



April 2025



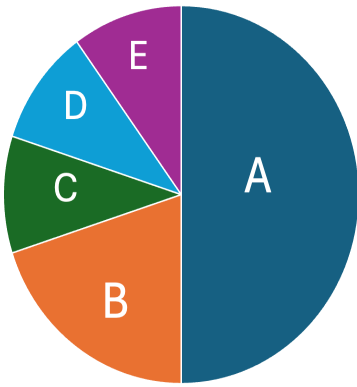
GRATITUDE GAZETTE

24 HOUR HOTLINE
(951) 530-4136
41340 Pear Street Ste 1

“STAY ALIVE IN 2025”

www.TemeculaCentralOffice.org

Suggested Group Contribution Pie Chart



A: Central Office 50%
B: GSO 20%
C: Area 10%
D: District 10%
E: H&I 10%

Pancake Smackdown Statistics

Pancakes served	1500
Eggs (even with the shortage)	1000
Bacon	90#

Thank you to all who attended, volunteered their time, and donated. Your collective efforts are so appreciated.

Events

Inland Empire Convention	April 4-6
Woman to Woman conf.	April 4-6
IWV Round Up	April 11-13
San Diego Spring Round Up	April 17-20
Back to Basics Men’s retreat	May 2-4
Desert Round Up	June 5-8
Founder’s Day	June 10
Founder’s Day Celebration	TBD
International Convention (Canada)	July 3-6
Woman to Woman (LA)	July 18-20
So-Cal AA Convention	Sept 5-7
Chili Cookoff	(Sept.) TBD
Golf Tournament	TBD
Softball Tournament	TBD

If you have an event that you would like added to this newsletter, please email bacongilbertj@gmail.com

Central office monthly		Central Office Volunteers			C.O. Board members
Website visits	5,327	Chris	Bert	Yolonda	Chairperson: Van M.
Phone calls	410	Debbie	Al	Dennis	Vice Chairperson: Yolonda
Store visits	90	Your name	Jim	Tara	Secretary: Richard
Sales from visits	52	To volunteer, please contact Ken at the office.			Treasurer: Mary V.
Intergroup Reps	34	We can always use help.			Events Chairperson: James D.
					Intergroup Outreach: Bill P.
					Communications: John BG.



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The Invisible Racecar Driver

I remember walking into that first Detox/Recovery Center. The patients were in sweatpants and pajamas, visiting with family members and there I was dressed business casual with at least a dozen dry cleaned and pressed shirts hanging over my shoulder. The admitting nurse asked; "What do you plan to do with all those shirts?" I replied, I was told I would be here for up to 28 days. She told me to take all but 3 or 4 back out to my car, then come back in. There, at the car, I gulped another 24-ounce beer before going back in. I was 36 years old and thought I was done drinking. I had no idea what it took to stay sober. It would be 11 years and 9 more detoxes before I would finally surrender to my spiritual malady. One thing I credit that first detox for, was they introduced me to Alcoholics Anonymous. After just one week of physical detoxing, they moved me into an Intensive Outpatient Program, where I would study the Big Book and mimic the first three steps.

After that, I started going to AA meetings, asked a man to sponsor me, and started faking the 12 Steps. Yes, faking! I had this one little problem. Well, I thought it was little at the time, I refused to do the "God thing." I had been running from my childhood God for a long time and didn't feel it necessary to mess up this guy's sponsorship success rate by telling him I actually wasn't praying every day as he suggested. How would he know anyway? I'd just do everything he asks except for that part. I had no idea at the time, but that one little thing, would keep sending me back to drinking, over and over and over. It would be a long series of Jails, Detoxes, Psychiatric Wards, Recovery Homes, and Sober Livings.

I should note that each time I was in one of these places (often self-admitted), I wanted to get and stay sober. I just couldn't go longer than a couple of months. The loneliness and boredom would take me out every time. I don't think I ever told anyone in all those years that I had a problem with God.

Over the years, the drinking and violence would get worse. I began to understand the progressiveness of Alcoholism, yet it just got bigger. Self-knowledge availed me nothing. I began beating up strangers for stupid reasons, threatening people's lives, brandishing firearms and even shooting at cars in drunken road rage. Over the years, I was charged with a litany of violent crimes and even terrorism, twice. My daughter quit talking to me, my son kept me at a distance, and the few friends I had left- avoided me. The only people who stayed supportive, was my mother, my ex-wife, and those damn AA's. They would say, "Keep coming back. You're gonna get it one of these days."

