

Roger ([00:01](#)):

In the earliest days, living in the UK, I remember reading a newspaper, the headlines about crew member, detained by police, preflight failing a breath test. And I remember reading those things 30 years ago and thinking well, silly him. That wouldn't happen to me and generally being quite unconcerned about it. But the fact was, I'd still read the same sort of headlines periodically. And by the mid two thousands, they would have a different effect on me. I would read those headlines and go, wow, that could be me. That could be me one day. ,addiction is giving up everything for one thing and recovery is giving up one thing for everything because The end point of addiction is people lose a lot. They lose lives and careers and, and, and marriages and relationships and everything. It is just total annihilation for this one thing,

New Speaker ([00:57](#)):

You all listening to flying straight and aviators guide to navigating through a life of sobriety people in the flying industry and other walks of life will share their experiences of living a life free of alcohol and other drugs. You will also hear from experts in the world of addiction and self-improvement join Andrew O'Meally, airline pilot, and non-practicing alcoholic. As he takes you on a journey discovering how a sober life can lead to a deeper level of happiness.

Andrew ([01:32](#)):

Well, welcome to this third episode of flying straight piloting a sober life. My name is Andrew O'Meally, airline pilot alcoholic, and your host. I'm talking to you from the sunshine coast in Southeast Queensland Australia. It's beautiful here at the moment, balmy days and rain in the afternoons. It's a great combo of fantastic beach weather and the rain keeping that Bush land alive.

New Speaker ([02:00](#)):

Anyway, today's conversation is with a super interesting guy, Captain Roger Healey Roger's career path is an enviable one. Soon after school, he joined the Royal Australian air force, flying a diverse range of aircraft, including P three Orions, which is a four engine Anti submarine aircraft, as well as rotary wings. He left the military after 16 years and started flying for a large airline being based in Hong Kong, as well as in the United Kingdom. He currently operates out of Asia flying freight a heavy jet. How good is that? Roger shares with us, his story of the impact alcohol had on his life. It was a slow transition from social drinker fitting in with the other crew members to that realization that something just wasn't quite right and was getting worse. He shares insights on the life as an international airline pilot and expectorate, a father and a recovering alcoholic. And he tells us how sobriety has given him everything alcohol had promised.

New Speaker ([03:09](#)):

Oh yeah. Thanks for doing this mate. This is excellent.

Roger ([03:12](#)):

Mate, this is yeah. Pleasure.

Andrew ([03:14](#)):

Yeah. So your down inthe central coast at the moment, is that right?

Roger (03:20):

Newcastle. Yeah. So Newcastle. So just South of Newcastle I'm in Charlestown

Andrew (03:26):

Charlestown. Okay. And just to clarify that's Newcastle Australia. Yeah.

Roger (03:33):

Newcastle Australia. Yeah. Certainly is.

Andrew (03:35):

And, that's a pretty rare event for you, isn't it? That being back in Australia,

Roger (03:41):

Being home hasn't happened, for nearly 12 months, you know, the 11 months, when I was last back, just the way the COVID thing's been rolling and the various, quarantine restrictions, both in Asia and back here.

Andrew (03:57):

Yeah. It must be good to be home.

Roger (04:00):

It is, it is. , although as generally a commuter for the last 10 or more years, my need to keep coming back is a bit different from some other folks. My kids are now pretty much grown up they're 20, 24 and 28. So, they're, to a greater extent self-sufficient and they're also geographically dispersed so that if I come back to Newcastle, they're not all here.

Andrew (04:26):

So, so did your kids spend any time in Hong Kong? We, you were always up there on your own?

Roger (04:33):

No. So I was married and we split back in 2002, the time that happened, we were all living in the UK. I Was UK based for a while.

Andrew (04:47):

You spent, a lot of time in Asia. As an expat.

Roger (04:53):

So, I've been with the company for 23 years. And so, for the period that I was based, which was the first 13 years or so, , my visits, there were a couple of times a month and you'd, just be in a hotel there when you were there,, for a couple of days and then, and then flying out again, back and forth, usually through the middle East, back to all ports in Europe, since I've been based there though, I've got my own little, own little apartment I rent up there and we jet about all over the place, some regional, some long haul.

Andrew (05:30):

Yeah, so you're, you're flying the 744freighter at the moment

Roger (05:36):

The mighty freighter, the mighty 74. Yeah.

Andrew (05:38):

That'd be a pretty cool job at the moment. And particularly with, all the freight booming and so on.

