

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

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

The Point

April 2005

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 herein should be construed as a statement of A.A., nor does publication constitute endorsement by A.A. as a whole, the Intercounty 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.

Spiritual Awakening

by Anonymous

"Maybe there are as many definitions of spiritual awakening as there are people who have had them... When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone."

– Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

A Supreme Court justice once famously remarked that it is difficult to define pornography, then he bluntly pointed out, *"But I know it when I see it."* Similarly, I have a hard time finding an adequate way to describe how a spiritual awakening feels from the inside, *but I know it when I feel it.*


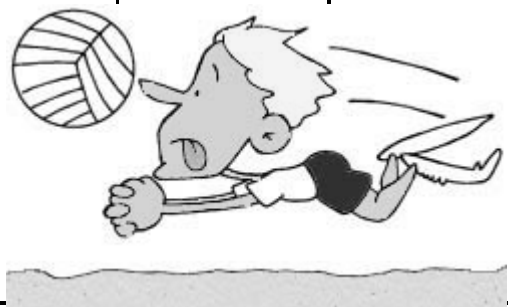
Like many in the fellowship, long before I actually got sober and began working the program, I did a lot of experiments intended to prove my hypothesis that I didn't have a problem with alcohol (and in my case, pot). For example, I would give myself a particular time period in which I would abstain from one or the other of my two favorite substances. (Notably, it was only on the very last of these experiments, the one right before I actually surrendered, that I tried to go without both of my favorite things.) I would go six weeks, or three months, or even six months without either alcohol or pot in order to prove that I could.

Unlike many in the fellowship, I never "swore off forever, with or without a solemn oath." I was not about to box myself in by saying the word *never*, probably because my biggest fear before getting sober was having to live the rest of my life without alcohol. On some level, I must have also recognized that I just couldn't do it at that time. (I'm still grateful that I don't have to worry about the rest of my life; just today.)

My first spiritual awakening in A.A. happened when I got sober and slowly came to understand that the idea of picking up a drink was a much scarier prospect than my old fear of not being able to drink. That shift in my consciousness—from the insane fear of having to live without alcohol to the healthy fear of drinking again—was not something that came to me on my own, despite all of my experimentation. I credit a Higher Power for that shift in my awareness.

That was the first and perhaps most profound spiritual awakening I've had because it formed the foundation for my whole commitment to sobriety. But there
(Continued on page 14)

April 2005....

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4 FIRST MON Archives Committee, Central Office, 6:00 pm Spirit of SF Committee, Central Office, 7:30 pm	5	6 FIRST WED Intercountry Fellowship Board Orientation 6 pm Meeting 7 pm 1187 Franklin St. at Geary, SF (Meets in Sausalito in Feb, May, Aug & Nov., Star of the Sea Church, 180 Harrison Ave.)	7		9
10	11 SECOND MON SF Public Information Committee Central Office, 7 pm	12 SECOND TUE SF Bridging The Gap 1111 O'Farrell, San Francisco 6:30 pm SF General Service 1111 O'Farrell, SF Orientation: 7 pm Meeting: 8 pm Marin H&I Lagunitas & Shady Ln Ross 7 pm	13 SECOND WED 12th Step Committee Central Office, 6:30 pm Marin Bridging the Gap 1411 Lincoln Ave., San Rafael 6:45 pm	14 THIRD THU Outreach Committee Central Office, 6:30 pm	15	16
17 THIRD SUN Mission Fellowship Steering Committee 2900 24th / Florida SF 1 pm	18 THIRD MON SF Teleservice Central Office, 6:30 pm Marin General Service 9 Ross Valley Rd, San Rafael GSR Sharing: 7 pm District Meeting: 8 pm	19 THIRD TUE San Mateo General Service St. Andrews Church 15th & El Camino Real San Mateo, 7:30 pm	20 THIRD WED Literature Review Committee Central Office, 6:30 pm	21	22	23 FOURTH SAT General Service CNCA Meeting 320 N. McDowell Petaluma DCMCs: 10 am Business Meeting: 12:30 pm
24 FOURTH SUN Living Sober Convention Committee 1668 Bush, SF 5:30 pm	25	26 FOURTH TUE Special Needs Committee , 6:30 pm Special Events Committee Central Office, 7:30 pm Marin Teleservice 1360 Lincoln Ave San Rafael Alano Club 7:30 pm	27	28 FOURTH THU Marin PI Committee 1360 Lincoln Ave San Rafael—Alano Club 7:15 pm LAST THU SF H&I Old First Church, 1751 Sacramento St. Orientation: 7:15 pm Business Meeting: 8pm	29	30

The Point Editorial Policy (adapted from the *AA Grapevine*)

The Point is published monthly to inform A.A. members about business and meeting affairs of the Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in San Francisco and Marin counties.

In addition, *The Point* publishes original feature articles submitted by local A.A. members that reflect the full diversity of experience and opinion found within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. No one viewpoint or philosophy dominates its pages, and in determining the editorial content, the editors rely on the principles of the Twelve Traditions.

The Point illustrates the shared experience of individual A.A. members working the A.A. program and applying the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps. Yet what works for one individual or A.A. group may not always work for another. For this reason, from month to month, articles may be published that appear to contradict one another. Seeking neither to gloss over difficult issues, nor to present such issues in a harmful or contentious manner, *The Point* tries to embody the widest possible view of the A.A. Fellowship.

The Point welcomes submissions from all A.A. members in San Francisco and Marin counties. Nothing published should be construed as a statement of A.A. policy, nor does publication constitute endorsement by A.A. as a whole, the Intercounty Fellowship Board, the Central Office, or *The Point* Editorial committee. Submissions of letters or articles that help communicate an individual's experience, strength and hope and carry the A.A. message are welcomed.

Please note that submission of an article does not constitute promise of publication. Articles are evaluated based on the Twelve Traditions, and while editing is done for purposes of clarity, style, and length, the editors encourage all writers to express their own experience in their own unique way. No payment can be made for submissions, nor can material be returned. At times, articles may be reprinted without the author's permission, but the author's byline will always be included in these cases. Email submissions to thepoint@aasf.org.

This policy is subject to revision.

Joke of the Month

Two alcoholics were driving down the road drinking a couple of beers. The passenger said, "Lookey there up ahead, it's a police roadblock! We're gonna get busted for drinkin' these beers!!"

"Don't worry," the driver said. "We'll just pull over and finish drinking the beers, peel off the labels and stick them on our foreheads, then throw the bottles under the seat".

"What for?" asked the passenger.

"Just let me do the talking," said the driver.

They finished their beers, threw the empty bottles under the seat, and each put a label on their forehead.

When they reached the roadblock, the sheriff said, "You boys been drinking?"

"No sir," the driver said. "We're on the patch."

Don't miss the new SECRETARY'S MONTHLY insert!!

Announce these **HOT NEWS ITEMS**
at your meetings.
Help Central Office get the word out.
And don't miss the
COMING EVENTS
listed on back.

Thanks to *The Point* Committee:

Cami W., Kathleen C., Kurt C.,
Maury P., Mike L., and Stephen R.

and to all who contribute time and
energy in creating our newsletter! If you
want to help or submit an article, email
thepoint@aasf.org or call 415.674.1821.



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MEETING CHANGES

Please note: All weekday meetings before 6 pm at 7th & Irving will be cancelled from Monday, April 18 – Tuesday, May 31.

New Meetings:

Mon	7:00 pm	Noe Valley	MEN'S GENTLE TOUCH, 725 Diamond St./ 24th St.; church-enter at gate; no court cards (BB, CI, Me)
Sat	12:00 pm	Financial	POWER OVER DRUNKENNESS, California @ Grant, enter through bookstore (DI)

Meeting Changes:

2nd Tue	6:30 pm	Cathedral Hill	BRIDGING THE GAP COMMITTEE 1187 Franklin St./ Geary (was 1101 O'Farrell)
2nd Tue	8:00 pm	Cathedral Hill	SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL SERVICE 1187 Franklin St./ Geary (was 1101 O'Farrell)
Sat	7:30 pm	Park Merced	SATURDAY NIGHT REGROUP, 777 Brotherhood Way (Remove "wh"- no wheelchair access)

No Longer Meeting:

Thu	7:10 pm	Marina	THURSDAY NIGHT WOMEN'S STEP STUDY, 2118 Greenwich St./ Fillmore
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Please Note: The Central Office occasionally receives reports that meetings listed in our schedules are not there. Sometimes these reports turn out to be mistaken—and sometimes not. The office relies primarily on information that is given to us by A.A. 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, 415-674-1821.** If we hear no objections during the month following publication here, the meeting will be assumed disbanded and removed from the schedule. **Thank You!**

Are you getting *The Point*?