Staying employed became real tricky. The thoughts and feelings of guilt and shame were overwhelming at times of early morning, sitting in the car down the street from a job, drinking, and trying to get just drunk enough to go to work, but not too much where I would slur my speech. Inevitably, most Mondays and sometimes Tuesdays, I'd just keep drinking and call out. I would then have to drink until passing out to avoid the shame.

Once, my Criminal Attorney pointed out that each time he had represented me, I had been drinking. Some quick math revealed he was correct, but I told him to just pay attention to his job. I remember telling him that I'm not the jail type of guy. He said, "No, you are exactly the type of person I represent. You get drunk and beat people up and the state doesn't want you in public anymore." That was 5 years before I got sober. If I was going to stay out of jail, I either had to quit drinking for good or quit putting my hands on people. The latter was easier.

At one point, my medical doctor told me he had bad news, which I thought was great, because I was tired of running from this thing. He said; "your liver is okay, but no human body can continue to consume 2 fifths of hard liquor a day without eventually failing." I was so confused. I said, my liver is okay, what's the bad news? He replied; "The bad news is, that I suspect you will continue to drink." He was right AND now the second professional that pointed out my Alcoholism. (continued pg. 8)

Quotes from books we love and appreciate

"I always talked too much. Long before I picked up my first beer and long after I put down my last scotch, I talked too much. When I was afraid, I talked to hide my fear; when I felt inadequate, I talked to convince you that I was hip, slick, and cool: when I was in trouble, I talked in such convoluted circles that many times teachers or policemen or sergeants threw up their hands in defeat. I talked so damn much, I got good at it. Or so I thought." *Emotional Sobriety, pg. 17*

"If you are ill or in poverty, or obliged to do work that you dislike; if you are lonely, or if you have to mix with people who displease you; you may be certain that you are not expressing the Will of God, and as long as you are not expressing His Will, it is natural for you to experience inharmony; and it is equally true that when you do express His Will, harmony will come." *The Sermon on the Mount pg. 131*

"Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under all conditions?" *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg.88*

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<i>Why we do what we do?</i>	<i>Quotable Anonymous</i>
<p>Founders’ Day 2025: A Journey Through Time and Hope for Beginners and Newcomers in Alcoholics Anonymous As the calendar turns to June, a date of immense significance for the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) community draws near: June 10th, Founders’ Day. This year, 2025, marks the 90th anniversary of the founding of AA. It is a day of reflection, celebration, and inspiration, particularly for beginners and newcomers embarking on their journey toward sobriety. Founders’ Day is more than just an anniversary; it is a testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit, the power of community, and the hope that recovery brings.</p> <p>The Origins of Founders’ Day To truly appreciate Founders’ Day, one must travel back to the early 1930s. It was a time when alcoholism was largely misunderstood and often stigmatized. The concept of addiction as a disease had not yet gained widespread acceptance, and those struggling with alcoholism often did so in isolation and shame. In 1935, two men—Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith—came together in Akron, Ohio, and changed the course of history. Bill, a New York stockbroker, and Dr. Bob, a surgeon from Akron, both struggled with alcoholism. Their meeting on June 10th, 1935, marked the beginning of a new approach to recovery, one based on mutual support and the sharing of personal experiences. This meeting is now commemorated as the founding moment of Alcoholics Anonymous.</p>	<p>“I used to be the black sheep, then I came to meetings and feel at home just being one in a heard of black sheep.”</p> <p>F.E.A.R.=Face everything and recover.</p> <p>“I have no idea what stacking the chairs after meeting and making coffee has to do with staying sober, but it seems to work so I’m going to keep doing it.”</p> <p>“Accepting what I can’t change has often troubled me. I held high expectations of others and when they let me down I tried to play the big shot. The truth is, I wasn’t holding myself to the standards that I expected of others.”</p> <p>“Help is one of the hardest four-letter words to say.”</p> <p>“Love cannot remain by itself—it must be put in action, and that action is service.”</p> <p>“The elevator is broken in A.A. you have to use the steps.”</p> <p>“I finally reached my bottom when I stopped digging.”</p> <p>“Before I took the steps, I was the type of guy who would steal from you, then help you look for what I stole.”</p>

