

DON P ARCHIVE

Unity by the Sea

1995 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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As a newly elected GSR and October very late, I went to my very first area assembly and I said from the podium when I was called up that this is not like my home group talking to a drunk. I don't like anything to do with this and I'm gonna resign as soon as I get home. And as those of you who know me, I'm currently serving as area chairperson. A lot of that is due to this gentleman from my left. He made a tremendous impact when he spoke that first scene and I heard him talk.

And all three areas of all pre-legacies, recovery, unity, and service. And my attitude towards his scholarship and this program has never been the same since and I hope that he would touch you in the same way. I was out any further due to Don P. in rural Colorado. Well, I hate introductions like that. My name is Don and I'm an alcoholic. I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous in good standing this morning. My home group is the Denver Thursday night group, which meets in Denver every Thursday night at eight o'clock.

I get an idea of what we're made up of because some of the people that I work with can't remember that. By the grace of God and because everything I've done here that I was suggesting that I do has worked, I've been continuously free of alcohol or any other kind of chemicals since December 26th of 1967. And I don't say that now. I say that for a very specific reason this morning. There has been a new myth creep into the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

And if you're kind of new here, I want to dispel it for you very quickly. Relapse is not part of recovery. It can and does and will happen. But if you aren't an alcoholic, you don't ever have to drink again. We can guarantee it. That's what they call me in so far. The promise has been kept. I don't know where we're going this morning. I appreciate you all coming because I like the hardcore crowd. And that's Sunday morning.

One of the groups I attend on a regular basis meets at six o'clock in the morning and we don't have any dead weight. You kind of really want to be there to be there. Before I get off into some things, I want to share something with you. Because since my awakening part way through the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, I awakened to the presence of God. And I've lived in that sense of the presence of God for 27 years. A little over a year and a half ago I woke up one morning at six and it wasn't there.

God hadn't gone, but my sense of God's presence wasn't there. And that's a shocker when you're used to it. And so I began to pray immediately. I have to laugh. It wasn't there what was I praying to, but prayer had become a habit for me. I suggested it's a really fine habit. And so that my automatic response was I started to pray. And the prayer was very simple, and I wasn't out of bed yet. I don't get out of bed until we have a visit.

Because I know that on my own I might not be able to find the floor. God, I need to know you're here. I need to be closer to you, and I need to know you better. And my phone rang. It's gotten to be a habit for God to respond with the same habitual deal. A fellow named Billy, I was over North Carolina. I was on a little road trip for God and Tom Ivister in North Carolina. And Billy said, listen, I was seven years sober in the last week I drank.

And now one was twelve years sober and last week he drank. And I understand that once in a while you get together with folks over a weekend and you just kind of go through the big book. Would you do that for us? That's why I said sure Billy. And I almost didn't get to work that morning because every time I tried to brush my teeth or get ready the phone rang. And I got it. God says to me, if you would know me better, know my children better, you won't be closer to me, be closer to my kids.

So I really appreciate you showing up. Because I'm also fully aware that you can't keep me sober. You didn't get me sober, you can't keep me sober. But without you, sobriety doesn't make any sense at all for me. And I must tell you the truth, Alcoholics Anonymous did not get me sober. I'm sober by the direct intervention of God Almighty himself. Got me sober December 26th, 1967 and brought me to Alcoholics Anonymous five months later.

So I belong to you. If God's going to go to all the work to bring me to you, you must be important. And I honor that. And I didn't come looking for you. I didn't know I was alcoholic. Didn't have a clue. My alcoholism was disguised behind all kinds of things. I was certified by one government agency as the sociopath Type II. I don't know what it was, but it didn't good. Another government agency said I was a psychopath.

Psychiatry says that I was a manic depressive drug addict. My alcoholism was well hidden. It had become such a part of my life that nobody even, including me, ever noticed it. Whatever I did, I drank. So there wasn't much chance of me being conscious that I needed you. I didn't know I needed to stop drinking. I've been drinking alcoholically since my first drink. Now as I understand alcoholism, that's easy to define.

I have absolutely no control of the amount I'm going to drink if I take one drink. No control. I have no control over mind that can't seem to remember that. I was in my first federal penitentiary when I was 19 years old. Because of alcoholism. I wasn't a big-time gangster. I've never been a big-time gangster. I've been to three prisons. Big-time gangsters don't even make one. And I was truly baffled at being in a penitentiary at 19.

I had left Denver to become a hero and save America from the communist menace. Two years later, I was in federal prison in Tokyo after having gone through some rain breaks. You don't want to do that. They're not friendly. And I'm wondering what the hell happened here. This isn't what I had in mind. I wanted to be a hero so badly it hurt. I had to leave Denver when I was 17 because it had gotten too small for me. And I've heard it here this weekend. I didn't fit.