We send a complimentary issue of *The Point* to registered trusted servants from each group in order to keep the Fellowship informed about current A.A. activities.

The Point includes important announcements and financial information about our Intergroup. It is important that this information be delivered to as many members as possible. Information expands the Group Conscience, one of the

strengths that holds Alcoholics Anonymous together.

If you haven't seen a copy of this newsletter at your meeting, let us know. And let your group Secretary and Treasurer know that registration forms are available on our website at www.aasf.org.

Secretaries and Treasurers who register are asked to please share the copy mailed to you with your group.

Recently Registered Trusted Servants

January/ February 2005

We'd like to thank and recognize the 36 San Francisco Trusted Servants and 21 Marin Trusted Servants who registered with Central Office during January and February 2005. Any group listed twice had two Trusted Servants (Secretary & Treasurer) register for their meeting or group.

San Francisco:

Afro American Beginners Sat 8 pm; Alamo Square Sun 7 pm; As Bill CCs It (1st & 3rd) Sun 8 am; Beginners' Step Study Sat 6:30 pm; Bernal New Day M-W-F 7:30am; Castro Discussion (Show of Shows) Wed 8 pm; Castro Monday Big Book Mon 8 pm; Civic Center Nooners Mon 12:05 pm; CLAADAAAGH Sat 8:15 pm; Embarcadero Group 5D 12:10 pm; Fireside Chat Sat 9:00 pm; Founders' Group Sat 5 pm; Friendly Circle Sun 8:30 pm; Friendly Circle Sun 8:30 pm; High Noon Monday Mon 12:15 pm; How It Works Sat 2 pm; Joys of Recovery Tue 8pm; Let It Be Now (Participation) Fri 6pm; Marina Discussion Fri 8:30pm; Meeting Place Noon Wed 12 noon; Men's Gentle Touch Mon 7 pm; Mid-Morning

Support Sun 10:30 am; Mission Dolores Fri 8:30 pm; Monday Beginners Mon 8 pm; Room to Grow Fri 8 pm; Sober & Centered Fri 7 pm; Steppin' Up Tue 6:30 pm; Sunset 9'ers Mon 9 am; Sunset 9'ers Mon 9 am; Sunset 9'ers Tue 9 am; Sunset 9'ers Wed 9 am; Ten Years After Sun 6 pm; They Don't Know Who We Are Sat. 7pm; Washington Square Mon 7 pm; Waterfront Sun 8 pm; Women's Promises Fri 7 pm

Marin:

7AM Group (Ross) 7D 7 am; Blackie's Pasture Sat 8:30 pm; Closed Women's Step Study Tue 3:30 pm; Day at a Time 7D 6:30 am; Downtown Mill Valley Fri 8:30 pm; Gratitude Mon 12 pm; Happy, Joyous & Free Thu 12 pm; Happy, Joyous & Free Fri 12 pm; Intimate Feelings Sat 10 am; Mill Valley 7AM Sun 7 am; Mill Valley 7AM Tue 7 am; Mill Valley 7AM Thu 7am; Monday Night Stag Mon 8 pm; North Marin Speaker Sun 12 pm; Sunday Express Sun 6 pm; Tuesday Big Book Tue 8:30 pm; Thursday Night Speaker Thu 8:30 pm; Tiburon Haven Sun 12 pm; "Tiburon" Beginners Meeting Tue 7 pm; Wednesday Sundowners Wed 6 pm; Women's Big Book Tue 10:30 am

Group Speakers for April 2005

BRISBANE BREAKFAST BUNCH

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

DATE	SPEAKER	FROM
03/06	Bill V.	Daly City
03/13	Joanna P.	Blue Book Special, SF
03/20	Patty S.	Sandpipers Group
03/27	Russ K.	Steps & Traditions, Daly City

TUESDAY DOWNTOWN

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

DATE	SPEAKER	HOME GROUP	DOS
04/05	Heidi H.	Too Early	10/25/87
04/12	TBA		
04/19	Eric R.	Simply Speaking	12/28/93
04/26	Ramona	First Place	11/17/99

FRIDAY ALL GROUPS

1101 O'Farrell, Urban Life Center, San Francisco
Friday, 8:30 pm

DATE	HOST GROUP	SPEAKER
04/01	As Bill CC's It	Joe
04/08	Students of the 12 Traditions	Lori Jean, Marin
04/15	TBA	Regina F.
04/22	Women's Ten Years Plus	Robi L., Marin
04/29	Sunset 9'ers	Lars F.

16th Anniversary Big Book Basics
Potluck at 6:30 pm
Meeting at 8:00 pm
Friday, April 1, 2005
St. John's Church
501 Laguna Honda Blvd.
@ Woodside

Got Something to Share?

The Point needs articles every month for its regular features –

Dear Alky – Got a problem? A concern? A question? Write *Dear Alky* a letter of 50 – 100 words.

Literature Review – Have a favorite AA book or pamphlet? Up to 600 words.

AA Service – How about a favorite AA commitment or one that challenged your sobriety or taught you something? Up to 600 words.

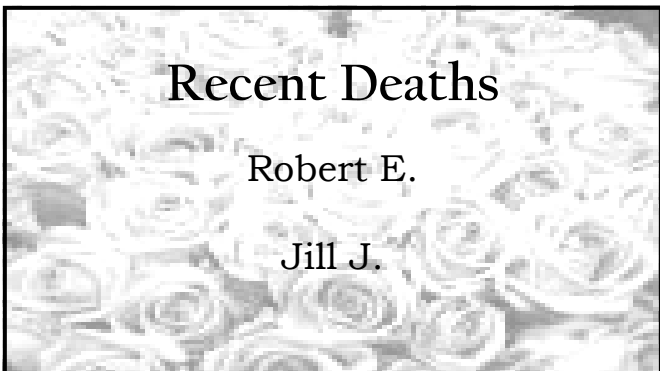
AA on the Road – Gone to AA meetings while traveling for business or pleasure? Moved from SF or Marin and want to tell SF-Marin AAs about the meetings in your new home? 600-700 words.

Inside Stories - Have an anecdote you would like to share? A moment of clarity? A spiritual awakening? 600-700 words.

Treasures of the 12 & 12 – Want to dig into one of the Twelve Traditions of AA? Up to 900 words.

Cover Story – Share your experience strength and hope? Cover stories can be about any theme related to sobriety. Up to 900 words.

Email as an MS Word attachment to: thepoint@aasf.org



Recent Deaths

Robert E.

Jill J.

Deep Springs

by Anonymous

*The grace of
not drinking
a day at a
time allows
me to humbly
say yes to
springtime
every day.*

When I lived in New York City, spring meant purple and white crocus pushing through palettes of Central Park snow. It also meant less slipping and falling on icy sidewalks during a night's crawl home from the bar. Now that I've returned to sunny California and been blessed with A.A. and sobriety, I don't have to wait for flowers to remind me of

spring. Every day is the possibility to experience new life springing from my dark history of boozing and blackouts.

Every day also brings the possibility to go unconscious or take sobriety for granted. Work, the freeway, A.A. meetings, relationships and standing in the line at stores are just a few areas where I can start on a streak of judgment, superiority and hatefulness. Fortunately, I have the Twelve Steps and other tools to navigate my habitual attraction to anger and control and help me discover deeper aspects of the spiritual experience that got me sober and keeps me sober today. Using the tools of investigation, honesty and humility transforms my self-imposed victimization into an experience of responsibility and freedom — the joy of living life on life's terms.

I work as a nurse in a large hospital. I work with people who occasionally make me absolutely crazy. By the time I arrive in the early afternoon, the unit I work on is in a chaotic uproar; my coworkers are hugely stressed by the amount of activity they're managing, and I get swept up in the erratic energy of it all. It probably doesn't help that I've just driven 45 minutes up Highway 101 in bumper-to-bumper traffic and I'm running late. The cars are too slow...the cars are too fast...that guy is tailing me way too close (think I'll slow down just a little to show him who's boss.) By the time I hit my unit, I've blamed my attitude on everybody and everything other than myself and I'm revved and ready for a fight. And that's just the beginning of my workday; it gets worse.