How it started and, what it took to have it today

The Plain Language Big Book was published by AAWS on Nov. 1, 2024, in response to a long-expressed need from the Fellowship to provide a companion volume that does not in any way replace the Big Book but helps express the book’s near-century-old language in ways that many of today’s A.A.s and suffering alcoholics looking for help can understand more fully. The voice in the Plain Language Big Book is reminiscent of a sponsor sitting down with a newcomer and the Big Book and saying, “Okay, so here’s what this really means.” As AAWS non-trustee director Clint M., who served on the trustees’ Literature subcommittee that helped shape the book, says: “At the end of the day, it’s the kind of information you’d share, person to person. “The new volume — covering the core content of the abridged version of the Big Book (without the stories) — is also intended to help fulfill the needs of the many populations within A.A. who may be without experienced A.A. members who can help them understand the specific vocabulary of the A.A. program of recovery as it is used throughout the Big Book. These include isolated populations in remote communities, people in correctional facilities who don’t have access to outside A.A., or A.A. members who may have reading and comprehension difficulties. “The Plain Language Big Book is truly a stunning example of collaboration by A.A. members, A.A. members who are professionals, committee members, elected delegates, and trustees,” says David R., AAWS publishing director. “The whole process invited participation. In my experience, no other book or pamphlet or piece of literature has gone through such an extensive review before it was sent to the printer. It bears repeating: We are not trying to replace the Big Book. The language of the Twelve Steps remains unchanged. This book is here to help people who may have barriers to understanding, of one type or another, more fully understand the Big Book. “The need to find a simpler version of the language of the Big Book has been expressed almost from the beginning of A.A. — the Big Book was called “high-falutin” and “fancy” by some early members. As early as 1993, a proposal was brought forward to the General Service Conference recommending a rewrite of the first three chapters of the Big Book. The proposal was rejected. (Continued on pg.9)

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F O U R	Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.	<i>Author of the month</i>
	Tradition 4: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.	<p style="text-align: center;">Concept IV</p> <p>Concept IV states: "Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional Right of Participation', taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge."</p> <p>This concept may begin with enforcing the 2a Tradition; 'For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority... Our leaders are but trusted servants...' however it is about much more.</p> <p>It is about ensuring that all AA members, whether at the level of General Service or our home groups, know they are a vital part of the survival of the program. That all members are considered equal, and no participating member is seen as being more or less important than the others.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Karen H.</p>
	Concept 4: The principle of the right of participation. There are no superiors, inferiors, or simple advisors in A.A. Everyone has the right to be heard with love and respect.	
	Principle 4: Courage- The 4th step requires fearless self-examination. And few things are more frightening than facing one's failings and shortcomings. Yet, courage is also needed to meet every day with an eagerness to improve ourselves.	
<i>Birthday Shout Out</i>		
Anniversary shout out to....		
Email John BG and we will give you a shout out here. bacongibertj@gmail.com		
<i>Meeting Boost</i>		
<p>These meetings could use your support</p> <p>Primary Purpose--Tuesday (mixed) 7:30PM 41743 Enterprise Circle N. #102 (around the back)</p> <p>There is a Solution--Thursday (mixed) 5:30PM 41877 Enterprise Circle N. #100 bacongibertj@gmail.com</p>		

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What is Central Office?

A Central Office (or Intergroup) is an A.A. service office that involves partnership among groups in a community—just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. A central office is established to carry out certain functions common to all the groups - functions which are best handled by a centralized office - and it is usually maintained, supervised, and supported by these groups in their general interest. It exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Reprinted from the A.A. Guidelines on Central or Intergroup Offices with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

Financial Reports, Agendas, Meeting Minutes for the Intergroup Board are available by request.

[Contact the TVCO Intergroup Board Secretary](mailto:Temeculaaa@verizon.net)
Temeculaaa@verizon.net

Ways to Be of Service:

"In Order to Keep It..."