Roger (05:46):

Yeah. it's the, it's the part of the industry, I think, with the brightest prospects at the moment.

Andrew (05:54):

All right. Great. SO, I remember you saying once this flying rubber dog shit out of Hong Kong, it's not such a bad gig after all

Roger (06:02):

that's right, is that famous line out of, out of that movie, isn't it, but top gun, top gun it was, seen as a threat to those guys findflying the pointy jets.

Andrew (06:16):

you mentioned the, pointy.....?

Roger (06:18):

those pointy jets. Yeah. The, top gun guys.

Andrew (06:23):

Yeah, What were you flying?.

Roger (06:26):

Well, I wasn't, no, I was, in the air force for 16 years, but, most of it was, multi-engine on the P-3 doing maritime patrol stuff and a bit of rotary wing for years on helicopters. That was all good fun, but a bit of a young man's game really, but all good fun.

Andrew (06:42):

How long were you in there for?

Roger (06:44):

16 years? Yeah. 16 years. 82 to 98.

Andrew (06:50):

Yeah. Right. Yeah. I've got to ask with the air force. So it was the Royal Australian Air Force

Roger (06:58):

Indeed. It was. Yeah.

Andrew (07:00):

How would you say the drinking culture was there?

Roger (07:04):

Ah, look, it's a long time ago now because, we're talking nearly 40 years ago that I joined and, I think the culture, and society, generally was very different back then. And the air force, was not particularly different. It was different that's for sure things were just more, more permissive. There was that sort of work, hard, play hard sort of culture. There was always the idea of flight safety coming first and, mixing the drinking with the was always very heavily promoted. But I think there were a lot of times where people would, as an example, Friday afternoons, it'd be off to the mess for a bit of socialization after, after a working week. And yeah, some people would just go for a couple of drinks and head off home and other people would stay for a bit longer. I was probably one of the ones that stayed a bit longer and, I was the one who came home late for dinner on a Friday night, was not very popular. And, there are a lot of those sorts of things. And as I say, these are the things that happened, 40 odd years ago.

Andrew (08:17):

Yeah. Right. So, so did you go straight from the RAAF into an airline?

Roger (08:23):

I did. I did so, straight from school to the air force and straight from the air force to an airline. So I've basically had two jobs, two interviews and, give or take, you know?

Andrew (08:36):

Yeah. And then you got the, the first airline gig and on your way, so yeah, so that was.... Sorry-go ahead.

Roger (08:45):

I was going to say, and that was, a different lifestyle. I think that lifestyle, a lifestyle of, constant adjustments and constant change, and you're transitioning back into being with the family or getting ready to transition away from being with the family and going on another trip, you just got that couple of days in the middle, which, somewhere like normal and you're off again. Yeah, yeah. it makes us demands on all the family.

Andrew (09:13):

I was going to say it's hard. It's hard for everyone, isn't it not?.

Roger (09:17):

What, what I've style does afford is you're way away from home, your away from responsibilities of family life. Your only responsibility is to get up every couple of days and front up in a reasonable state to fly an airplane. And you can have a couple of days here and a couple of days there and plenty of time to go out, out on the town, in a new destination. And, as I say, without the constraints, it's very easy to fall into the habit of bingeing. I think you call it,

Andrew (09:48):

Did you feel like you were pretty much the same as everyone else?

Roger ([09:52](#)):

Yeah, absolutely yeah, that was certainly the case at school. That's the way it seemed to me, that's the way everybody drank at school and at university and, early years in the air force or whatever, probably the circle of people that I knew that drank, like I wanted to, gradually shrank over the years, but if I could find another one or two that wanted to, go out for a bit of a night on the town, then that was normal. That was, that was okay. It didn't matter if most other people weren't doing that, but if there was one or two of us that was fine.

Andrew ([10:22](#)):

You were just always searching for those handful of normal people.

Roger ([10:26](#)):

Hand full of normal people, that's right, to reassure yourself, I think, despite the fact that daily intake as recommended by the medical authorities, whatever was pitifully small, if there are other people drinking, like I did, and that was normal and that was okay. And that would justify it. And I didn't have to explain myself to anybody else. Yeah,

Andrew ([10:50](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Because, I mean, as you say, when we're drinking, we look at those what the medical advice is, and we think, Oh, ya pussies! Who does that?

Roger ([11:04](#)):

I didn't know anybody who drank like that. I didn't know people that didn't drink. I didn't think there were people who did drink. I couldn't imagine, it was beyond my experience. I just didn't know them. I didn't think they existed.