I make my plan for the next eight hours and get to work. That nurse didn't finish her task again and now I've got to

do her work...call the doctor, order the procedure, coordinate personnel...(I think I'll write her up and see how she likes that.) X-ray wants this one, surgery wants that one. (I yell in my head and a little under my breath for them all to get off my back and take a flying leap.) A co-worker asks a question or tells me something important and I automatically snap at him too loudly. I look at my hand; it's shaking and my breathing is faster.

The pain of my own self-satisfied righteousness has caught up with me. I've got to get out of here.


Now I'm standing alone in a small room, leaning over a counter to get my balance, and a thought arises: *You're about to lose it in a big way and you don't know what to do.* I suddenly realize this is the absolute truth. Everything stops.

My Higher Power has blessed me with the willingness to honestly not know what's going on with me.

Humility takes hold, I can see that I don't know the whole story, and I become teachable once again. Because I'm not drinking, I choose to hear what I have yet to hear and see what I have yet to see; this is true investigation. I wait quietly. My thoughts are now a message of deep silence:

You are not your job, your upsets, your thoughts, your feelings, your troubles, your desires, your doing. You are not who you think you are. You have forgotten that you are a child of God, whole and complete, not separate from all that is. All upsets and trouble are merely divine nets to bring you home again to the freedom of your Self. Bow in gratitude to all of life; life on life's terms will free you of your arrogance and bring you home, again and again.

The *Big Book* promises, "What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind...we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it."

As time passes, my attitude at work and in my relations has become more in alignment with the gift of recognizing the purpose of life on life's terms; to simply support me in remembering who I truly am. When I remember who I am, then I remember who you are and life's purpose in Truth. The grace of not drinking a day at a time allows me to humbly say yes to springtime every day. 



Dear Alky

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

Dear Alky,

My wife and I are eight months pregnant and I'm having second thoughts about raising a child. I'm concerned I'll never have time for myself. Everyone tells me I'll hardly get any sleep, and I won't get any attention from my wife. How can I go to meetings or take care of my other commitments? What about my sanity?

Sincerely,
New Dad (maybe)

Dear New Dad,

It's a little late to change your mind. It's true that you will occasionally be up all night with your new son or daughter and your weekends are not going to be the carefree times of yesteryear. Remember how you spent sleepless nights and lost weekends when you were drinking? And what did you get out of that? Not even good memories, which you'll definitely get from your time with your child.

Parenthood is an incredible growth opportunity, a way out of our limited selves. You are one of the lucky ones. Many A.A.s want to have children and can't. Others don't get sober until their children are grown. Get some gratitude that you are about to be given a fantastic gift – a new person to nurture.

On the practical side – there are meetings with child care, you and your wife can take turns babysitting, and you can trade babysitting with other new parents. It is heart warming to see the baby section of some A.A. meetings. To learn how one sober parent kept her A.A. commitments – for example taking Teleservice because she could handle it while home with her toddler son – check out the cover story: *Single Parenting: A Pleasant Surprise in Sobriety*, in the July 2004 issue of *The Point* – available online at www.aasf.org. You are about to begin one of the greatest adventures of your life, and you get to do it sober.

Congratulations,
Alky



Dear Alky,
I've been unemployed for nine months. My unemployment ran out recently, but I managed to find a part-time job that almost covers my rent. I've been trying to get my own freelance business going. I'm beginning to get stressed seeing my savings dwindle, but I'm seeing little flashes of hope that my freelance work is about to take off. Do you have any suggestions that might help me ride out this period of financial insecurity?
Thanks,
Nearly Broke



Dear Nearly Broke,

In *Losing Financial Fears in As Bill Sees It*, Bill says, “When a job still looked like a mere means of getting money rather than an opportunity for service, when the acquisition of money for financial independence looked more important than a right dependence upon God, we were the victims of unreasonable fears.”

Not that your fears are unreasonable, but if you find your freelance work to provide a valuable service for other people, you feel right about doing it, and it helps your spiritual condition, then you probably have nothing to worry about. Stay sober, work the steps, and work with others. Your work can be a source of joy and the satisfaction of being useful, of putting something into the stream of life, as well as a way to make a living.

Faithfully,
Alky



Dear Alky,
I recently got a job working at an alcohol and drug rehab program. One great perk is that I get paid to take the clients to four A.A. meetings a week. Another is I get to be reminded regularly of where I can end up if I drink again. However, I've noticed that I've started to feel a little crazy after spending so much time surrounded with so many people who are freshly detoxing. I'm not sure how I can ensure my own sobriety stays strongly in tact. Any suggestions you have would be most appreciated.
Sincerely,
Slightly Nuts

Dear Slightly Nuts,

Believe it or not, you might want to look at the pamphlets, *A Newcomer Asks*, and *For Beginners*. They both have a number of suggestions that may help you, since you are surrounded by wet drunks and their fascinating thinking. Try spending as much time as possible with A.A.s with long-term sobriety. Not that these folks are going to be perfect, but they may be calmer than the people at the recovery house. Stick with the winners and you will have more to give your clients. You need support to counterbalance all the toxicity around you. Stay in touch with your own sponsor on a regular basis. Get to some meetings outside of work. Telephone your “sobriety buddies” for a reality check once in a while.

Take care of yourself,
Alky

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—

Joe G. 415.350-0373

VICE CHAIR—

Steve R. calmont1@aol.com

TREASURER—

Danna P. dannajp@earthlink.net

RECORDING SECRETARY—

Don B. 415.777-9374

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

CENTRAL OFFICE COMMITTEE—

Danny F. dannyf112@earthlink.net

12th STEP COMMITTEE—

Needs a Chairperson call CO for info.

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE—

Lynnore G. lynnore1@aol.com

LITERATURE COMMITTEE—

Gary D. 415.922-1341

ORIENTATION COMMITTEE—

Tim M. gryffindor-house@earthlink.net

OUTREACH COMMITTEE—

Lou H. ljhmarin@hotmail.com

THE POINT—

Steve R. calmont1@aol.com

SPECIAL EVENTS—

David B. dbelectric@turnershouse.net

SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE—

Pene P. 415.200-6261

WEBSITE COMMITTEE—

Michael R. michaelr@aasf.org

SF TELESERVICE COMMITTEE—

Rick P./Mary P. sfteservice@aasf.org

SF PI/CPC COMMITTEE—

Laura N. 415.931-2567

Recovery ❖ Unity ❖ Service

In Memory: A Life Worth Living

by Nkechi E

I came to A.A. four years ago and am celebrating three years of continuous sobriety. In this short time I have had the experience of sponsoring several women. As a sponsor I try to pass on the message of A.A., but often I am the one receiving the message through my sponsees.

One sponsee, NS, came to me in August 2003, depressed, timid, full of anxiety and self-pity. I sponsored her through August 2004. She slipped once in December 2003 and came right back, willing and ready to work. We started over and she completed all twelve steps of A.A. to the best of her ability. Her willingness to take suggestions and go to any lengths to maintain sobriety—like attending three meetings a day during a rough patch—transformed her life in a matter of months. Before long, a fellowship and a host of supportive friends had grown up about her.

NS had the spiritual awakening promised in Step Twelve and her loneliness and self-pity vanished. In the process of her recovery, our sponsor-sponsee relationship blossomed into a friendship. In September 2004 she got another sponsor, but we continued to chat by phone and run into each other at meetings and in cafes.

On December 13, 2004, I saw NS sitting at a local cafe with a friend. She was smiling, animated and fully present. I was filled with awe and gratitude for having been granted the opportunity to help her recreate her life through A.A. She was now a graceful, sober woman with many friends, a job, an apartment, a car, a cat, and only a few financial amends left to make. She was experiencing longer periods of hopefulness and setting goals for the future.

Before she left the cafe, we exchanged hugs and planned to connect by phone. She called two days later and left a beautiful message, expressing her appreciation, catching me up on things, and wishing me well. I called back several times and was unable to get through.

On December 20, 2004, a sponsee and I went to check in on NS. Apparently no one had seen or heard from her in several days. My sponsee, NS's landlord and friend, was worried. We knocked on the door, got no answer and left. Several hours later I received a phone call from my sponsee. NS was dead. I was in shock. I rushed back to her apartment. The police were already there. My sponsee, was terrified, in shock and in fear of drinking. We both watched as NS was carried out in a body bag. I knew it was important for me to show up as a sponsor, stay sober and carry the message in the face of this tragedy.

I found NS's more recent sponsor and together we helped settle NS's affairs. We organized an A.A. memorial. An autopsy revealed that her heart had stopped. NS died sober. Having worked with her the longest, I wanted to chronicle the miracles of her A.A. experience for her family

(Continued on page 13)

Treasures of the Twelve & Twelve: Tradition Four by Steve R.