Part of our recovery is to be of service, to help a fellow suffering alcoholic, and to spread the message. If you're looking for ways to be of service, there are many! Here are a few options available to you, ranging from light to heavy duty:

Volunteer for a commitment in your home group - coffee, greeter, trash, secretary, etc. Check with Central Office and see if volunteers are needed for any upcoming events (we can always use your help in some area!)

Hospitals & Institutions opportunities! We have approximately 100 H&I panels in the valley - help is needed. Both women and men are needed for H&I! Please check the Central Office website for opportunities. Please help carry the message of AA to alcoholics who are confined in hospitals and institutions.

Central Office needs volunteers! Please contact Ken S. at (951) 530-4136.

Hotline - add your name to the Central Office 24 Hour Hotline list. Volunteer to answer the phones for a few hours. Spanish speaking volunteers also needed. Central Office website has scripts, so you'll know exactly what to say!

Be a GSR or Intergroup Rep for your group!
Contact Bill P. 951-283-6238

If the information you need isn't available on the Central Office website, please call Ken S. at (951) 530-4136



Don't think of service... Be of service.

Even if you have one day of sobriety, you are always qualified to be friendly to someone else in A.A. You know what it feels like to walk into a room full of strangers. Be friendly, smile, offer a cup of coffee or a meeting schedule. Be a heart with ears.

Monthly Challenge

Do you share at every meeting? Try listening for the whole month and give someone else a chance. When you speak, you are only repeating what you already know and block yourself from learning.

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TVYPAA

Temecula Valley Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (TVYPAA) has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. We are aware that not all young people, or young at heart, may find our meetings and events necessary; therefore, we do not propose to be the only answer in the Temecula Valley area for young alcoholics. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, we want the hand of alcoholics anonymous (A.A.) always to be there. And for that: we are responsible. We ensure by unifying young people in the Temecula Valley area and by practicing the principles of A.A. through meetings, events, outreach, and providing a forum for young alcoholics to grow through service. We welcome all young and young at heart alcoholics to join our business meetings and potentially obtain a commitment, where you can join in the magic of reaching the alcoholics still suffering and create the fellowship you crave!


Business meetings are held every second and fourth Sunday at 5:00 PM at the Temecula Alano Club.

A fun AA meeting you can find many of us at: "Wasted Youth" Young People's Meeting, held every Sunday at 7 PM at the Temecula Alano Club

Contact:

Cassie, TVYPAA Intergroup Rep - (951) 426-6333

Star, TVYPAA Events Chair - (951) 525-0199

 <https://tvypaaevents.wixsite.com/temeculavalleyyoungp>

 <https://www.instagram.com/tvypaa/>

 https://fb.me/g/p_XuZu9QmkFkMhAdg6/XxYJeYbm



H&I PANELS

There's a fire in the Valley with H&I Panels - we are making a difference! We would like group participation going forward!

Currently we have over 100 panels, and more new panels are added each week.

The Temecula Valley Hospitals & Institutions Committee meets the 1st Monday of the month at 6:45 p.m. at the Temecula Valley Alano Club:

27470 Commerce Center Drive, Temecula, CA 92591

Donations to H&I can be sent directly to:

Temecula Valley H&I

P.O. Box 893142

Temecula CA, 92589

H & I Needs YOUR Help!

If you have never been on an AA panel in the Temecula Valley, now is the time! We have openings for recovering AA volunteers in every category: Youth facilities, men's & woman's jails and prisons, hospitals and recovery homes need us to bring meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous to their doorstep.

H & I Committee Book Donation Box

Did you know that there is a box at the Temecula Valley Central Office for you to drop off your new and used books, which will be donated to the various institutions that our Temecula Valley H&I serve?

Please remember that if you want your book to go to a jail or prison, it must be a soft cover book.

To help, please call Sean G. (209) 598-0576

www.temeculahi.com



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March 2025 Group Donations

Serenity Circle.....	\$1,200.00
Good Dudes	\$1,155.00
Unity Hall	\$750.00
Bills Early Bird.....	\$677.00
Serenity Circle.....	\$600.00
Early Birds	\$409.00
Serenity (Friday 6PM)	\$288.00
Intergroup.....	\$237.00
TVCO Board	\$156.00
Robbers Roost.....	\$154.50
Road Crew	\$119.32
Salvation Army	\$100.00
Principles Before Personalities.....	\$110.00
Tues Nite Mens Stag	\$53.00
Bravo Alpha	\$73.03
Giving Trees	\$32.98
Little Big Book	\$31.00
86d	\$20.00

March	\$6073.60
February	\$5,651.06
January	\$4,473.92

Donate to Temecula Valley Central Office Today!