In that entire city, I couldn't find a place to fit. But I had this picture in mind. If I came back a hero with medals, I could walk down the street. You could hear them. Just barely hear them. That's him. There he is. He lets me talk to him, you know. He's my friend. Oh, I wanted this. Instead, I'm laying in the prison cell. What the hell happened? What happened is that I took a drink of alcohol in Long Beach on a 24-hour liberty.

And when I drank alcohol, I get lost and I can't find my way home. And when you're in the Navy, that's a felony. The captain's mask. The captain and I were on a first-name basis. I'd get back at 26 or 28 hours and get 10 days of restriction and we'd go to see a big deal. This time, I was 23 days late. And when I got back home, it wasn't there anymore. It was on the way to Korea, which was a war zone. And my partner and I were subject to being shot for desertion.

That's pretty serious stuff for just one damn drink. But I took that drink and it changed me. And I didn't know all this. You taught me this. I think one of my responsibilities and one of your responsibilities, when our new people come, is to lay out the symptoms of alcoholism clearly so they can find out, do I have this deal? Because if you have it, you're doomed. It's wonderful. Oh, yeah. There's nothing left to fight.

You don't have a chance. There's no treatment for it. Sorry. We still don't know how to treat alcoholism. Alcoholics and all of us doesn't treat alcoholism. I've got a physical allergy to alcohol that there's no treatment for. You won't bother me unless I drink alcohol. And if I drink alcohol, it will destroy my very life and the lives of everyone around me. There's nothing anybody can do about that. Isn't that wonderful?

We can quit trying. We just got quit drinking. And here's the rub. Alcohol changed me. That's why I stayed with it. That came to alcohol desperately needing change. I don't know if it was 16 or 17, whatever it was. The rite of passage in Denver at the time was you got a bottle of whiskey from a guy from the airbase and went out east of Denver, drinking, getting drunk and had fun. And I went into the evening, stupid, short, frightened, furious, baffled, confused, almost 16 or 17 year old.

And I had a couple drinks of bonded bourbon and it was all over. I can tell you I got taller and broader and all that. But what really happened, the change that occurred to me is that suddenly it was all right for me to be me. It was all right for you to be you. And I had some plans for the evening. I had never had any real plans. I had learned to have scripts. Everything in life had to have a script so I gave the appropriate response.

So that you wouldn't mess with me while I tried to figure out what's going on here. Who's home? Who's running the store tonight? It was getting crowded already. And all of a sudden that didn't matter. I had some plans. They were good plans for 17 year old. There was a kid in my class that hadn't been treating me very well. And I was going to meet him back at the drive-in and whip him. And I could have done it too. There's no question about it.

There's a little girl in my class that hadn't been treating me at all. We were going to have a visit. I could have done it too. And that's not a bad deal. That's all it is. I'd buy everybody here a drink. It brought me into the heart of things. But that didn't all it did to me. Something happened to me and it's in my nature that if one works, you take ten. There's no need to do anything unless you can overdo it. And that hasn't changed that much.

And so by the time I got to the drive-in, instead of what I had planned, instead of the people that are seeing what was in mind, which would have been good, they saw my partners hauling me around the driveway while I puked in the driveway. I almost died of acute alcohol poisoning that night from too much booze. And my keen alcoholic mind immediately found what was wrong. What caused that was bonded bourbon. And to this day, I have never had bonded bourbon since then.

I'm sure if that's all that was here, I'd drink it. But I began to do what is described in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. I began to drink for the effect produced by alcohol. The main effect was that it changed me. Since I was little, I've known my answer would be spiritual. And I've been on a spiritual search forever. But I was a spiritual thief. Take it from out here and put it in here and it makes you feel better.

And I thought that was spiritual. Dr. Carl Jung, and I have to make an editorial comment. After 25 years of

sobriety, you're allowed to do that, you know. He gets to say, has some opinions. Almost everything we know about alcoholism and almost everything we know of any value at all about recovery came to us from non-alcoholics. We just aren't right enough to come up with it. The only thing that we do better than they can do is that I can carry that information to you and you'll believe me and you won't believe that.

That's all. We didn't invent this deal. It's been going on for a long, long time. Anyway, Carl Jung was talking to Roland and he described a spiritual experience. If you're kind of new here and that sounds nebulous, spiritual experience, we have descriptions of it all through this book. I did a little thing for a group of inmates a while back and in just a casual going through, I found 73 descriptions of a spiritual experience.

You know, I just quit because I didn't have any more time. Carl Jung says that a spiritual awakening is to him it was a phenomena. He said that it is a huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas and conceptions that used to rule the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side and an entire new set of conceptions begins to dominate them. I took a drink of alcohol and had a spiritual awakening. That's exactly what it did to me.