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

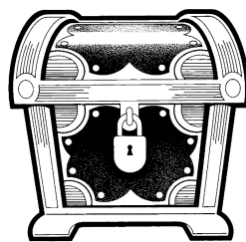
Tradition Four is another of the “unity” traditions. Its purpose is to help a group or service board establish and maintain consensus. How does it work? The *Twelve & Twelve* (p. 189) regarding affected groups states “...those groups ought to be consulted.” And regarding A.A. as a whole it reads “...conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board.” Bill W.’s opinion on Tradition Four in the *Twelve & Twelve* discusses its usage current at the time he was writing and the potential usage he foresaw. Let’s look at some of his comments.

The Fellowship is described as “...a band of ego-driven individualists,” and it was inevitable that every conceivable deviation would be tried. “These very deviations created a vast process of trial and error. We had discovered that there was perfect safety in the process of trial and error. Children of chaos, we have defiantly played with every brand of fire, only to emerge unharmed...” The Fourth certainly has the most wiggle room of all the Traditions.

Elsewhere, in the pamphlet *A.A. Tradition: How It Developed*, Bill wrote, “Trial and error has produced a rich experience... That process goes on and we hope it never stops... We could victimize ourselves by petty rules and prohibitions... We might even be asking alcoholics to accept our rigid ideas or stay away. May we never stifle progress like that.”

Finally (back in the *Twelve & Twelve*), the fictional Middleton Group performed a great service when it abandoned its ambitious social/medical/educational project. It had consulted in advance with the Alcoholic Foundation (precursor to the General Service Board), and after the project’s failure, subsequently acknowledged the wisdom of previous A.A. experience. It laid a stone in the foundation of the future Fourth Tradition. It had exercised its “right to be wrong” and eventually conformed to “tested principles.”

Today it’s hard to envision something new and untried being brought forth by a group that would bypass the service structure and have international repercussions. Using Bill’s earlier fire metaphor, imagine a lightning strike here in the West. Unchecked, the flames roar up and down the Rockies, through Central America and down the spine of the Andes. Devouring the Great Plains they race up the Ohio Valley and the Mid-Atlantic, jump the ocean and the Alps, burning out only in the steppes of Asia and the Cape of Good Hope.



Such a scenario with a new and untried A.A. idea is highly unlikely.

When A.A. was still young, the Middleton Group was on the fringe of the Eastern Seaboard and Midwest axes of A.A. Today, the vastness of the Fellowship acts as a buffer protecting A.A. as a whole, but regional and local practices can vary extensively and produce strong reactions from A.A. travelers such as myself.


On a four-hour layover in New Orleans, I selected a mid-day meeting where no one else arrived. On every table and wall were intense religious icons – primarily the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I took my four months of sobriety across town for a zip through full-swing-by-noon Bourbon Street and landed at a meeting that I had to leave early nearly two hours later; it was open-ended. It may still be going on.

In Buffalo a group purchased a building with its bar intact and proceeded to rent out rooms. Meetings to this day are severely distracted with comings and goings because it’s a pick-up joint with all the old behaviors, only substituting caffeine for alcohol.

In Everett, Washington, a fellowship neither welcomes visitors nor engages at arms length with them; however, at that meeting hard-core bikers are dutiful sponsees of long-timers. In other areas groups emphatically inquire about your sponsor and home group, others read directly from the Bible and discuss it during the meeting.

Locally, a few groups recommend a sectarian meditation technique, and others meditate during the meeting. Then there are the atheists, agnostics, artists and writers, not to mention meetings defined by gender and sexual orientation. And let’s not forget A.A.’s roots and the ultimate sectarian events at meetings: recitation of The Lord’s Prayer and the use of the word God in our Twelve Steps.

Our spiritual, organizational and literary qualifications are equal to those of the founding generation. Our task is to interpret and refine the continuing collective experience of A.A. through the appropriate channels of Intergroup and General Service participation. Consider this corollary: Each group should be *consciously cooperative* in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

That is the responsibility inherent in the autonomy granted by Tradition Four. 



A.A. On the Road: Cruising Again

by Kristen H.

I first got sober in May of last year. Before that I hadn't spent a holiday sober since I was a young teenager. I knew that the Christmas season of 2004 would be celebrated with my family's annual cruise vacation. Not only would I be away from our beloved San Francisco fellowship, where I got sober, but I'd be with my *family*, trapped on a boat with liquor *absolutely everywhere you look*. Let's just say I was very, very nervous.

Thankfully, I have a wonderful sponsor. Gently guiding me on my path, she suggested I do "ninety in ninety" through the holidays. I was resistant to this suggestion from the beginning, and had not yet been willing to attempt the challenge. She knew that in my fear and vulnerability, this was the perfect time to ask again, and God put the "yes" in my mouth. I was committed.

I made it through a trip home to Chicago over Thanksgiving sober, and had my first trial run of meetings outside of SF. The cruise date was approaching, and my mind filled with a million what-ifs. I knew the cruise line offered "Friends of Bill W." meetings, as I'd seen them in the daily schedule of previous cruises. My father, also an alcoholic, had attempted to attend one a couple of years ago. Unfortunately for him, no other alcoholics showed up, and this became my primary worry. I began to think about A.A. Internationalists and A.A. Loners and wondered if I could make it with just literature and email.

As soon as I arrived on board, and after passing on the complimentary glass of champagne offered right as my feet left dry land, I checked the schedule. "*Friends of Bill W.*" wasn't listed. Praying and trying my best not to panic, I called the concierge, who assured me the meetings would

begin the next day. Again, I prayed to God that at least one alcoholic would show up at the Teen Disco, where the meeting was to be held. At five o'clock, armed with my *Big Book*, I entered a small room where I met Dave from Canada and Mike from Texas. These two men had ten times the sobriety I had, marked by their palpable serenity. We prayed, read *How It Works*, and then had an informal chat consisting mostly of them assuring and reassuring me that I would make it through the trip.

I attribute the best vacation of my life to A.A. The meetings ranged from just Dave and me to about a dozen alcoholics. I met alcoholics from all over the country. But more importantly, I was reminded about the strength of the Twelve Traditions and our primary purpose. At one meeting, an alcoholic in his 90s shared his experience, strength and hope since getting sober in the 1950s! A delightful, old cowboy (from Texas, the real thing), he brought his sweet and eternally supportive wife, a member of Al-Anon. I was humbled and inspired.

Our daily meetings and serendipitous encounters on the ship gave me the strength to not only avoid taking a drink, but to actually have my first real let-it-all-hang-out *fun* in sobriety. I went dancing sober for the first time, and have never felt freer.

My experience on this cruise was the polar opposite from my trip in 2003, where I managed to run up an atrocious bar bill and embarrass my family. On this trip I learned it is true that we do need to talk with other alcoholics, and all you need for an A.A. meeting is one other A.A. member. Now I have faith that, no matter where I go, I'll be able to find "one of us" as long as I am willing to search. ↑

FAITHFUL FIVERS! Thanks for Your Support!

Faithful Fivers are A.A. members who graciously pledge to contribute at least Five Dollars each month toward the support of Central Office in its efforts to carry the A.A. message to alcoholics who

still suffer in the San Francisco and Marin area. As a Faithful Fiver, your personal contribution can and will make our vital services possible. We'd like to thank the following members for joining:



AMI JOY Y.
BARBARA M.
BRUCE D.
DAVID B.
DAVID B.
FRANCES L.
GILES H.
HARRY M.
JANET B.
JERRY N.

JIM H.
KATE B.
KELLIE A.
KRIS F.
LAURIE L.
LISA C.
MARGARITE S.
MELINDA H.
MICHAEL R.
MONIKA H.

NANCIE G.
PEGGY M.
PETER F.
PHILIP G.
RALPH P.
RICH G.
RICHARD C.
SCOTT N.
WICKIE S.



Literature Review: Spiritual Experience, (*Big Book*, Appendix II)

by Randy W.

Coming into A.A., I didn't have trouble with the concepts of "higher power," "God," "spiritual experience," "spiritual awakening" or "God-consciousness." I actually liked those terms. Having been born and raised in that "melting pot" of the Pacific known as Hawaii and being the product of a racially and ethnically mixed marriage, I grew up surrounded by different religions and spiritual philosophies from both Eastern and Western cultures. What I ended up with was an appreciation of and belief in all spiritual practices and gods.

