

RRP 112 – Paul O. / One Burgundy Sock at a Time: Recovery, Service, and the Art of Staying

Presenters: Julie P. Lewis and Peter B. Dowell **Episode Length:** 1 hour 33 minutes **Release Date:** May 1, 2026

Paul O. showed up at his first AA meeting on October 7, 1991 – a lesbian stag meeting in Reno, Nevada, where they let him stay only if they called him Pauline. More than three decades later, he carries a story that listeners won't forget: how a gentle inner voice once talked him into getting sober one burgundy sock at a time. In this deeply personal conversation, Paul traces his journey through multiple addictions, a relapse after 13 years, a completed First Step, and the daily practice of mending his net – meeting by meeting, sock by sock.

Key Points

- **[00:04:00]** Paul's sobriety date – October 7, 1991, Reno, NV – and the full picture of his addictions: alcohol, compulsive sex, overeating, and casino gambling
 - **[00:05:00]** The night Paul stood near a bridge with no money and no hope – and the one thought of his mother that pulled him back from the edge
 - **[00:06:30]** His first AA meeting: a lesbian stag group that welcomed him as "Pauline," and the Brooklyn woman named Kathy who hugged him tight and said "you keep coming back"
 - **[00:12:00]** Working two jobs to repay stolen money; finding his foundation at a 6:30 AM meeting called Beginners Our Winners
 - **[00:13:30]** The Burgundy Sock Story – how a voice in his head negotiated him from "all the clothes" to just one sock, and how that one sock launched a lesson he has carried for 35 years
 - **[00:17:30]** Walking near Mount Tabor, wrestling with suicidal ideation, and asking God for just 15 seconds of quiet – then 30 minutes – then four days – then gone
 - **[00:35:00]** New Year's Eve, a bottle of wine in the fridge, and the voice that sent him back to ask a fellow member named Luann for a hug
 - **[00:38:00]** Becoming "Coffee Pot Guy" – how service gave him his identity in the rooms and why he calls it magic
 - **[01:09:00]** Meeting his "Marlboro Man" in AA, four and a half beautiful years, a move to Arizona, and the slow drift away from meetings
 - **[01:11:00]** New Zealand: 13 years sober, a checklist, a hot Australian, and the relapse that finally completed his First Step
 - **[01:22:00]** The fisherman's net – Paul's metaphor for what meeting attendance actually does, and what happens when you stop mending
 - **[01:28:00]** How Paul learned to love the people who annoyed him most – and the strategy his mother gave him that still works
 - **[01:37:00]** Paul's current practice: noticing resistance, finding a shred of willingness, and the pause between impulse and action
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"Sometimes when a task feels so overwhelming that you just gotta keep breaking it down to whatever you actually can do." – Paul O.

Websites Discussed

- Lunch Bunch / Extended Family AA Online – <https://sites.google.com/view/lbefaa>
 - Real Recovery Podcast – <https://www.realrecoverypodcast.com>
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