

Sharing Hope.

You make anytH(&)Ing possible:

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

I'm writing this from O'Hare airport in Chicago after another whirlwind tour of the Midwest.

When I'm here I find myself thinking this is home; when I'm back in California I also find myself thinking this is home.

So, where is my true home? It's written in my 24-hour AA prayer book I got from my sponsor, Bob, on the day I got sober back in 2007: "*To Gene, welcome home, love Bob.*" AA is home for all of us and why I feel so welcome everywhere I travel.

One of my fondest memories of this was when I just happened to find myself in Lincoln, Nebraska (okay, Iowa was playing Nebraska that day in football, if my secret must be exposed) and attended an AA meeting. My words of wisdom to a rabid, yet loving group of sober Nebraska Cornhusker football fans, whom made me feel so welcome? "Remember, you don't have to drink over your loss today."

Well, my words turned out to put the "mis" in "misguided", as my beloved team took a loss not witnessed in those parts since the great farm debacle of 1836. Luckily, I took my own advice and didn't drink and proceeded to head out of town like a traveling circus facing a federal indictment.

Anyway, back to happier times. The reason I love H&I is we get a chance to provide a home for those who are searching, which is why I always write what my sponsor wrote to me almost 10 years ago when I give out a book, such as *Daily Reflections*. Speaking of providing, a gal my H&I partner, Deborah, and I met on a panel, relayed she was also a provider, (apparently not to be confused with an illegal substance dealer) to those who were in need. Although this may sound like a noble calling, our society and legal system seem to disagree.

Luckily, we are able to provide her and many others with an alternative way of thinking and potentially a new life that doesn't include eating meals with a spork. AA: Welcome Home!

Gene Steichen,
LAHIC Director

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SEPTEMBER CAN TOTALS:

Your groups donated a healthy \$7,379.06 to the fund that buys the literature we bring into jails and institutions for our brothers and sisters who can't get out. A big AA thanks to you and your group for your generosity. Let's keep it up as we head into the holiday season.

LETTER FROM THE CORRECTIONS DIRECTOR

Getting speakers for an H&I panel does not always happen. I would put out the panels slips at the monthly meeting and sometimes there would be none. I would send a mass email and sometimes no replies. But most of the time I get someone or several someones who come to share their experience, strength and hope. On the times it's just me, I've mixed it up a little. I always follow the format. But when it comes time for me to share, here are the options I've tried with good results:

AA Classic

- o Telling my story for 15-30 minutes with Q&A during and/or after. Great for any size group.

AA Step Study: Chapter 3, More About Alcoholism

- o Go around and have each person read a paragraph or two and share their experience with it. Okay to pass and not read or share. Great for small to medium size groups.



AA Round Robin Share

- o Go around and have each person share on their disease and/or day. Okay to pass and not read or share. Great for smaller groups. Optional: set a time limit based on the number of people.

Sometimes I just decide which one feels right. Other times I put it up for a vote to the group. These options encourage participation. And this helps people to get active in their own sobriety and often move into some insight or acceptance. If you have any other suggestions, please let me/us know.

As always, you are the ones making the magic happen. Thank you for your terrific energy, service and commitment to our fellow brothers and sisters, to AA and to H&I.

In love and service,

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

SOBRIETY IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION: PART 2

Now let me get loaded, it would be nice, it would be different this time...

That's the insidiousness of this disease. We think that it will be different, but it never is, unless it is worse. So, I decide to call on a lady friend. We had had so much fun getting loaded together over the years, I told myself. Thinking back, we just fought all the time, but *it would be different this time...*

I stopped by her place. She was home. She said come in. She seemed happy to see me, things were looking up. We got comfortable. Then she did something unexpected. She didn't offer me a drink, a joint or any other distraction; she offered me a solution. See she had gone to her first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous 30 days ago, and had been to several since, and she had started on her journey in sobriety. She wasn't preaching, she was teaching, telling

me her story, and I could relate. The next day was Labor Day, so I stayed home, and I didn't drink or use. I cleaned house. Literally cleaned the house, top to bottom.



I had some sort of extra-terrestrial energy that I hadn't felt in a long time. And I emailed my cousin, who had several years of sobriety, letting him know that I was ready... ready to go to one of those meetings. Somehow, I got through that day,

and the next, without a drink or a drug. Wednesday after work he met and he took me to my first meeting. I was afraid. I was afraid of losing my best friend. I was afraid of losing everything that I ever knew. Don't tell me that sobriety isn't frightening as all hell. Actually, it wasn't hell at all. I had been there, and this wasn't it. We first heard a very entertaining speaker, and I identified. When it became time to share, the topic was fear. Somehow, I found the courage to put up my hand, and shared that I was 2 days off of the stuff, and scared to death. But before that I said that my name was Gregory, and that I was an alcoholic. Something happened when I said that. It was like the burden of 1000 years of misery was lifted, and I was given a new-found freedom. I had worked my first step.

*Gregory Gardner
AA H&I Hospitals Director*