

It is an urban legend, or AA legend, that great meeting can only occur when its origins come from the most humble beginnings. For example, both of my "home groups" started in day care classrooms in which the only chairs to sit on were made for Kindergartners. I believe the fruits of good recovery develop when the alcoholic goes to "any lengths" to get sober.

Scripps Ranch Men's Tuesday night meeting began in the ^{early}mid 1990's in a room at the Scripps Ranch Swim and Racquet Day Care Center where grown men sat in tiny chairs for an hour sharing about their hope and strength. Over time the meeting moved. Today the grown men get sit in adult chairs and some – if they show up early – get to sit on couches. For some of the members it was a tough transition to do away with the little chairs and sit in "big boy" chairs. I believe it was made easier by the practicing of Steps Six and Seven.

The meeting has morphed over time with a core collection of roustabouts sticking around as newcomers came and joined the circus. Even some members who had significant time sober joined the ranks. But for a few years there were less than 5 on average at the meeting. It took time to build up to the average of 30+ participants that the meeting has today. The story goes that when the AA International Conference took place in San Diego during the 1990's the meeting had two regular members and was on the verge of closing its doors. During the week of the conference an out-of-town visitor came to the meeting and encouraged the core members to keep it going as it helped him stay sober that week. They did and eventually the meeting grew.

There are key reasons why men come to Scripps Ranch Men's and stay at an appreciable rate compared to other meetings. One is that there is a certain appeal amidst the fellowship that, granted, could freak out the newcomers in the beginning but reel them back because of a desire to laugh once again. If there was ever a collection of otherwise selfish alcoholics that thrive on supporting the newcomer and one another it is these clowns. It is the Jerry C, John S, Charlie A, Walt A, Tim G, John K, Mark D, Howard (the official guest), James W. and Johnny L's of the meeting, among a host of others, that walk the walk and reach their hand out to those in need.

When I started to attend the meeting in the summer of 2003, with about 3 weeks of sobriety, I knew I found a home. The group did not coddle me, but I was welcomed "under the tent." I was not expected to walk the high wire or jump through the fire by myself. There were loving individuals who let me grow with them through the tough times as well as good times. For that I am grateful.