@TVCOAA



venmo

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SAFETY CARD FOR A.A. GROUPS

The General Service Office has made this optional card available as an A.A. service piece for in-person/online groups that wish to use it. Please feel free to utilize, choose a section(s) or adapt the text to your group's needs.

Tradition Five states: Each group has but one primary purpose -to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Any person seeking help with a drinking problem is welcome at this group. No A.A. entity determines an individual's membership in Alcoholics Anonymous. It is this group's conscience that if any person endangers another individual or disrupts the group's efforts to carry A.A.'s message, the group may ask that person to leave the meeting.

This group strives to safeguard the anonymity of A.A. members and attendees; however, keep in mind that anonymity in A.A. is not a cloak for unsafe and illegal behavior. Addressing such behavior and/or contacting the proper authorities when appropriate, does not go against any A.A. Traditions and is meant to ensure the safety of all in attendance.

The short form of Tradition One states: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity." Recognizing the importance of group unity, our group strives to create a safe meeting environment in which alcoholics can focus on achieving sobriety.

Additional Sharing:

- Safety is a topic within A.A. that groups and members can address. Developing workable solutions to help keep meetings safe can be based on the principles of A.A. In discussions about safety, keep the focus on our primary purpose, our common welfare, and placing principles before personalities.
- Predatory behaviors and unwanted sexual advances are in conflict with carrying the A.A. message of recovery and with A.A. principles.
- A.A. does not provide medical advice or detox services; it has no opinion on outside issues, including medication. Medical advice should come from a qualified physician.
- The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. Groups and members strive to create a safe environment for the alcoholic who still suffers.
- If safety concerns arise, individuals can speak with a sponsor, members of the group, a trusted friend and/or a professional to address the concern.
- Service entities, such as areas, districts and intergroup/central offices, are available to help provide A.A. services and shared experience. All groups and entities in A.A. are autonomous. There is no government within A.A. and no central authority to control or direct its members, but we do share our experience, strength and hope.

For more information on this topic, see the service piece "Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare" (SMF-209) at aa.org.

(continued from pg. 2) The last six months of drinking were brutal. I had come to know what it was like to drink against my own will. I was constantly sick to my stomach when not drunk. I had to drink every two hours and if I went 6 hours without a drink, I would have a seizure. I vomited bile every morning, my teeth were in disrepair, I was unemployable, and running out of runway. I had been to thousands of AA Meetings, 9 Detox Centers, 6 Recovery Homes, 2 lock down Psych Wards, every jail in San Diego County and some in Colorado, Nevada, and Utah. It had been 11 years since I started trying to get and stay sober. I was now suicidal and homicidal. I had made a plan about two years previously on how I would end it all. I would drive off the road next to a huge bridge. The beat up old truck I had would fly for several hundred feet before hitting the solid boulders below. There would be no possible way to survive. About that time, I drove myself to yet another hospital to sober up. My blood alcohol level registered at .47 and they told me that an early death was emanate. I left that day to return to the beach parking lot to drink myself to death, again. I decided this would be the day to drive off that bridge entrance. (continued pg. 10)

