

The evolution of my Home group

The maturity of the content

Being on active duty in the Navy when I got sober, it was hard for me to establish a Home group since I was traveling all over the Pacific during the Vietnam War and I spent my first 13 years in A.A. on active duty attending meetings everywhere I could. Prior to getting sober, I spent a year and a half on the ship station at Mare Island and eventually transferred to a ship in Long Beach, Ca. where I attended my first A.A. meeting on October 15th 1969. One year later I was transferred to a ship in Alameda, Ca. and spent 4 1/2 years attending a meeting at the, Five Cities Fellowship in Fremont, Ca. My final tour of duty in the Navy was Recruit Training Command in San Diego where my role involved the training of company commanders or, drill instructors if you like, and that experience is responsible for most of the disciplines I have in my life today. I retired and bought a home just North of San Diego in the small town of Poway, Ca. and in 1983 I was one of a group of 25 members, of the program, that established the Poway Alano Club. I eventually got in the habit of attending the 7:00 AM meeting 7 days a week, and I consider the Monday through Friday "Unconditional AA" Meeting to be my Home group. To be clear, I believe that every AA group appeals to certain members of the program and that most Alcoholics will attend meetings where they feel comfortable. I have cycled through quite a few different AA groups and each of them has resolved an area of my thinking and as I grow, In the program, I am drawn to meetings with a literature-based format. The Monday through Wednesday meetings are based on the Daily Reflections, the Thursday morning meeting is a Big Book study, and the Friday morning meeting is a Step and Tradition Study. We have a core group of, so called, old timers that are there every morning with an equal group of members with varying lengths of sobriety. We go around the room in order and try to allow everyone a chance to share. When an out-of-town visitor shows up at a meeting, they usually share about how comfortable they feel, usually based on the individual sharing's as we go around the room. It is very gratifying to watch a newcomer come into the meeting overwhelmed with typical alcoholic problems and try to explain them to the group and within a month, to see his/her whole outlook on life change to one of the reconstructions and restitution based on the maturity of the content of the groups Input and quoting areas of the big book and the 12 Steps and Traditions rather than their own rationalizations. The group has a pattern of not being judgmental about a person acting or displaying symptoms of the disease of alcoholism. They display degree of understanding and patiently allow the person to assimilate the values expressed in the Program and allow him to develop his own pace of understanding. There is a constant air of ego deflation and an absence of rationalization when the old timers express the values of the program based on compassion and understanding. Our goal is to provide a safe environment where a newcomer does not have to protect his own turf; they can feel safe and abandon the habit of rationalizing their own alcoholic behavior. We are blessed with a handful of, so called, elder statesmen that set a non-threatening tone of patience and understanding that appeals to the newcomers and the occasional visitors and I feel fortunate to be a part of it.