

Joe Gallagher Writes

My last year in the SM was coincident with your senior year at Serra. If you are going to present this to the group I should address some things to them. I don't do autobiographies, but I'll add a footnote to the proceedings.

My congratulations to all of you on the celebration of fifty years since your graduation. Enjoy the day and the renewal of old friendships.

I left the SM after several years of trying to determine what was the right path for me, and if I was where I should be. During that 1965/66 school year I was in considerable turmoil in the finalizing of that decision and some of my angst was visited on you; both individually and severally, either occasionally or incessantly, in the form of my behavior as a half-baked teacher and total asshole. Please accept my apology; late indeed, but with sincerity deepened by time.

I am an alcoholic. That defines me both when I was drinking and after I found recovery. It covers the aimless, helpless, stumbling life of the drunk I was, as well as the man who has found the God of my understanding, spiritual renewal, a life of peace and generosity; That, through and with the loving care of my fellow recovering alcoholics. You all cannot have come this far without knowing me or others like me. Perhaps some of you share the journey. We are legion. It is our strength.

Sobriety gave me the impetus to return to one of the loves of my youth: outdoors, anything outdoors. I returned to running, bicycling and cycle touring, hiking, backpacking, trail building and maintaining trips all over the West. The San Gabriels, The Sierra, Pacific Coast Range, Cascades, U S and Canadian Rockies is where many of you and I have wandered and experienced God's Nature and Nature's God. I do miss those places, but I have The Smokies close by for my cathedral.

At 80, long retired from a career in manufacturing, 41 years clean and sober, I work part time in Adult Education. I do whatever I can to help redirect the interrupted lives of young people in getting their high school equivalency diploma which will open some doors to their employment and educational futures. I know something about turnarounds. It is the joy of my life.

Thanks so much for the thoughtfulness and the invitation. All the best to you and your extended families.

"Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." – John Muir



Godspeed!

Joe Gallagher
5/3/16