Later, as an adult and throughout my many years of compulsive drinking and living a life characterized by incomprehensible demoralization, I always prayed to all the gods I believed in: Pele, Krishna, Baba, Jesus, Buddha, and Great Spirit. I prayed to the earth. I prayed to the winds. I prayed for love. I prayed for money. I prayed for wisdom. I prayed for strength. I prayed for redemption. I prayed for forgiveness. I prayed for death. But I never learned how to use my relationship with God to impact or transform my life.

In the relatively short time that I have been sober, I've been grateful for my heritage because it lends itself so well to the spiritual foundation of A.A. I hear at meetings. I hear from others that "recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms." For me, one of the more profound forms has been that there is not just one way or specific length of time in which we can get sober and learn how to lead sober lives. This is the spiritual awakening of the "educational variety" that psychologist William James speaks about in Appendix II of the *Big Book* called *Spiritual Experience*. The awakening that develops "slowly over a period of time" is indeed more the norm

in recovery rather than the exception. I am grateful for this or there would be no place for me in A.A.

Discovery of a working higher power most often develops and matures over time, changing and evolving as we travel through the Twelve Steps and our lives. We realize that the alcoholic who "has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone." I believe this is key to living a sober life—not living in isolation and learning to get help from others AND to give help to others. No amount of self-discipline, intelligence or stubbornness helped me to lead a happy, useful life. For me, the inner resource which is my higher power does not reside within me. Instead it resides in all of us; it is the very fellowship of coming together and giving our lives to each other.

"Contempt prior to investigation" was how I lived my life before getting sober. I was arrogant, stubborn and willful in thinking I was right and knew what was best. If I couldn't hide behind my arrogance when I was forced to see I might be wrong, I stubbornly hid behind my willfulness. Returning to this program after a ten-year absence, I committed myself to rigorous self-honesty to discover what I needed in order to stay abstinent. I found open mindedness about what that looks like and a willingness to travel that path.

I was disrespectful of myself and others when I drank. To me there was nothing that needed looking into because I knew the answer. "God-consciousness" did not really impact how I related to other people or myself. Today, if I had to define "God-consciousness," I would say it is our A.A. fellowship, the fellowship of being present with one another and helping each other learn how to live. ↑

CONTRIBUTIONS

to the Central Office were made through March 15, 2005 honoring the following members:

ONGOING MEMORIALS

Bill M. (Philadelphia-4 years), Bud C., Fran H.

ANNIVERSARIES

Beyond 164: Tim M. 5 years
Reality Farm: Derek D. 6 years
Founders' Group: Joya F. 14 years
High Noon Friday: Meredith R. 23 years
 Doug P. 14 years; Kris F. 17 years
Ocala, FL: Lyle W. 30 years

AA Group Contributions - January 2005

Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous - San Francisco and Marin Counties

<u>Name</u>	<u>Jan. '05</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Jan. '05</u>
Fellowship Contributions		Embarcadero Group 5D 1210pm	136.80
Brisbane Breakfast Bunch Su 11am	27.80	Fireside Chat Sa 9pm	23.61
IFB - January	83.72	Fireside F 830pm	94.00
Marin Teleservice	500.00	First Place	39.60
Unidentified	120.93	Four Forty Niners F 8pm	28.55
Unidentified	60.00	Friday Lunchtime Step F 12pm	140.00
Unidentified	220.09	Happy Hour (S.F.) F 630pm	63.70
Total Fellowship Contributions	\$ 1,012.54	High Noon Monday 1215pm	46.30
		High Noon Tuesday 1215pm	57.77
		High Noon Tuesday 1215pm	73.02
Honors		High Sobriety M 8pm	327.60
Endless Summer F 830pm	38.38	High Steppers W 7pm	301.75
Total Honors	\$ 38.38	Hilldwellers M 8pm	84.00
		How It Works Sat 2pm	62.94
Marin Group Contributions		Join the Tribe Tu 7pm	244.42
Candlelight Group Sun 8pm	69.94	Keep It Simple Sat 830pm	503.77
Day At A Time 7D 630am	198.51	Let It Be Now F 6pm	100.00
Fairfax Friday Night F 830pm	68.96	Like A Prayer Su 4pm	51.80
Intimate Feelings Sa 10am	183.69	Like A Prayer Su 4pm	76.77
Island Group Th 8pm	228.50	Living Sober W 8pm	128.82
Living in the Solution F 6pm	306.00	Lush Lounge Sa 2pm	51.60
Monday Night Stag (Tiburon) 8pm	142.35	Miracles Off 24th St W 730pm	57.34
Pathfinders Tu 12pm	105.00	Miracles Off 24th St W 730pm	54.14
San Geronimo Valley Book Study F 8pm	43.45	Mission Terrace W 8pm	122.90
Saturday Serenity Sa 8pm	100.00	Monday At A Time M 1pm	30.00
Six O'Clock Sunset Th 6pm	106.69	No Gurus Meditation Su 7pm	21.36
Tiburon Beginners & Closed	512.00	Pax West M 12pm	136.44
Tiburon Haven Sun 12pm	675.00	Pinehurst Tu 730pm	128.00
Tuesday Chip Meeting Tu 8pm	500.00	Rigorous Honesty Th 1205pm	50.00
Wednesday Mid-Week W 6pm	63.11	Saturday Easy Does It Sa 12pm	124.80
Women's Big Book Tu 1030am	45.00	Saturday Night Regroup Sat 730pm	67.50
Women on Monday M 7pm	79.79	Seacliff Th 830pm	60.50
Total Marin Group Contribution	\$ 3,427.99	Serenity House	200.00
		Sesame Step Tu 730pm	9.95
SF Group Contributions		SFPOA Th 7pm	72.00
A Vision for You (SF) Su 630pm	67.00	Sisters In Sobriety M 7pm (SF)	25.00
AA Step Study Su 6pm	198.30	Sober & Centered F 7pm	175.03
Afro American Beginners Sat 8pm	51.00	Steppin' Up Tu 630pm	85.00
All Together Now Th 8pm	108.00	Steps to Freedom M 730pm	116.36
All Together Now Th 8pm	72.00	Stinson Beach Fellowship Th 8pm	451.04
Artists & Writers F 630pm	331.20	Sunday Rap Sun 8pm	60.00
As Bill Sees It Th 6pm	141.95	Sunset 11'ers W	52.65
As Bill Sees It Th 830pm	140.09	Sunset 9'ers F	137.13
Ass in a Bag Th 830pm	40.80	Sunset 9'ers W	26.38
Beginners' Step Study Sat 630pm	124.53	Ten Years After Su 6pm	190.80
Bernal Big Book Sat 5pm	36.22	Terra Linda Group Th 830pm	500.00
Big Book Basics F 8pm	175.29	Thursday Night Speaker Th 830pm	935.00
Blue Book Special Su 11am	97.42	Wednesday Noon Steps W 12pm	104.27
Creative Alcoholics M 6pm	120.00	Women's Promises F 7pm	186.00
Creative Alcoholics M 6pm	60.00	Women Living Sober Sa 1030am	18.53
Each Day a New Beginning F 7am	455.60	Women Who Drank Too Much Tu 615pm	63.20
Each Day A New Beginning Su 8am	488.06	Total SF Group Contributions	\$10,303.54
Each Day a New Beginning Th 7am	304.00		
Each Day a New Beginning Tu 7am	254.58	TOTAL	\$14,782.45
Easy Does It Tu 6pm	139.36		

Gratitude Month 2004 — Groups

Intercounty Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous - San Francisco and Marin Counties

Group	Jan. '05	Group	Jan. '05
Marin		SF, continued	
Six O'Clock Sunset Th 6pm	89.98	Join the Tribe Tu 7pm	116.00
Tiburon Beginners & Closed	18.00	Joys of Recovery Tu 8pm	70.60
Total Marin Gratitude Month	\$ 107.98	Living Sober W 8pm	47.99
SF		Miracles Off 24th St W 730pm	38.01
Ass in a Bag Th 830pm	12.00	Monday At A Time M 1pm	10.00
Blue Book Special Su 11am	26.19	No Gurus Meditation Su 7pm	15.00
Each Day a New Beginning F 7am	157.54	Park Presidio M 830pm	57.00
Each Day A New Beginning Su 8am	84.23	Pinehurst Tu 730pm	42.25
Each Day a New Beginning Th 7am	156.00	Room to Grow F 8pm	40.12
Eureka Step Tu 6pm	72.58	Sunset 9'ers F	82.93
Haight Street Blues Tu 615pm	80.00	Waterfront Sun 8pm	242.00
High Noon Saturday 1215pm	69.07	Women's Promises F 7pm	187.00
Hilldwellers M 8pm	145.23	Total SF Gratitude Month	\$ 1,894.74
Huntington Square W 630pm	143.00		
		Total Gratitude Month 2004 for Jan.	\$ 2,002.72

Note: In November 2004 and December 2004 we took in \$10,517.56 for Gratitude Month 2004 which brings our total to \$12,520.28. Additionally, in Dec. I made an error and credited the CLAADAAGH group that meets on Sat. at 8:15 pm with a Grat. Mo. contribution in the amount of \$14.15 for the CLAADAAGH group that meets on Tuesday at 8:15pm. The correct amounts should be Tues. \$14.15 and Sat. \$21.00. Maury P.

