

# HARBOR AREA STORIES

## PHIL S.

My sobriety date is December 27th, 1980.

When I was a cop in Long Beach, downtown Long Beach was the beat. I got on the vice division and they were paying me to go to bars and look for trouble. They'd give you a little bit of secret service money but, in those days, most of the bartenders knew you were working vice, so you didn't have to buy every drink. And I thought God, I'd died and gone to heaven. They're paying me to do what I was doing when I was away from work.

You know, I think, I really believe that I drank alcoholically from the first drink. I broke into a hunting lodge on Cape Cod. I was about 11 years with a friend of mine. I remember the bourbon. It was P. and S. bourbon. I don't remember, I tell people this, I don't remember my first ice cream cone. I think I remember who I kissed, but I don't remember the first kiss. I faintly remember my first car.

I remember every detail of that first drink, the way it felt on the way down. What occurred after. How the hunting lodge was. I can see it now; the fireplace at one end. So apparently alcohol was quite important to me.

I started to drive home from the bar one morning and I hit three cars. A private party on a motorcycle followed me to my house. I was living in Belmont shore, married and had a little baby. He tried to make a citizen's arrest on me, and I kicked his motorcycle over and went in the house. Then the cops showed up. The next morning, I thought I'll get ahold of that AA thing.

We were going to a lot of meetings in South Bay, the Alano club over in Hermosa Beach, the church on Palo Verde near Pacific coast highway was a participation meeting. The women's club in Redondo Beach was four speakers every Sunday night at what saved me, I say it way that way; I connected with four of the guys that were getting sober about the same time. And we started to talk with each other and that one drunk talking to another and then little miracles started happening for me.

I planned go to Avalon and drink for the weekend. Nobody would know. Everybody over here I met was in AA, but I'll go over there and drink for the weekend. I just I need a break from all this. This lady kept coming up to me saying, 'I'm hoping you're going to be at the meeting Friday'. Oh, somebody wants me around.

Oh, ok. I'll go Saturday to Avalon. Saturday morning somebody else come up to me; 'Hey, are you going to be there for the noon meeting? And that carried me through that.

I think I was four, three and a half or four years sober. My mother died of alcoholism. It was 30 days. She was in the hospital, in and out of comas. Really hard time. A week after that, my dog died and a week after that, my brand-new wife said; 'I want a divorce.' Now I was, my neck muscles almost hurt. They were so tight, my shoulders, and if you talked to me, I was so stressed that my heart would start missing beats. I laid down at night in bed. The bed would bounce around and I'd have to sit up. It was, for probably a month and a half like this.

I went up to Palo Verdes Hill near Marineland, where I used to dive this one cove. I was sitting up there thinking about, reviewing the last month and a half. I went, oh boy. It was a moment of freedom that came over me.

There's a time when you're on a sailboat; everything's perfect. You can't get there. It just has to happen. The boat takes up a hum. You're on the wave perfectly. Everything's perfect. It was that kind of freedom. I just stood there. I was leaning against the car looking out over the ocean. I never once thought about drinking. Not once did I go, 'nobody will blame me.' None of that. Not an ounce of 'boy I need a drink'. And I was free. I wish everyone could have that. Right now, I can bring that back to me and I wish everyone could have that sense of freedom. Free from the drink.