Andrew ([11:21](#)):

So you're, you're in, an ex-pat lifestyle and that's, I generally find an ex-pat lifestyles pretty full on, I was in New Guinea and it seemed to be a lot of drinking going on that people bonded through alcohol, unless you were a missionary. So I guess you were part of that ex-pat alcohol-bonding scene?

Roger ([11:45](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah, it's a part of bonding. It's all that shared experience. There are a lot of reasons why people do that. They feel, I guess when you're, an ex-pat in another country, you're, maybe accepted rather than welcomed among the locals. You, you feel you're a little bit on the outside that there's a common bond between all the ex-pats with the vagaries, the difficulties of living in these different, different countries, whatever they might be. Yeah. And there's a lot of socializing, a lot of socializing goes on with those similar sorts of people and most socializing involves getting together and having a drink. Again, I found myself amongst people of a like mind what, I will say, one thing that's a little bit different though, is in, certainly being an ex-pat in some of the heavily populated Asian countries. They're frequently served by extraordinarily good public transport systems and very few people will drive. So, as a result of which you can get most places with a cab or a bus or a train, lots of people in lots of these places don't even own a car.

Andrew ([13:01](#)):

So, you're in Asia and you don't even need a car or a taxi. You just hop on, or you could catch a taxi, but you, you know, the train system is fantastic and so on. And then, you know, you don't have that accountability if your family's not there a lot of the time. And yeah. So then you are in that ex-pat environment, and then you go traveling to these fantastic places in the world. So there's plenty of opportunities to drink when you're away. And in fact, I remember you once saying that if you didn't have an excuse on hand, you'd synthesize one, uh, what, what were some of those excuses to have a drink?

Roger ([13:47](#)):

Oh, excuses to have a drink? I've got to... You honestly didn't need one, you know, it's Wednesday, it's Tuesday, it's, whatever it is, there was never really a reason. It was, when you're down route, you'd land, you'd go to the hotel, you'd check in, you'd get your room key. And, somebody, sometimes it was me, but somebody would say "downstairs in 15 minutes then?", Or, or 10?, Or, you know, and somebody would say, Oh, what's wrong with five?, And it was a bit of a joke. It was a bit of banter, but it was just absolutely common. And, you know, that was the first thing you did. Nobody was going to the gym. Nobody was going for a run. Nobody was going to the pool, as long as the bar was open. That's where you go or just going for a couple and then we'll have dinner. Right. Except it didn't always work that way. You're running into another crew and there's this shout of four or five guys and everyone's drinking pints. Cause they're all Brits. And, before, you know it, never mind about dinner again, excuses, I don't really remember.

Andrew ([14:52](#)):

Maybe it's saying something like, you know, the time zone change.

Roger ([14:56](#)):

Oh, well, yeah. Okay. Well, so yeah, yes. I get what you mean. Yeah. Yeah. Those excuses or rationalizations, you know, it's always five o'clock in the afternoon somewhere, you could, you could always make it seem normal. You, arrive at Hong Kong at five in the morning or whatever, and like, everything is closed, but, those of us in the know, would know that you can just nip out the front door and go down there and around the corner a bit. And there was a petrol station that had a few beers in the fridge, and you could always grab them at any hour of the day or night, and that was justifiable, because I've been working all night and this is my knockoff, so this is the end of my day. So, and I deserve it because I've been working hard, you know, I deserve my drink and it'll help me sleep. And, there'll be much better rested for my next duty. I mean, which is just nonsense. You know, the quality of sleep was never objectively assessed, but it was almost certainly of a inferior quality.

Andrew ([16:04](#)):

Yeah. I've heard studies about, you don't go through that REM cycle or those cycles normally around eight and you go through like one when you drink it. And that's why you sleep really heavily, but you're wake up feeling terrible because you haven't gone through this natural sleep cycle. Yeah. Yeah.

Roger ([16:25](#)):

If you do that for a couple of days, eastbound in the middle East and then do that in Hong Kong, and then you do it the same in the middle East, on the way back, you get back to the UK after eight or 10 days, you are just destroyed, partly because of a bit of off back of the body clock flying. But yeah, mainly

because you used your rest time, so unwisely in the meantime, so you come back home, you you're tired, you're grumpy, you're not happy. And, again, additional pressure on the family.

Andrew ([16:58](#)):

Yeah. So you, you probably did some things that weren't exactly proud of while you're away. And, so did you wake up at times and think that's it, I've had enough, I'm never going to drink again?