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But in 2015, David M., a member from Area 78 (Alberta/Northwest Territories) who had worked closely with First Nations peoples in Canada, made a presentation at the A.A. International Convention in Atlanta in which he said, “I want to see, sometime in the near future, a plain English translation of the Big Book. ... [S]uch a translation into plain language would be very valuable to our A.A. members in remote communities and to people coming into our western countries who only know English as a second language.” Discussion of this at the General Service Conference in 2016 resulted in a Conference committee consideration that “the need for ‘plain-language’ recovery literature be explored by the trustees’ Literature Committee.” Carolyn W., the current AAWS chair and a General Service Board trustee, was appointed to that committee in 2018. “On the committee, we looked at certain things, including external data on literacy and analysis assessing reading levels of some of our materials, including the Big Book,” she says. “We also had an appointed committee member who had contact with the young people of A.A. who did some surveys of what tools people from within A.A. and outside of A.A. might be using because of a lack of understanding the Big Book. [Many of these tools turned out to be from outside A.A.] So it felt to me that if A.A. members needed a resource, A.A. should provide it. All that information was consolidated and presented back to the Conference in 2019.” In September 2019, the chair of the General Service Board wrote a memo to the trustees’ Literature Committee asking the committee to connect the work of previous committees and provide further information on the feasibility of a plain language Big Book. As a result, the subcommittee for Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access to the Book (known as RIPTAB) was formed. RIPTAB considered the original purpose of the Big Book — to carry the A.A. message beyond the physical reach of the original A.A. members. The subcommittee also took a close look at literacy and reading levels in terms of A.A. literature and the general population today. They studied the background of the various requests for a plain language Big Book, chief among them the inability of some alcoholics to identify and relate to the message of the Big Book in its original language. The RIPTAB subcommittee concluded that literacy concerns indeed reflected potential accessibility factors and presented their findings at the 70th General Service Conference in 2020. At the request of the delegates on the Conference Committee on Literature, a video of their presentation was produced and presented to the Fellowship with a request for feedback. After the Conference, new members were appointed to the subcommittee (now known as RIPTAB-II) and continued to explore the topic. A 2021 Conference Advisory Action recommended that a draft version of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition), be translated into plain and simple language and be developed in a way that is accessible and relatable to as wide an audience as possible. The Advisory Action asked that a progress report be brought back to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature. To implement the Advisory Action, the Trustees’ Literature Committee formed a subcommittee, known as TABB (Tools to Access the Big Book). John W., who served on that committee, says, “I joined the AAWS board as a non-trustee director after the 2021 Conference, and I was appointed to the plain language subcommittee. We worked together to draft the Request for Proposal in order to get a set of potential writers to submit their work for review.” The subcommittee met 12 times between August 2021 and January 2022. “There were 16 responses to the RFP,” says John. “From these, we commissioned six writers to submit writing samples — a plain language translation of Chapter 5 and a few other select passages. Finally, we three members of the subcommittee and three members from the Publishing Department reached unanimous consensus on our finalist [in February 2022].” After the 72nd General Service Conference that year, as part of regular rotation, a new sub-committee was formed. “As a member of the new subcommittee,” Clint says, “I reviewed a lot of material to get ready for the 73rd General Service Conference; we also had the support of Publishing. The first six chapters had been created in draft form, so we reviewed that, proposed a number of suggested changes, and then got to work at prepping for the reading room for the 73rd General Service Conference, which we monitored so that delegates could read the material we had at that stage.” The special readings were set up, John W. says, “in order to be as transparent as possible, given the Fellowship’s deep and wide interest in this project. People were open and welcoming but still a little reserved, given the emotional attachment and deep connection A.A.s have with their experience of the Big Book. Still, the response was overwhelmingly positive. I heard people say things like, ‘I never knew I was translating the Big Book before, but this is the kind of stuff I say to my sponsee so they (pg.10)

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(from pg. 9) understand the language from the 1930s.' Clint adds: "The text struck me not as something 'right' or 'wrong' but something completely different. It would be quite a departure for you if you'd only been familiar with the original text. But when I read it now, in a common language type of format, it does strike me as the way we would normally converse with one another about the pro-gram." At the 74th General Service Conference, David R. says, "all the delegates had the opportunity to read the full draft of the manuscript. The delegates decided, in substantial unanimity to publish the book. In other words, A.A.'s group conscience spoke, again and again, to move this book forward." The Plain Language Big Book was an immediate bestseller, with all 72,500 of the first print run selling out in just a few weeks after the book's publication and a second printing of 100,000 copies ordered shortly after. (This article came from the box 4-5-9 newsletter).

