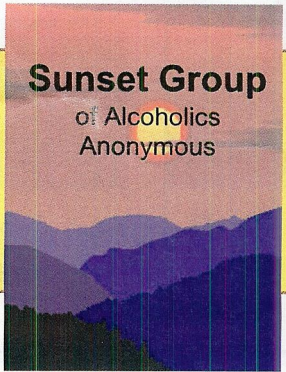


Sunrise Group
of Alcoholics
Anonymous

September Newsletter



Sunset Group
of Alcoholics
Anonymous

Turning a Burden into an Asset

THURSDAY SPEAKERS IN SEPTEMBER

Sept. 4: **John A,**
Laguna Woods

Sept. 11: **Georgia B,**
Los Angeles

Sept 18, **Karen H,**
Long Beach

Sept 25, **Clancy I,**
Venice

SATURDAY SPEAKERS IN SEPTEMBER

Sept. 6, **Paul S,**
Simi Valley,
Step 5

Sept. 13, **John G,**
West LA
Step 5

Sept 20, **Don L,**
Simi Valley
Step 6

Sept 27, **TBA**
Step 6

When I first got sober, I was unemployable. I had two dogs, a cat, a pregnant wife and a teenage daughter. I needed a job and I needed it quick. I was willing to go to any length to bring home a paycheck.

I had helped my brother move into his 1930s-era fixer-upper house that he had just bought. When we had him settled in, he took me behind his lopsided garage and showed me an old water-logged forty-foot wooden ladder that he said I could have.

It took both of us to lift that ladder and put it on top of my \$300 hatchback. Of course, it was longer than the car, so I tied it to the front and back bumpers, secured a rope around the part of the ladder that rested on the car's roof and tied it off through the two open front windows so that the rope passed right behind my head as I drove. I had to untie the rope in order to open the doors and get out. The next day I bought a two-inch and a four-inch paintbrush and--just like that--I was the owner of my own house painting company.

An AA old-timer became my first customer and it was there during the next three weeks that I worked on that house that I learned some of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned in Alcoholics Anonymous.

I knew enough about house painting to know that you started at the top and painted down, so that first morning at five minutes after eight I realized two things: first, it takes two people to use a forty-foot ladder, and second, anybody in his right mind would realize that in order to paint this house I would need scaffolding and a crew to erect it.

After an hour or so of trial-and-error, I invented my own way of getting that ladder to where it needed to be: at the highest apex of the roofline.

After struggling and after taking a trial run up the ladder, I came back down and formulated a plan. I knew that the hardest part of this job was not going to be the scraping, the puttying, or even the painting. The hardest part by far was going to be moving the ladder.

I put all my tools into a five-gallon bucket and went back up. My plan was simple: I would reach all that I could from where I was. I would stretch myself as far as I could upward, then left, then right. Then, I would dip my brush again and see if I couldn't reach a little farther and when I felt I just couldn't stretch another inch, I would stretch that inch and paint a little more.

Was I scared up there? You bet. I was way up there all alone stretching, stretching, stretching until I felt like Spiderman crawling along the face of that house. After I had done my first section and returned to earth, I was struck by how solid that old ladder was. Once I had stomped its legs into the ground, I realized that it was way more solid than the standard aluminum ladder.

We talk about the program in the meetings and on the phone but in truth most Alcoholics Anonymous lessons are learned out there in the real world. That's the way it happened to me that summer long-ago. I learned two important AA lessons for living: Sometimes, when we don't have anything else to work with but the simple tools we are given and our desire to do well, we can turn a burden into an asset. Then we can use that asset to reach out as far as we can--to do all that we can from where we are.

John Y.
Russell, Pennsylvania



September Newsletter (continued)

"Higher Power, I pray for the right attitude to make my amends, Being ever mindful not to harm others in the process."

— FROM THE 9TH STEP PRAYER
PAGES 78-80 OF THE BIG BOOK OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

WHERE WE MEET

THE SUNSET GROUP meets every Thursday night from 7 pm to 8:30 pm at 14701 Friar Street, Van Nuys – at the corner of Cedros Ave, near Van Nuys and Victory Blvds.

THE SUNRISE GROUP MEETS ON Saturday mornings at 8:15 am to 9:30 am on the second floor of Pinz Bowling Center, 12655 Ventura Blvd., just east of Coldwater canyon.

THE SUNSET GROUP AA BIG BOOK STUDY takes place every Tuesday, 7 pm to 8 pm at the Vineland A.D.H.C. Center, 5629 Vineland Ave, North Hollywood. (Parking is at the back on Ensign Ave, east side, just north of the Cri-Help side gate.)

Tradition Eight: A Clear Distinction

Counselor celebrates the difference between work and recovery

I recently completed a six-hour workshop the state offers clinicians who provide evaluation and treatment to DUI offenders. The workshop focused entirely on completing paperwork the state requires for reimbursement and accountability.

As the workshop dragged on, a phrase from Tradition Nine came to mind and repeated itself incessantly: "AA, as such, ought never be organized . . ." A big "amen" to that was all I could think after six hours. I shook the cobwebs from my brain, thanked the state employees, and headed for the door.

During the two-hour drive home, I daydreamed about ditching red tape, quitting my job, and living again off borrowed money, food stamps, and the strained generosity of others. I set my automatic pilot straight for a regular Step meeting and arrived just in time to hear a sober friend read the long form of Tradition Ten that assured me we wouldn't discuss politics, religion, or reform laws about alcohol.

What a relief! I may be a professional in the field, but I'm also a sober alcoholic, and I'd heard more about administration, the law, and proper procedure than I could handle for one day.

If this had occurred when I was newly sober, I easily imagined the old me buttoning up my shabby trench coat of resentment, self-pity, defiance, fear, and egotism, blowing off the interview mid-sentence, and heading for the nearest package

store. Keep the driver's license, the old me would have said. I'd rather walk so that I can drink in peace.

The founders who hammered out our Traditions on the anvils of their sometimes chaotic experience understood well what it meant to "professionalize" work that might be more spirited and effective without, compensation, documentation, accountability, and oversight boards

We may know it when we see it, but who among us could document an alcoholic's true recovery: the return of self, body, mind, spirit? The return of gratitude and a keen appetite for living? Who could sign the forms to certify that one more sober alcoholic, with the help of others, and by the loving grace of his or her Higher Power, had received the unmerited gift of living one more sober day?

Count me as one more professional in the field who couldn't survive my job without a meeting, a simple program, AA literature, sober friends, and a mighty good life to return to by day's end. The records of this recovery are written in my heart. May they remain an open account to the loving God of my limited, but growing, understanding.

Anonymous



Contributions: email Michael B at michael@thebucklandcompany.com, or call him at 213-453-7554. Don't be shy. Michael is a writer. Give him a half formed thought. He'll make it work.