Individual Contributions Dec. 2004 & Jan. 2005

HONORS

3.00	120.00
60.00	21.00
47.00	21.00
114.00	5.00
15.00	149.65
20.00	20.00
45.00	50.00
5.00	50.00

Total HONORS \$ 436.65

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

43.00	1,000.00
100.00	20.00
20.00	500.00
25.00	43.00
300.00	200.00
500.00	25.00
100.00	11.00
1,000.00	200.00


Total INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS \$ 4,087.00

TOTAL \$ 4,832.65

In Memory... (Continued from page 8)

and other A.A.'s. It became my privilege to help commemorate the life NS lived as a sober woman who had found her strength and her voice, and used both to pass on the message of hope in A.A.

Stepping into this unexpected role was a challenge and a blessing. I was overwhelmed by grief at times. My daily practices of a written Tenth Step, prayer, meditation and reliance on my higher power were deepened by necessity. This, and the support of my A.A. community, enabled me to meet this calamity with serenity.

The fellowship that had grown up around NS came to the memorial. I saw each A.A. grappling with their own feelings about her death. As we shared our memories of NS in her final year, many stories came to light of her dedication to her own recovery, and of her service to other alcoholics, despite her own struggles with depression. Through our collective testimony, a picture emerged of a woman more remarkable than any of us had seen alone. I learned that the steps we take in our journey of recovery bless others more than we know. And I know now, more than ever before, that our program can give each of us a new life, as it did to NS, who I saw reborn and spiritually awakened into a life of recovery and service; a life worth living. 

Spiritual Awakening...continued from page 1



have definitely been others. A spiritual awakening is what it usually takes to break me out of denial. The denial that allowed me to continue to drink and take drugs despite a variety of adverse consequences did not simply vanish when I got sober. Instead, it shifted around to obscure

my view of other areas of life, such as romance and finance. Don't get me wrong. I'm not knocking denial. As a dear friend once remarked to me, "Without a little denial, we'd do nothing but sit around contemplating our own deaths." However, my denial tends to prevent me from seeing my own self-destructive behavior. It traps me in bad patterns (those infamous "character defects") that keep me feeling stuck and make me considerably less useful to God and my fellows. Denial also keeps the possibility alive that I will pick up a drink again, despite all the damage it caused me. It usually takes a "spiritual awakening" or a "moment of clarity" to shake me out of that kind of denial.

I've recently experienced a renewed spiritual awakening. After a number of years sober, I found myself drifting from the program. The story was pretty standard. Things got better, I got a full life and slowly but surely, there wasn't time to make it to meetings very often. Nor was there time to work with a sponsor or my sponsees. All but one of my sponsees found new sponsors. I was hitting one meeting a week, *almost* every week, for a couple of years. Fortunately for me, I had pretty solid spiritual practices other than meetings and a lot of close friends who are sober. However, I was not working the steps. I felt safe in my sobriety because I'd been so active early on and really thought I'd "gotten it" about my powerlessness over alcohol.

As time went on, circumstances in my life changed in ways that did not please me. Instead of looking for solutions to my newfound problems in the steps, I began acting out in various ways. I got involved in a self-destructive relationship for several months. No matter how much pain I found myself in, I could not seem to walk away from that situation. I kept

trying the same thing, hoping I'd have a different result. *Sound familiar?*

Eventually I got into enough pain over this relationship that I decided I'd give the steps a try. I approached a woman who had shared and made references to similar self-destructive relationships in her past. I asked her to work the steps with me. I quickly recognized that I was powerless in the situation. The fact that I was literally losing sleep over it was enough to show me that my life had become unmanageable.

In the course of working the second, third and fourth steps around this relationship, a shocking realization hit me: *I was setting myself up to drink.*

My sponsor told me this the first time I disclosed the full story of the relationship (including that the other person is a perhaps more-than-social drinker). I did not believe her and initially resented her presumption. However, by really confronting my powerlessness in the relationship, recognizing the need for a higher power to help me let it go, and making a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, I was empowered to review my behavior with this person. The comparison of that behavior with my pre-sobriety pattern was chilling. It hit me deep in my gut that I was creating a perfect excuse (and even an opportunity) to drink.

The good news is that I haven't had to drink over this situation. I am profoundly grateful and relieved. I am still on my fourth step, sifting through my behaviors looking for the "causes and conditions" beneath my choice to be involved in something so unworkable and ultimately dangerous to me. I definitely have faith that working through all twelve steps will liberate me from the "stuck" place I'd gotten myself. And I know from my prior experience that someday I will be able to use this difficulty to benefit others, no matter how crappy it makes me feel today.

I am already filled with gratitude for the shift in perspective that has come to me at this point in the process. Once again, in order to have this realization, it took a Higher Power, another person, and the steps. 📌

*It hit me deep
in my gut that I
was creating a
perfect excuse
(and even an
opportunity)
to drink.*

Did You Year That? *A Report from the Special Needs Committee* by Stacey S.

I am constantly reminded that it's one alcoholic sharing with another alcoholic that keeps me from that first drink, and how important 12-Step work is. However, I never considered that some people might not be able to actually *hear* the message.

Through involvement with the IFB and its Special Needs/Accessibility Committee (SNAC), I watched the members pull together a solution to insure our deaf community has at least one meeting a week in which they can hear the message through ASL interpretation.


We have since found that another problem exists with the hard-of-hearing. "Approximately 10% of Americans have hearing loss," and "90% of those have lost some, but not all, of the hearing used to understand speech." These were some of the facts presented to the IFB by Laura Clark of the Hearing Society for the Bay Area, who attended our January meeting to educate us on Assistive Listening Devices for the hard-of-hearing.

Prior to Laura's talk, I heard some members complaining about why we were spending time on this, and although I was interested, I must admit I was expecting some sort of sales pitch on expensive equipment that might benefit a few. As has been my experience, what "I thought" and "what was," were two completely different things. Not only was I made aware of the severity of this problem, but I walked away wondering if this was the reason some of the older members who used to attend my Tuesday evening

meeting no longer showed up – was it because we ceased using the P.A. system?

Laura conducted an audio exercise demonstrating examples of varying levels of hearing loss. I was amazed to find that as my ability to hear decreased, so did my comfort level as did my level of integrity. I started adjusting my position to lean closer to the sound, but acting *as if* my leg was cramped; I tried focusing on the stained glass windows in the room acting *as if* I was deep in thought; all the while feeling ignorant because I had no idea what was being said.

What really blew my mind was that simple and immediate action could be taken by groups to help with this problem. The IFB's website contains a downloadable document entitled *Communications Strategies for Groups* with tips on ensuring our hard-of-hearing members stand a better chance of *hearing* the message. Download the document at <http://www.aasf.org/formsGroupCommunicationStrategies.pdf>

We are taking action to make A.A. more available to people with special needs and this isn't restricted to the deaf or hard-of-hearing. If we don't know a problem exists, we can't find a solution. This is why a constant flow of information between A.A. members and our committees is important and why it is important that groups have representation at the IFB and General Service. We'd also like to encourage groups to respond to information requests and surveys from our various committees. 

The SNAC could use your support. They meet at 6:30pm the 4th Tuesday of each month at Central Office. Call 415-674-1821 for info.

Special Events Committee Combines Service and Fun by Fran K.

My journey into the the Intercounty Fellowship Board, (IFB) started with me asking one too many questions of a friend who is very involved in the San Francisco fellowship.

She said, "I can tell you about the functions of various service committees within A.A., but until you experience this program on many levels for yourself, you will not truly understand their importance."

What he said reminded me of the Twelve Steps. I could read the *Big Book*, from beginning to end and think I am working the program. Yet it wasn't until I took the action of working the steps with a sponsor that spiritual awakening occurred. I had to experience the program in all parts of my life to understand how recovery works.