Roger ([17:16](#)):

Yeah. I don't know that I got to that stage back, back then, that stage certainly came a bit later though,, so it does eventually come where, I'm thinking that's, that's probably much later, probably the last year or two before I quit. So, 2009, 2008, and I think one of the things that, that brought that on, in the earliest days, living in the UK, I remember reading a newspaper, the headlines about crew member, detained by police, preflight, failing a breath test. Manchester, or wherever Glasgow. And they were frequently North American crews who'd been there on an overnight there. They're off their time zone, whatever, and they got an early morning start, and they're still a little bit worse for wear from the night before.

Roger ([18:05](#)):

And I remember reading those things 30 years ago and thinking, well, silly him, that wouldn't happen to me and generally being quite unconcerned about it. But the fact was, you know, I'd still read the same sort of headlines periodically. And by the mid two thousands, they would have a different effect on me. I would read those headlines and go, wow, that could be me. That could be me one day. something had changed. You know, whether, I didn't recognize that my behavior changed my attitudes to alcohol or, or my respect for the, separation between my drinking and my flying had changed. And yet the same newspaper headline would have a different effect on me. So I think there was an awareness that, I was getting away with it in later years that, I just hadn't been found out yet..

Roger ([18:52](#)):

Yeah. And then you realize you're potentially on borrowed time and you realize what the potential ramifications are. And so around that time, I guess I was thinking that, yeah, I probably should wind it back a bit. And then there's that period of sort of denial where I should wind it back a bit, but I can do that any time, I can. I'm still fully in charge. I can do that tomorrow. I'm not going to do it tonight because I'm just going to have one tonight, but, I, I can start that tomorrow. So there's always, that idea that you've still got control, and you're simply choosing not to change your behavior just yet, even though there's an inkling that maybe you should, things sort of progress on from there looking in 2009, I had some time off work for some, really a succession of relatively minor medical things.

Roger ([19:41](#)):

And I've sort of probably strung them out to do them sequentially rather than in parallel, because it sort of suited my,, unwillingness to go back to work, but the problem was without the discipline having to turn up for work, every few days without that constraint, now we talked about the constraints before, but, with, with that further, that, that final constraint removed, the drinking was essentially without limits and without, yeah, it was just a drink until you passed out, or until you ran out, of booze, you usually took dam fine care to make sure that you didn't run out. So, that was, there was almost a daily occurrence and that was not great because there was a period then where you'd wake up and you say, right, I'm not going to do that tonight, definitely not. And then come, you know, four or five in the

afternoon, you say, well, I'll just have one and one doesn't hurt. And then, one didn't hurt, so I'll have two, and, then, you're off to the races again, which is the, the most common, if you like distinguishing feature about people with a substance use disorder, it's just that absence of control. And the fact that once you've had that first one that all reason, all, willpower, if you like everything else out, the window just becomes the most important thing. And yet the other thing is you spend your day, when you spend your morning hung over from the night before you spend a portion of your afternoon, wondering whether it's okay to start drinking now, or whether you've got to wait a little bit longer to be respectable.

Roger ([21:15](#)):

And, the other bit, and the other bits drinking, and it's just that, entire 24 hour cycle. And if you're not going to work and doing other responsible things, and you're no longer married and families on the other side of the world and all the rest of, it's just a nightmare. And it's a recurring nightmare. It's a daily- it's a Groundhog day type existence. Yeah. And, that's where I found myself. And, during the period that I was off work with the various medical things and they sold the old airplanes- the classic 747's. And when I come back, the first thing I was going to have to do was a conversion on the 400. And, as the time for that, came closer and closer, I think I would say, right, well, I've really got to not drink tomorrow and start getting my head in the books and I'm getting ready for this conversion course.

Roger ([22:11](#)):

And, even with that intention, that sincere intention, that absolute, absolute commitment to doing that, it would not happen day after day after day. And, eventually I very much realized and acknowledged and, accepted, I guess, that I was no longer in control of this situation. I was just, going along for the ride. Yeah. That's about when I stuck up my hand and, requested some help from work and, they were only too happy to help. And I think I needed that. I wasn't going to fix it all on my own, that didn't look like happening. So I think that's the differentiating feature for me is when, if you've been in that state of denial for a while, and then there's an acknowledgement that, Hey, there is a problem and I should do something about it and I intend to do something about it. And you decide that you are going to do something about it and you just find yourself unable. Yeah. That's probably the point where, it's beyond your control and you need some help. Yeah.