(continued from pg. 8) I lifted up my fifth of Black Velvet and it was half full. I turned on the ignition key and I had a half a tank of gas. There was enough of both to make the hour drive. For some reason, I looked through the windshield and said, "If there's some kind of God out there listening, show me a sign." The very next thought that came to me was something a man said to me after a meeting. "Next time you're out there running and gunning Del, don't tell people that AA doesn't work, because you never did it." Damn! And I thought I had them all fooled. Well, I made a decision right there in that beach parking lot to go back to AA and be all in. Even if I had to pray to God, I would give it one last try. I would try it for 6 month (A hockey season) and if it didn't work this last time, I would follow through with the end of life plan.

When I got out of the Medical detox, I went to 3 meetings a day. At the very first meeting, a guy walked up and asked if I wanted to take the 12 Steps of AA? I said yes and then he asked the most horrible question, "How are you with God?" I told him I had a problem and then he said he wouldn't work with me. I said I would try and that's all he needed to hear. He said I would need to pray to something. He didn't care what I prayed to and even suggested the ocean. He said I needed to pray every morning and ask whatever it was to protect me throughout the day. Then at night, I was to pray to that same entity and thank it for protecting me. The results were nothing short of miraculous. I didn't feel a thing while praying. It was actually very mechanical and uneventful, but somehow I felt completely different. It was the easiest detox, emotionally and physically, ever. He and I met every day for the first several months. At one point I told him I was a competitive driver on the roads and that I tend to talk to the empty passenger seat as if someone was there with me. Then I asked him if it was okay that my God be an Invisible NASCAR Driver? He said, "PERECT." That was it. For the first year and a half of my Recovery, that was my God and it worked. It worked to get me over that hump of the "God Thing". I guess all those years, I just wanted a God that you all would approve of. Come to find out, you all didn't and don't care who or what my God is, as long as I have one. In fact, it could be "Good orderly direction", "Group of drunks", "nature", etc... Looking back, that first year of Recovery was pretty wild compared to today, but glorious compared to jails and detox centers. After that first year, things really started to level out and come together. That sponsor got me into taking meetings into a local detox center. For the first few years, it was weekly, then eventually became monthly, however the past few years, I have been presenting the H&I (Hospitals and Institutions) Orientation to other Alcoholics wishing to be of service by carrying the message. This has been huge in my recovery.

Dr. Bob said in his Farewell Talk at the 1950 international convention that "Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words "love and "service." We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind." I am so grateful I was pushed into service early on and continue to be able to be of service today.

The 9th Step promises started coming true for me and it seemed like every two years, there was another major gift the "Good Orderly Direction" provided. I think first, I got to fix my teeth, two years later-expunge my complete criminal record, two years after I had paid off all creditors AND quit smoking. Two years more and I had re-entered the San Diego Real Estate market-buying a condo. Also, after 8 years, I was finally able to get my career back (It just took a while for people to trust me again). And my daughter that quit talking to me? Well, we play volleyball together on many Fridays. Is all she really wanted was to have a dad she could talk to and be proud of. Three years ago, God put my soulmate in my life. She's an amazing human who has vowed to spend the rest of her life with me.

And my son... Well he called me about 90 days ago and said he had a problem with alcohol. We met for dinner and discussed it. The next day he asked, "Where are these meetings?" He joined AA, got a sponsor, working the Steps (currently on the 4th), and on the 18th of March, he will have 3 months of sobriety. God is good.

So here I am today, coming up on 15 years sober (in recovery), reading, writing, praying, and meditating every day. I'm at peace with myself and the world about me, on most days. I've still got that H&I commitment at detox and a few others within the program. I have 4 Home groups, a Sponsor, and an inner circle of men and women that I can share what's going on with me, and do on a weekly basis. My life probably looks pretty normal to the neighbors, but to the Local, State, Federal Police and my mother---I've got an amazing life!

So how does a hope-to-die-convict go from where I was to where I am now? The only answers I can come up with is; Alcoholics Anonymous and an Invisible Racecar Driver. -Del Baker-San Diego

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DISABLED PERSON PARKING PLACARD? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			
BED HEIGHT: Most beds are 37" high – "captain's height" – roughly kitchen counter height. We have a limited number of lowered beds and it's costly to add more. Please indicate below if you have a physical limitation that requires your bed be lowered. Or, if you need assistance and can use a step stool, please choose that option (less costly). If you don't need any accommodation, please select "None Needed" and help us keep the weekend affordable for all.			
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Questions for the Central Office, email TemeculaAA@verizon.net