After being in program for about two years, I chose to check out the IFB because I wanted to see A.A. continue to grow in San Francisco. It's not that I thought A.A. would perish without me; not even this alcoholic's ego is that big,

but rather I could no longer expect others to do the footwork, while I kicked back and enjoyed the benefits. The only type of service I was doing at that time was lip service. I knew I could be part of the problem or part of the solution. I chose the latter.

There are many subcommittees within the IFB. The one I chose was the Special Events Committee (SEC), one of the newer committees within the IFB. Its primary purpose, paraphrased from David B. is to provide the IFB with suggestions for A.A.-related Special Events, such as workshops, picnics and dances designed to encourage fellowship and unity within A.A.

It was the IFB members who threw the "Low Bottom Bingo" event who really touched my heart. They wanted to make sure ASL (American Sign Language) continued being provided at a meeting and money was needed for that. The group of volunteers gave 150% of themselves and were

(Continued on page 18)

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, March 2, 2005**

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	
Amber W.	Sisters Circle	P	Gary D.	Work In Progress	P	Nick T.	Cocoanuts	P
Bill V.	Attitude Adjustment, Fairfax	P	Georgia L.	Friendly Circle Beginners	P	Omar C.	Tues. Chip	P
Bob W.	Creative Alcoholics	R	Grant D.	Ten Years After	A*	Pascal G.	Marin Stag (Mon. Night...)	P
Brian C.	Mission Terrace	P	Greg S.	Keep Coming Back	P	Penelope P.	Amazing Grace	P
Carol W.	Miracles Off 24th St.	A**	Jacqui G.	High Noon Thursday	P	Peter S.	All Together Now	A**
Dan Z.	Sunday Morning Gay Men's Stag	P	Jim T.	First Place	P	Ray M.	Sunday Rap	P
Daniel B.	Too Early	P	Joe G.	Beginners	P	Rebecca S.	Room To Grow	A**
Danny F.	Each Day A New Beginning	A**	Johnny G.	High Noon Tuesday	A**	Rebekah D.	Fell Street Step	A**
David A.	Living Sober	A**	Judi C.	Tuesday's Daily Reflections	P	Ryan W.	Tiburon BB	P
David B.	Beginner's Warmup	P	Kristine F.	Castro Discussion	P	Rudi D.	Serenity Seekers	P
David B.	Federal Speaker	P	Larry L.	The 24 Hour Plan	P	Russell G.	Regroup	P
David E.	Sesame Step	R	Lillian R.	Women's Promises	P	Scott N.	Sunset 11'ers Sa	P
David P.	Goodlands	A*	Lou H.	Mill Valley 7AM	P	Shiloh A.	Fireside Chat	R
David S.	High Sobriety	R	Lynnore G.	Walk Of Shame	P	Steve N.	Terra Linda Group	P
Don B.	Friday Fell Street	P	Martha C.	449'ers	P	Stephen R.	Valencia Smokefree	P
Charles M.	Founders Group	P	Maury P.	Office Manager	P	Steven S.	Homegroup	P
Danna P.	Treasurer	P	Melanie L.	Second Chance	A**	Tim M.	Join the Tribe	P
Dave F.	Reality Farm	P	Meredith R.	High Noon Friday	A*	Tim T.	Some Are Sicker Than...	A*
Doug D.	As Bill Sees It	P	Michael R.	Huntington Square	P	Tom B.	Eureka Valley Topic	P
Edward F.	Happy Hour	P	Mitzi H.	New Hope Big Book	P	Victor V.	Stepping Up	P
Francesca K.	West Portal	P	Monika H.	SFPOA	P			

P = Present; A = Absent; R = Resigned. 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	
Gaspar L.	Keep It Simple Sa 8:30pm	Miriam R.	Happy Hour (Alt.) F 6:30pm	Adam E.	San Mateo General Service
Heidi S.	Cow Hollow Young People's Tu 7:30pm	Stephan S.	Artists and Writers F 6:30pm	Ashley N.	SF PI/CPC
Matt S.	Waterfront Group Su 8pm			Matt T.	Marin Teleservice
				Trevor F.	Marin General Service

Following is an unofficial summary of actions, information, upcoming business and service opportunities discussed at the March 2005 IFB meeting. It is provided for your convenience and it is not intended to be the completed approved minutes. For a complete copy of the minutes, contact the Central Office.

A. IFB Reports

Chair's Report: Joe G. reported that microphones and amplified sound will be present at future IFB meetings. The Bylaws Review Committee met and will propose amendments to the bylaws to be read at the next three IFB meetings, as required by the bylaws.

Treasurer's Report: Danna P. gave the report. Total net income for January was \$4,173, which was \$2,550 better than budget. Discretionary cash as of January 31 totaled \$46,824 and is sufficient to pay the expenses budgeted for the next two months. In March \$7,200 of discretionary cash will be transferred to the supplemental compensation account. The prudent reserve was raised in accordance with our

bylaws, which require a six month reserve. A check for \$5,100 was deposited bringing the balance to \$90,912.

Central Office Manager's Report: Maury P. gave the report. She thanked the Special Events Committee for hosting the very successful Trusted Servants Workshop. There are two phone shifts open at the Central Office – a Monday morning shift and a Friday afternoon shift. She requested that IFB members inform their groups about the availability of substitute phone shifts. Maury requested that anyone submitting a written document for IFB meeting packets get them to Peter at the Central Office no later than noon the day prior to the IFB meeting.

Central Office Committee Report: Greg S. gave the report. While Maury's on leave, Peter M. will report to the COC each month. Maury P.'s three year anniversary is in March and Joe G. and Danny F. will conduct her annual review. The COC agreed to continue to decline "In Memoriam" contributions from non-members.

(Continued on page 17)

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Central Office Committee Vacancy

Due to a resignation, there is a vacancy on the COC. IFB members were polled to determine their availability to fill the vacant slot. The following members declared themselves as available: Bill V., Chris T., Lynnore G., Rudi D., and Victor V. The Nominating Committee will contact the candidates prior to the next IFB meeting to determine their eligibility to serve. The IFB will elect a new COC member at the next meeting.

C. IFB Committee Reports

Outreach Committee: The committee has developed both a "script" and "talking points" for presentation to groups that aren't currently represented on the IFB. The "script" is a prepared presentation and "talking points" highlight the role of IFB reps and the functions of the IFB. David B. and Lou H. demonstrated the "script" and "talking points" pitches. A target meeting list will be available at the next IFB meeting. The Outreach Committee will ask IFB members to sign up to make presentations to three meetings on the list. Ray M. will contact meetings designated as wheelchair accessible. The committee meets the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

Lease Committee: Tom B. reported that the current lease has no early termination clause.

Literature Review Committee: Gary D. gave the report. The committee did not meet last month. There is a need for volunteers who are willing to contribute articles to *The Point* on a regular basis. The committee meets the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

The Point Editorial Committee: Our bulk mail price is increasing. There will be a subscription price increase later in the year. Local AA members who are interested in writing for the newsletter are encouraged to contact the committee.

Orientation Committee: Tim M. reported that that six people attended the February orientation. IFB members are required to attend an orientation meeting before they are eligible to vote. The orientation of new IFB members takes place each month at 6:00 pm, one hour prior to the monthly IFB meeting.

Website Committee: Michael R. and Dan Z. gave a demonstration of the new website format. Many new features and links have been added. The committee was commended for its efforts in improving the website.

12th Step Committee: No report. The committee meets the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

Special Events Committee: David B. reported that the Trusted Servants Workshop held in February was well attended and successful. Upcoming events include a Founders Day event on June 11, being coordinated with General Service, a Bingo event on May 7, Unity Day in the Fall, date to be determined, and a Halloween event on October 28. The committee has changed its monthly meeting date from the first Tuesday of the month to the fourth Tuesday of the month, beginning in April, however the next committee meeting is on Tuesday, March 29th at 7:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

Special Needs Committee: Pene P. gave the report. Due to lack of consistent participation by signers and deaf AA members, ASL has been cancelled at the Sutter Street Beginners meeting. The committee is researching other sites, particularly Mon. - Thurs. meetings. The committee meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

Archives Committee: Lynnore G. reported that the committee has only three members and needs more volunteers. The committee meets the first Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Central Office.

Nominating Committee: Ray M. reported that there is a vacancy on the Nominating Committee. Persons interested in serving on the committee should contact him after the meeting.