Andrew ([23:16](#)):

Yeah. So when, when you stuck your hand up, can you tell us the,, what, what were you thinking you you'd obviously got right to the end of the road there and why was that day different to the day before?

Roger ([23:31](#)):

Yeah. Good, good reason. I think I'd used every, I had this pack of cards and I'd used all the jokers. There was nothing left. I couldn't couldn't string it out any longer. And, I was out of excuses too, to not be coming back to work. And it was the global financial crisis. And I basically exhausted all my sick leave and, just about running on, running on my accumulated savings and, it was a mess and it couldn't go on any longer. So I had to get back to work, but there was a realization that I couldn't go back in that, in that current state, it just wouldn't work. So I was essentially just out of options, really. And it was fear really, it was fear of being found out fear of being caught, fear of being, fear of events becoming beyond my control, like I was going to get found out on a random test and, the consequences were really different. The only way I could retain some sort of control of the situation and navigate its course was

to, stick my hand up and, request some help. So yeah, that, that's because of the way the policies were in the company at the time, that could seem like the best option for me. And, and it really was. Yeah.

Andrew ([24:52](#)):

Did you feel safe as far as, you knew the company would support you or you weren't sure. Had you heard other people go through this?

Roger ([25:00](#)):

I thought they would. I didn't know anybody else who'd done it. Although there were people who had, yeah, I didn't necessarily know who these other people were. We've got a much better network of things these days. And there are things like, your wonderful podcast, Andrew,, where we're helping to spread the word and just let people know that they're not alone. So at the time I felt quite alone, I did feel unsure. I didn't really know what it would entail. I was a bit wary because I thought it might've had something to do with never drinking. Again, I wasn't really interested in doing that. I thought it might have something to do with one of those rehab places. And I figured if you went to one of these rehab places, they teach you to drink like a gentleman and you could just be like a normal person after that. I thought that sounded good.

Andrew ([25:49](#)):

Did they say to you, well, two in order to get back flying again, you should be going into an inpatient rehab or, how did that all eventuate?

Roger ([26:01](#)):

Yeah, so that, that was, a relatively brief phone call. I spoke to one of the company doctors and said, to the guy who had been running with most of my case and listening patiently to all my various excuses over the previous six months or so. And I spoke to him and I said, I think what really might be the, the core of the problem here is my abuse of alcohol. And he said, he said, great. We know what to do about that. It will involve you a 100% abstinence from here on, and it will involve, inpatient treatment, I'll call you back. And, they call back a couple of hours later and said, right. You're. So I was in Newcastle. I was back in Australia at the time I was in Newcastle. They said report to a facility down in Sydney, 10:00 AM tomorrow morning.

Roger ([26:47](#)):

Well, you can give them a quick call this afternoon. And basically they did an assessment over the phone and, they were quite satisfied that I was just the person they're looking for. Yeah. It wasn't, a particularly thorough assessment, but, there was essentially no more denial. It was, it was just quite an honest accepting. It helped me, I'm out of control. I, don't know, what's going on here and I need help. And, they were very, very happy to see me. Yeah. And it's 28 days there, which is very different experience, a bit isolating at first, you don't have all the freedoms. In fact, I remember going down there to check in and you bring a little bag of clothes for a couple of weeks toothbrush and, and whatever. And, you walk in and they tell you to put your bag down on the bed and they go through your bag. They search it very thoroughly looking for any contraband. You have anybody trying to bring drugs or booze into the place. Uh, you weren't allowed to have your mobile phone while you're there. There was a payphone or something I think you'd use. So to me, that first day felt like what I imagined going to prison would be like, yeah.

Andrew ([28:01](#)):

So that would have been really scary.

Roger ([28:04](#)):

Yeah. I did not think this is the beginning. I thought this is the end, and that's all I could see. It was just the door closing behind me, the physical door, entering this place, but that was, the door on my past life. It was, but I had no idea what, lay ahead, not for 28 days. And certainly not for the 10 years that followed, I had no idea, a lot of uncertainty, a lot of fear and anxiety. And I wasn't immediately filled with the feeling that I had made the right decision. Then that came kind of a little bit later. Yeah.

Andrew ([28:44](#)):

Did you feel that you belong there or did you look around and in day one anyway, the first couple of days and think, Hey, I'm not like these other people in here, or did you think, man I'm in the right place!

