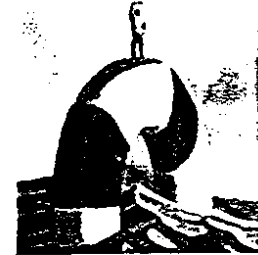




September 2005

# The Other Bar

## For Lawyers of California



www.otherbar.org

As we come to the end of the summer of 2005, I write to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be of service to the Other Bar, to introduce myself, and to provide the membership with an assessment of the state of this singular organization.

More than fourteen and a half years ago, in early January 1991, I was introduced to the Other Bar through one of its founders, Ed Caldwell. A few days before, I'd had the misfortune of crashing into a San Francisco Muni bus while in a blackout. The 49ers had lost a pivotal playoff game earlier in the day, providing a more than adequate excuse for me to drown my sorrows in a sea of beer and vodka. (My first AA sponsor would later ask me what I would have done had the team won the game. Damn those sponsors!)

As luck would have it, my parents, each of whom had previously found the rooms of AA, lived around the corner from Ed and had gotten to know him as a recovering lawyer. It seems they and Ed had had conversations concerning Brian and his problems with alcohol and other mind-altering substances, and Ed had volunteered to talk with me whenever the time seemed right. So on that fateful morning following my harsh encounter with the bus, when I telephoned my parents to advise them of my dire situation, they offered to have Ed call.

I'll never forget that call. I remember being curled up in a fetal position under the covers of my bed, with all the lights in my apartment off, and my eyes tightly shut, as if somehow that would make my troubles go away. And from the other end of the telephone came the gentle voice of another alcoholic lawyer who, I was thunderstruck to realize, seemed to know exactly how I felt and who had done many of the same embarrassing, shameful things I'd done while in the

grip of my addiction. In that sense of recognition and shared suffering, I took my first steps into the sunlight of recovery and the fellowship of 12-step recovery.

I began attending Other Bar and AA meetings that next week, and have done so continuously since then. As a result, and with the help and support of countless other recovering alcoholics and addicts, by practicing the program of recovery as set forth in the pages of Alcoholics Anonymous, and with the love of an unconditionally loving higher power, I have remained clean and sober since then.

Two years later, in 1993, I was privileged to be invited to join the Board of Directors of the Other Bar. Jim Heiting was concluding his tenure as president of the organization, and it was then that I first was introduced to the folksy charm and passion for recovery of our incoming State Bar president.

In the ensuing years, as I worked my way up through the leadership of the Other Bar, I was able to watch Jim, as well as the many other men and women in the Other Bar who daily volunteer their time and effort for the cause of recovering lawyers and judges, "walk the walk." I learned from them the importance of "going to any lengths" to carry the message of hope and sobriety to many members of the legal community who struggle daily, often without hope, under the lash of addiction to alcohol and drugs. And I came to understand and appreciate even more fully the grace that happens when one alcoholic or addict lawyer carries the message of experience, strength and hope to another alcoholic or addict lawyer.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

FRONT ①

**The Other Bar is a network of volunteer California lawyers and judges who deal with alcoholism and chemical dependency on a personal and absolutely confidential basis by providing on-going assistance and support. The Other Bar also operates a 24-hour toll-free telephone service for information, emergencies and referral 1-800-222-0767**