D. IFB Standing Committee Reports

SF Teleservice: Written report. A nationwide survey of teleservice operations is available. IFB members who would like a copy of the survey can contact SF Teleservice Chair Mary P. The committee meets on the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

PI/CPC: Ashley N. gave the report. There is a need for Spanish Liaison. The committee meets the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Central Office.

D. Group Rep Reports: None

E. Non-IFB Liaison Reports

General Service, SF: Brian C. gave the report. A condensed form of the 12 Concepts is being developed. The committee meets the second Tuesday of the month at 1111 O'Farrell. Orientation is at 7:00 p.m. and business meeting is at 8:00 p.m.

General Service, Marin: Trevor F. reported that there will be an Agenda Topics Workshop on March 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to develop topics for the General Service Conference in April. The committee meets the third Monday of the month at 9 Ross Valley Road, San Rafael. GSR sharing at 7:00 p.m.; business meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Teleservice, Marin: Matt T. reported that approximately 150 people attended the Spaghetti Feed held on February 26. The committee meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at 1360 Lincoln, San Rafael.

PI/CPC, Marin: No report. The committee meets the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:15 p.m. at 1360 Lincoln, San Rafael.

Bridging the Gap: No report. The SF committee meets the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. 1111 O'Farrell, San Francisco. The Marin committee meets the second Wednesday of the month at 6:45 p.m. at 1411 Lincoln, San Rafael.

H & I: Georgia L. reported that there is a need for volunteers. There is a six month sobriety requirement for hospitals and institutions and a two year requirement for jails. The SF Committee meets the last Thursday of the month at 1751 Sacramento St., SF. Orientation is at 7:15 p.m. The Marin committee meets the second Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at Lagunitas and Shady Lane, Ross.

Spirit of San Francisco: No report. The committee meets the first Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Central Office.

The next IFB meeting will be held Wednesday, April 6, at First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1187 Franklin at Geary, San Francisco, at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Don B., IFB Secretary



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Slogan of the Month

Surrender to Win

by Anonymous

I returned to A.A. after a two-week relapse that wiped out nine years of sobriety. I was so twisted I could barely pay attention at meetings. I had to read along with *How It Works* in my pocket edition of the *Big Book*.

At about a week sober I read, "Some of us have tried to hold onto our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely." The sentence seemed neon-lit. I decided it would be the flag I'd plant on this newly sober turf.

If I were to live, I'd have to surrender everything I knew. So I changed meetings, took people's phone numbers and tried to listen to the A.A. message. At a couple of weeks sober I asked a man to sponsor me. He'd said something about the *Big Book* in a meeting that struck a cord with me. We were as different as night and day, but he had what I wanted: sobriety and immersion in the book.

Not that I didn't sometimes rebel. He told me to show up the next week with a hardcover *Big Book*, a highlighter and a ballpoint pen. I appeared with my soft cover pocket edition and a Flair pen. He sent me home. The next week I showed up with the same things. He rolled his eyes, but we got to work.

We read the book chapter by chapter, week by week. My sponsor pointed out lines for me to highlight and underline. I told him I'd gone to a fancy university, and I knew how to mark text. He said, "Learn to follow directions." I took further offense, which just made him laugh.


My first fourth step took three years to complete; this one, three or four weeks. By month nine I was on my ninth step. By eleven months I was sponsoring guys.

Still, occasional cravings notwithstanding, I was slow to surrender in those early days. Early on my sponsor told me that when I woke up, I should decide what meeting I'd go to that day, build my day around it, and then go. At week's end he'd ask how many I'd attended. I'd say, "Oh, I did pretty well. I went to four or five."

He'd look me in the eye and say, "You're not following directions."

I had to hear that about 500 times during that first year before I understood the selfish and self-demolishing nature of the alcoholic disease. Left to my own devices, I'd wind up dead. But if I surrendered, little by little, to the A.A. way—and to the God I'd found as a result of it—my life would improve.

And so it has, dramatically, over the past seven years.

Oh, remember that pocket *Big Book*? At about a year sober I spilled coffee on it, blurring all the Flair-pen markings my sponsor had directed me to make. I went to him with a new, hardcover *Big Book*, a highlighter and a ballpoint pen. With my tail between my legs, I asked him to read me through the book again and he did. 

Special Events Committee


(continued from page 15)

backed by many other committee members throughout the Bay Area. The result was a huge success both in fundraising and fun. I would have sworn they each had won a million bucks, looking at how joyous they all were. I saw no ego, only the love of people who wanted to make sure all alcoholics have a chance at recovery. I know I found people I wanted to work with.

The first Special Event I took part in was "Hot August Nights," a meeting followed by a dance. The music range was from the 50's to today and what people wore ranged from hot pants to pink fur and wild hats. It was an absolute blast.

The last event the Special Events Committee threw in 2004 was "Monster Bingo." Once again there was a meeting before the event and I found it strange to see monsters and ghouls sitting next to cheerleaders reading the Steps and *How It Works*. There were cowboys, cowgirls, monsters, men that got fat then skinny, tacky dressed women of the evening and even the brides of Frankenstein. To liven things up, the Bingo callers would give out booby prizes and put hats on people with signs that read, *Hotty, He cheats, I snore* and whatever struck the callers' fancy. My face hurt from laughing so hard. The night ended all too soon but the memories will last a lifetime.

It is my hope that 2005 will once again be all about the Triangle within the circle—Recovery, Unity and Service. I hope that more people reach out and do service for the whole of A.A., because the rewards are numerous and the friendships that come along the way are a gift from a Higher Power. Thank you all for being part of my recovery.

The SEC meets at 7:30 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of every month at Central Office. Call 415-674-1821 for info if you're interested in joining. 

Financial Statement

January 2005 - Intercounty Fellowship of AA

	<u>Jan 05</u>	<u>Jan 05</u>		<u>Jan 05</u>	<u>Jan 05</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense			Other Expense		
Income			Depreciation Expense	408.17	408.17
Group Contributions			Total Other Expense	<u>408.17</u>	<u>408.17</u>
Honors	38.38	38.38	Net Other Income	-337.45	-337.45
Group Contributions - Other	<u>14,744.07</u>	<u>14,744.07</u>	Net Income	<u>\$ 4,173.24</u>	<u>\$ 4,173.24</u>
Total Group Contributions	14,782.45	14,782.45			
Individual Contributions					
Faithful Fiver	186.00	186.00			
Honorary Contributions	386.65	386.65			
Individual - Unrestricted	<u>499.00</u>	<u>499.00</u>			
Total Individual Contributions	1,071.65	1,071.65			
Gratitude Month					
Gratitude Month - Groups	<u>2,002.72</u>	<u>2,002.72</u>			
Total Gratitude Month	2,002.72	2,002.72			
Newsletter Subscript.	107.90	107.90			
Sales - Bookstore	<u>9,344.61</u>	<u>9,344.61</u>			
Total Income	<u>27,309.33</u>	<u>27,309.33</u>			
Cost of Goods Sold					
Cost of Books Sold	<u>5,809.89</u>	<u>5,809.89</u>			
Total COGS	<u>5,809.89</u>	<u>5,809.89</u>			
Gross Profit	21,499.44	21,499.44			
Expense					
Bad Checks	70.60	70.60			
Employee Expenses					
Wages & Salaries	7,200.00	7,200.00			
Employer Tax Expenses	1,118.05	1,118.05			
Health Benefits	<u>742.00</u>	<u>742.00</u>			
Total Employee Expenses	9,060.05	9,060.05			
ASL Expense					
ASL Other	<u>130.00</u>	<u>130.00</u>			
Total ASL Expense	130.00	130.00			
Bank Charges					
Cr Card Fees	84.95	84.95			
Bank Charges - Other	<u>48.90</u>	<u>48.90</u>			
Total Bank Charges	133.85	133.85			
Equipment Lease	569.62	569.62			
Filing/Fees	20.00	20.00			
Insurance	2,312.68	2,312.68			
Office Supplies	118.52	118.52			
Postage	75.00	75.00			
Shipping	-112.31	-112.31			
Rent - Office	3,708.75	3,708.75			
Repair & Maintenance	178.00	178.00			
Security System	98.50	98.50			
Telephone	380.73	380.73			
Utilities	<u>244.76</u>	<u>244.76</u>			
Total Expense	<u>16,988.75</u>	<u>16,988.75</u>			
Net Ordinary Income	4,510.69	4,510.69			
Other Income/Expense					
Other Income					
Interest Income	<u>70.72</u>	<u>70.72</u>			
Total Other Income	70.72	70.72			

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