Roger ([29:00](#)):

No, absolutely. And some of these feelings were not just for the 28 days I was there, but probably for the first year or so in recovery, I would look at everybody else and I would go, Oh, well, I'm not as bad as him or her, or I'm a little bit worse than him or her in, in, some regard with regard to some aspect of my life or my drinking or whatever. Yeah. I saw a lot of the differences between my situation and those of others. Whereas one of the first things you told in recovery, when you're going along to a 12 step meetings and things is look for the similarities, not the differences. And yet I was, I was often met with the differences. They were the more apparent ones to me. And while I could see the similarities, I think I still, for a long time and quite unproductively placed myself in a different sort of category from others. Yeah, yeah. As I say, it wasn't something intentional. It wasn't something I sought to do. It's just the way my mind was working in my assessment of where, things were and where everybody else was. But those sorts of feelings are not particularly helpful.

Andrew ([30:15](#)):

No, I bet. I think they're also, particularly common too. A lot of people go in and they think, and I'm not like this, that, or this person and so on. And I think that's, yeah, that's maybe more the the norm.

Roger ([30:32](#)):

I think it's very much the norm. I mean, I did find some, there. There were people there that there were, there were Housewives there at the rehab. There were, minor league, rugby league people. There were people referred there by the drug court or whatever who were, mandated to be there rather than, willing participants there were a couple of doctors and they were smart people. They were, they were interesting to talk to, but they're in just as profound as a pickle as I was. And, I probably, to some extent, similarly in denial or, recategorize them to categorize themselves as different. So we hit things off a bit there.

New Speaker ([31:18](#)):

Back in Newcastle. I met some people who had a very simple, very black and white view of things. It was just sit down, shut up, listen, do this. Don't do that. Yeah. Call me every morning.

Andrew ([31:36](#)):

Yeah, if you, if you keep it down to the fundamentals it's.....

Roger ([31:38](#)):

Yeah. Just boil it down to the fundamentals and these people... I think there's a temptation for it for a lot of us to overthink and to complicate what's a pretty simple recipe for recovery.

Andrew ([31:53](#)):

Great. So how long did it take you from the time you got out of the 28 day program until you were back in the, in the flight deck, again?

Roger ([32:02](#)):

Subject to your engagement with the program and satisfactory series of no notice,, testing and progress with the various, suggested steps for recovery, you can be back online in, probably a minimum of about four months, really three or four months after after discharge from the inpatient treatment facility. It's possible if you apply yourself to, as I say, doing the recommended things and just engage with the, with the program.

Andrew ([32:38](#)):

So part of that was support groups. You mentioned AA, so you got stuck into AA.

Roger ([32:46](#)):

Yeah. I got stuck in a little bit slowly yeah, I got stuck into it eventually. Yeah. Yep. Good, good.

Andrew ([32:54](#)):

And now you're, you're also using, or I should say your zooming in, or you, or before COVID you are physically going to Birds of a Feather support group, or did that, did that come a fair way after AA?

Roger ([33:11](#)):

Yeah, so there wasn't a Birds group in Hong Kong when I started, we probably set that up two or three years later, something like that. There was a great one up in Anchorage Alaska and, the freighter operation hubs through Anchorage all the time. So I've met, a bunch of really good guys up there on a Wednesday afternoon. And, were guys from US-based freight carriers as well. And they'd be down in Hong Kong on occasions. We catch up and see each other at meetings and they knew people. And I think that's the beauty of it. When you get to a point where there's that shared experience one thing, but that sense of fraternity and just knowing people and networking and "do you know, Andrew?" "Yeah. I know Andrew is a great guy",, and all that sort of stuff. And you just feel, you're part of something. Um, yeah.

Andrew ([34:06](#)):

i'm glad they say that about me when,

Roger ([34:11](#)):

When you meet them, for example, not necessarily.....

Andrew ([34:16](#)):

-just mucking around, but yeah,

Roger ([34:18](#)):

No, I know. So I think that, initially you can feel like your very much separate from the rest of the pilot community cause you're a little bit different. You're the guy who doesn't drink when they go out now, but you also become a part of something else that you weren't a part of before. And so there's part of this special group of people who've walked the same path and share their experiences and tell you that what you're feeling is normal and, there's actually nothing wrong with you and, and all those sorts of help to dispel all those doubts and fears. And, and we have a laugh and we reminisce about the nonsense way we used to carry on and we don't glorify it or whatever, but we just remind ourselves that, probably wasn't real helpful. And it really wouldn't be very helpful now, talk about the things that we enjoy doing now and why we like, yeah, you develop a love for the new way of life. That's, I think, the turning point is when you actually enjoy doing what you're doing, that's the thing that keeps you there, you know?

