made in favor of going back to the old logo. This motion passed, 20 voting for, 13 opposed, 17 abstentions. The minority opinion was asked for and it was voiced. A new vote was called, 14 for, 15 opposed, 20 abstentions. This motion failed. Central Office will stay with the new logo.

2. *Polling for availability to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, COC member.* Board members signed up to make themselves available for service. Duties of the officers can be reviewed in the by-laws.

3. *Distribution of revised by-laws:* IFB reps, please read between now and the next IFB meeting; additions are underlined; deletions are struck through.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm. ↑




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The June 2004 issue of *The Point* contained the wrong Financial Statement. I should have printed the March 2004 statement, which had been reconciled and approved by the IFB, but instead, printed an unreconciled April 2004 statement. Therefore, I am presenting both of the correct statements in this issue.

—Maury P., Central Office Manager

July 2004

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