

Step One – Getting Off the Ground

She did not find it too comforting

By Rick R.

I got sober in Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) right in the beginning of the Space Exploration experience and my eyes were glued to the TV screen through it all. I was sitting at a meeting recently when I heard a very young, and very sincere, single mother of two, new in the Program, sharing that her first experience in A.A. was the thought of having to do all this stuff *for the rest of her life* and she *did not find it too comforting*. It sounded to me that, from her perspective, *she knew that she had to do it*, but it was *not going to be easy or fun*. I admired her for her *courage and conviction*, and I tried to encourage her by explaining things that I had experienced when I was faced with the life changing challenges of sobriety. I was the father of a boy, I was in the U.S. Navy at the time, and I was divorced. It was a challenging time, but I had to go through it, drinking or not. I began the process of recovery in a slow, methodical way, and I came out a stronger person for it. I likened it to the first *Apollo space mission to the moon*. It goes something like this:

When you first see the size of this space craft and consider the amount of energy it would take to put it into orbit, it is hard to fathom. After the countdown is complete, the engines fire and a tremendous amount of flame and smoke engulf the entire area as it slowly starts to lift off. As it lumbers its first few hundred feet, it is expending a tremendous amount of fuel. Slowly it starts to gain momentum and pick up speed, still shuddering along. Soon the booster tanks are depleted, and they are ejected, and the main tanks begin to propel it further along the flight path with even more thrust as it is reaching for orbit. Next, the main tank is depleted just before orbit and is ejected. What is left is a small portion of what left the launch pad. Soon the craft leaves orbit and heads toward the moon and *something else happens that sometimes goes unnoticed*. Somewhere between the earth and the moon, the gravitational pull of the moon has more influence on the craft than the earth's has, and it is gently drawn along its path. Very little energy is needed at this point except for minor course corrections.

In AA, when we first get started, it appears to be an insurmountable task and it requires a tremendous amount of effort just to get off the launch pad. Not every launch is successful and some of us do not make it the first time, and we must exert all that energy in each successive attempt. As we do get on our way, it starts to get easier as we increase our momentum. Much of the burden falls away as we make progress, and the going gets easier as we head for our objective. When we go through the twelve steps, we finally reach orbit. After we are satisfied that everything is in order, we can now set out for our trajectory. If we stay on course, the spiritual gravity of values we have adopted in the A.A. program will far outweigh the negative gravity of the past if we eject all the dead weight that held us down. As we continue to adjust the day to day, mistakes that we make, and adopt an unselfish approach to life, somewhere along the flight path, we will cross that line where we are drawn towards a life of peace and serenity that is hard to imagine when we are setting on the launch pad. The most important part of the journey is the lift off. If we can get through that most challenging time, it does get easier, and then we need only to stay the course. Five, Four, Three, Two, One, Lift Off.