Andrew ([35:27](#)):

Yeah, yeah. I agree. Yeah, it is. That's from, sort of begrudgingly to thinking, wow, now this is what I've been looking for. And we get together and have a laugh. And s, I can't let this podcast go without just mentioning that the first time I met you, Rog, was when I heard you spoke at an Australian HIMS convention a couple of years ago. And I liked the way that you introduced yourself, you know what I'm talking about?

Roger ([36:00](#)):

Oh yeah, I do. So, when you're at an AA meeting, it's very much a first name basis. It's alcoholics anonymous. We don't necessarily reveal our whole identity to people, but we're very friendly on a first name basis. So invariably, you commence your period of sharing your little story with, "hi, my name is Roger and I'm an alcoholic". So of course that's why I kicked off speaking to the assembled multitude at the HAAG conference, most there are non alcoholics. And, , as I just said that, hi, I'm Roger, I'm an alcoholic. And I said, it's my nightmare scenario of getting on the PA on the airplane one day and saying that to all the passengers, - got to remember to keep those two separate two circumstances quite separate!

Andrew ([36:48](#)):

That's fantastic. I love that. so that was at the HIMS conference a couple of years ago. And you've been involved in the Australian HIMS side of things in various capacities. And one of the things that you are a part of is the video on it, on the Australian HIMS website. And that's fantastic. You're a bit of a movie star by the way, You, do mention something in that video. I don't know if you remember, I had to look at it the other day. You talk about sobriety in your life from a really nice perspective, and you say, I'm quoting you here. "It's a lifelong journey, a beautiful journey. And I wouldn't swap it for the world". I just think that's, is a really good way of, of approaching the whole philosophy of sobriety. What do you think?

Roger ([37:47](#)):

Yeah, look, I'd completely forgotten that. I might've said that, but it's something that I absolutely stand by it. I think it's something that I, I now feel, certainly wouldn't swap it for the world. That's definitely true. I think I wish sometimes wish I might've started on this journey a few years earlier, could have

saved me a whole lot of pain and heartache. And, if you like, regrets, yeah, look, I wouldn't swap it for the world. Some of the things that you learn in recovery it's not just about drinking or not drinking. A lot of us have a lot of, repair work to do in the psychological or emotional area. A lot of us need to learn a few life skills for coping with, with things.

Roger ([38:33](#)):

And, a lot of it revolves around a lot of the things we're hearing more and more today in society about strategies for mental health, whether it's mindfulness or whatever. A lot of that sort of stuff comes up and it's all, all just good, common sense. Yeah, there are so many benefits to the program. I think chief among them, for me, I think it's just peace of mind. I think that's the most profound thing or the thing that's with me the most is back in the drinking days, you were always thinking about what you'd done the night before, what you'd said, The way you'd acted who you'd upset, what you'd done wrong. Whether anyone saw you. Was it going to come back to bite you or, whatever. And, if you're not just drinking in this out of control fashion night after night, you're not behaving that way. You're not, you're not doing those things and you don't need to worry about the next morning. And, people look at you differently because you're not just that dickhead that gets a bit out of control when he's had a few. You're , you can become the sort of person you can be proud of. You can be a supportive part of your family. You can be there for your kids and you can be relied upon emotionally present, maybe a million ways.

Andrew ([39:55](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm sure, it's a reciprocal thing. Your family would be really proud of you that , you're living the life you are now, because it's not easy.

Roger ([40:08](#)):

Yeah, we don't. Yeah. We don't talk about it that much, but the, the relationships with the kids were good a long time ago that they were not so good for a period. And they're a lot better now.

Andrew ([40:21](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Well, you Zoom into the birds meetings in Australia regularly, and I find what you say, quite often, you can distill it into the, the fundamentals of the way to live a happy sober life, which is great. And I find the younger guys and those guys early in sobriety within the group, just really find you as a great inspiration. And they, they hang on- were all just waiting for your next fantastic words of wisdom. You've got so many great. One-liners like the, sobriety gave me everything alcohol promised. It was something that we really embraced and it's so true.

