

Sharing Hope.

You make anytH(&)Ing possible:

A monthly memoir from the Director of Los Angeles H&I

As we approach the end of summer, my hot tub time machine (filled with Old Style Beer) takes me back to 1985, when I made the big move to LaLa Land.

On Labor Day (the day before I moved), my pops threw a party at our house in Iowa. I tried to make a final breakthrough to my alcoholic dad: "Father, I'm truly touched by your going away gesture for me."

"And you are...?" was his reply between guzzles of beer.

Not exactly the sentimental type; the only advice he ever gave me was "*The key to survival is blackout drinking.*" I took it to heart.

Well, here we are, back to the future (and that, folks, gets me to my 2nd movie reference quote), my 10th Labor Day sober, and 15 years since my dear dad passed away from this drinking thing. I'm so thankful for AA to help me come to peace with my memories of him; we were both trying to find our way through life lost in our own, to quote the Big Book, "best thinking."

An example of my best thinking would be waiting 'til *The Price is Right* aired to start drinking.

Anyway, that is what I love about H&I, the opportunity to guide others away from their best thinking, as others once did for me. "What are you going to do when you get out of here?" is a question I often ask those I meet on a H&I panel, hoping to hear an answer along the lines of "*Go to an AA meeting, save my life, and fix the world.*" Not always the answer we get. One person told me, "Hit up a liquor store, check into a motel, and make up for lost time." "Well, even though it's apparent you've put a lot of thought into this plan, do you think it's the best option?" was my first reaction.

We're not all ready to get sober at the same time, but when we are, H&I will be there, offering our best thinking...

*Gene Steichen,
LAHIC Director*

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AUGUST CAN TOTALS:

In August, your group joined the rest of Los Angeles AA groups in donating a total of \$10,823.08 to fund the literature we bring into jails and institutions for our brothers and sisters who can't get out. Thank you—and your group—for your generosity!

LETTER FROM THE CORRECTIONS DIRECTOR

When I first got sober, I went to a cozy outdoor meeting in the beautiful backyard of a home with chairs and pillows all circling a fire. In the summer, we sat under the warm setting sun. In the winter, the bright warrior of the Orion constellation watched over us as he circled around the meeting. There was great food too. And fresh coffee. Everyone looked put together, beautiful, happy, smart and seemed to have the secret key to the world. I was totally intimidated. When the meeting ended, everyone seemed to know everyone else and they all had places to go out and eat. But nobody asked me. I felt really sorry for myself.

After awhile, I remembered Paul S., my first sponsor, would take me out to fellowship with our group after that meeting. We would go to Café 101 or some other diner in Hollywood. He made me feel part of and slowly I got my social confidence back and made new friends. He also suggested being of service and getting commitments at meetings. Well, I looked at this meeting and saw



there was no fellowship commitment. I asked in a business meeting whether we could start one... and another AA miracle was performed.

When I became the one who would invite others to be included, focusing on those who needed a place or newcomers who didn't know anyone, my self-pity disappeared and was replaced with joy and purpose. From there, our fellowship grew and the restaurant even offers us a free meal each time for all the years we have been there that we give to those in need.

This was a great lesson to me about the power of serving others. I still carry that joy into H&I. That meeting is still my home group over 10 years later. If you are feeling apart from or sorry for yourself, find a way to be of service to others in that situation. Miracles will happen.

*Stephen B.,
AA H&I Corrections Director*

SOBRIETY IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION: PART 1

I was given the gift of physical sobriety 14 years ago by the grace of my higher power and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I do not know why Sept. 1 was the day that I did not drink and use for the last time since today. I do know that the day prior I was really questioning the possibility of living a sober life. I had been drinking and using everyday for 25 years. It had stopped working, but it was all I knew. My biggest fear in the world wasn't going places and doing things that put my life, and the lives of others, in imminent danger. It was Alcoholics Anonymous. When my friends had gotten sober I avoided them like the plague. When my ex-wife asked me when I was going to go to AA to try and get sober, I became very defensive. Any suggestion of it was immediately rejected

by that loud voice in my head that was always shutting down those soft cries for help.



On August 31, 2003, I took a couple hits off of a joint and threw it on the floor. It wasn't working. A neighbor came by with some white rock to smoke. I didn't smoke it. I got in the car. It was a Sunday.

There were bars that I enjoyed on Sundays, and I tried to find one, but my steering wheel would not turn into the bars or liquor stores that I generally frequented. Why was I so afraid of going to an AA meeting? I would find out.

I knew about the SHARE Center. I had been there before for anger management meetings, when I thought that anger was a problem rather than a symptom. I drove up, parked, and went to the door. It was locked, closed. Labor Day weekend. Must be a sign from God. I had tried, given it my best shot. Now let me get loaded, it would be nice, it would be different this time...

*Gregory Gardner
AA H&I Hospitals Director*