Roger ([41:08](#)):

Look, I can't claim to any of these little pearls really. They're, all just things I've heard at various meetings. Just things you pick up around the place, but yeah, they're just things that resonate with me. And I just think, yeah, that that's perfect. That's so beautiful. It just sums it up. That is great. It just little things that you can just remember, there's that other one was just sent you a little while earlier, and it was talking about how... It was like, addiction is, is giving up everything for one thing. And recovery is giving up one thing for everything, because frequently, the end point of addiction is people lose a lot. They lose lives and careers and, and, and marriages and relationships and everything. It is just total, anihalation for this one thing, this one substance or whatever, you know, recovery is, all you do is just quit that one little pesky little thing that's getting in the way of everything else in your life. Yeah.

Andrew ([42:07](#)):

I was going to ask the question, do you have any advice for someone starting down the path of sobriety, but I think you've probably already given some fantastic advice there, just even in that last quote, but anything else, any advice for someone that's just the equivalent to Roger, just starting in a rehab or whatever, thinking maybe I don't fit in here or, or the doors closed behind me and it's not a great feeling, but what, what sort of inspiration could you give them?

Roger ([42:40](#)):

I think that's the most important thing is to stick with it, give it a red hot go, throw yourself into the whole process with some enthusiasm and some commitment and, the changes, will happen if you sort of just dip your toe in the water and have a bit of a feel, and you're sort of one 40 in and one foot out, it can be very difficult. It can be a long, long process before you really get traction and, see the results that are there to be made. So they're probably the main things and, just, being engaged. There are lots of groups out there. There's birds, there's lots of AA groups. There are, there's lots of support out there. They're not all the same. You know, some, some meetings, some you like some, you won't, some people you like some you won't. Find the ones that work for you and you can be, it can be a bit of a smorgasbord find the things that work and hold, hold close to them, hold them dearly. And, the things that aren't really working for you just yet, just put them to the side, they might be useful later on, but there's room in here for everyone. That's for sure. Yeah,

Andrew ([43:44](#)):

Yeah, yeah. That's right. There is,

Roger ([43:48](#)):

Its not an exclusive club, it's a little bit of a high barrier to membership, but w we're not really that exclusive. Yeah,

Andrew ([43:53](#)):

Yeah, yeah. But once you get, once you get in the club, you know, it's a.... The way of life that the club brings, it's the best kept secret in the world, really. So it's fantastic. It's a great way of living.

Roger ([44:06](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, it is. It's peace of mind and you develop some self-respect again, that you might not have had for, for a long time. Probably start to like yourself a bit more, even through all the denial stage where you keep telling yourself that everything's okay. You're probably in a state of mind where, it's not really, and you just develop that that self-respect, and learn to love yourself again, which is the important

Andrew ([44:35](#)):

Thing. That's fantastic. That's, that's great.

Roger ([44:37](#)):

And we're all worthwhile all of us, you know, no matter where we've been, what we've done, however, we've screwed up before.

Andrew ([44:43](#)):

Yeah, that's, that's, that's great advice, Roger. Great, great insights there, and thanks very much for, for all that. That's just, your so down to earth and you've also got a great sense of humor to boot, so, and that's really important. Yeah.

Roger ([44:59](#)):

I think you're the new, um, you're the new Kerrie O'Brian or the new, uh, Parkinson or something make you make a good interviewer,

Andrew ([45:07](#)):

it's like sobriety. It's going to get better and more enjoyable over time!

Roger ([45:13](#)):

I day at a time, one day at a time, mate

Andrew ([45:15](#)):

It, that's it now. Yeah. We'll say thanks very much. Rog and hope to see you very soon at the next Aussie Band, and hopefully when everything sorts itself out, we'll be able to have a face-to-face meeting and that'd be great.

Roger ([45:31](#)):

Proper face to face. Yeah. We got to look forward to it, mate. And look, thank you very much for this opportunity. It's such a valuable, important thing that you've undertaken here. I, I take my hat off to you, mate. This is gonna make some real and lasting change around the place, I think. Yeah.

Andrew ([45:50](#)):

Thanks mate.

Andrew ([45:52](#)):

Well, hope you enjoyed that conversation with Roger. I certainly did. And every time I speak to him, I get another fantastic insight into how sobriety is just a fantastic way to live life. If you'd like more information on the HIMS network in the U S it's websites HIMSprogram.com, in Australia, it's aushims.org.au, and in New Zealand, it's in nzhims.org.nz. If you are Interested in looking at the Birds of a Feather support group website, the web address is boaf.org. And if you have any feedback regarding this podcast, I'd really enjoy hearing that, and my email is andrew@flyingstraight.com.au. And I look forward to sharing another story with you, soon,

Speaker 4 ([47:05](#)):