It has led me to believe today that perhaps my problem really is spiritual in nature. I have a physical disease and a mental and emotional problem, but I have a spiritual disease and it gave me that. And of course, when your sickness is spiritual sickness, anything, that awakens the spirit is going to be worth having. It was worth the prices I had to pay. I paid terrible prices for drinking and everyone of them was worth it.

For a few moments on any given day, I've been okay to be me. I've been down a lot of roads because of alcoholism. I'm one of the freaks that came out of Berkeley in the 60s. Throwing owls and these acid around freely and screaming out where there's dope there's hope burned down city hall. I took amphetamines in various ways, including injecting for 14 years, but I am not a drug addict. Some of you are, I'm not. No, that's true.

I think another thing we need to do today because of the nature of our incoming membership is help people find out. You may be an alcoholic only. You may be an alcoholic and a drug addict. You may be an alcoholic with a drug problem. We don't, I don't have any problem with any of that, but the steps have to have a foundation of truth. And without that foundation of truth, it'll work. So I'll help you find out. I can't help you find out if you're a drug addict, by the way.

I can't help you find out if you're an alcoholic. And then we can go from there, we can work on that. And some interesting things happen after that. Enough of that. With the limited time I have, I really want to share with you the transforming power that I found here. And I'm talking about a transforming power. I'm different. I'm not a fixed up, buffed up model of the old on. He's dead. He's gone. He doesn't exist anymore, except in my memory.

And I keep him there because he is my greatest tool in working with new people. See, they think I'm smart. They think I can read minds. How did you know that? They don't understand that all I'm doing is just remembering. I had a kid, it hadn't been a month or two ago. And he was really calm and cool. Looked at least 30 years sober, until he looked in his eyes. And I knew he was under 10 days. We can look in her eyes and tell.

And I said to feel like you got about 10 million pins pointed the wrong way just about ready to come right through your skin. Don't you? How do you know that? Because I remember. And the best way for me to keep

remembering is to keep working with new people. Keeps it fresh. I tried everything. I was one of the first people in Dianetics. I knew they were all around Hubbard personally. Now you think about that. I've just come out of federal penitentiary.

My life is going to hell at 19. And for my answer, I turn to a science fiction writer. Made sense there. Frankly, he was a lot of fun. I too have been baptized a number of times. I've had the privilege of sharing penalty meetings with the Washington Indians and the Easter Ceremony. And had a genuine vision. Saw Great Bird flying high with no head and understood clearly. That's me and my life flying high going over. Kept me sober four months.

If you knew, I got to tell you the truth. Vision is a good performance of sobriety. I read books. I knew how to be a psychopath. But I knew how to be a sociopath. And my favorite game was Manic Depressive. Now let's put that in the street terms. If you're messing with me, you're going to get some severe mood changes. That's what I learned. If you give them the right amount of mood changes that leave you to hell alone for a while, you have to get really good at it.

If you do it too much, they lock you up. And if you're only an amateur, they invite you to parties. And that's what I'm trying to avoid anyway. I come from a functional home. I really do. I'm sorry, but I do. My parents are still alive. Recently we had to put Dad in a home because it's gotten where Mom can't handle. But they still live together. They still talk to each other. They're still in love. They've been in the same house for...

My God, I was six years old. I don't want to tell you. I can't even calculate a long time. My little brother is probably one of the finest people who's probably one of the finest musicians in the world. He's a professor of music at the University of Colorado. And he's a synthesizer musician of such high caliber that they take him all over the world. He just got back from Russia and Scandinavia because they're trying to figure out how he does what he does.

He was writing music with Stan Kenton when he was 19 years old. He can play every instrument that has ever been put in front of him. That's the way that is. And he's pursued that. Now he lived right down the hall from me when we grew up. Apparently that house and the folks in it were not what caused my alcoholism. My little sister. Bless her heart. She is raising a retired from IBM as one of their top executives. And she spent a lifetime making good money and great babies.

And her babies have been making great babies. You idiots can't seem to catch onto that. So we haven't got a whole lot of husbands to go along with them. But in my family, the attitude has always been when one of those babies shows up. It wasn't that cute. Another little prince baby. Let's raise it. So if you ask me what conditions I would like to have grown up in, I have to tell you that's what I grew up in. The very conditions I would wish for myself today.

Apparently that has nothing to do with my alcoholism. I didn't fit there. I wanted more than anything in the world to fit there. I loved it when you say I'm from and leave it blank. That's all I felt most in my life. Maybe it's Mars. In fact at 13 I thought it must be Mars because I don't feel like these people feel. I don't think like they think. I wanted my folks coming back to get me. And then I found some chemicals that let me go looking for them.

So I know what Christmas is supposed to look like. There's a big tree. A real live tree. It smells good. And it's decorated with lights and tinsel and we used to strain popcorn back then. And make long rees of popcorn. And the house smells good. Hot chocolate with marshmallows. I'm not talking about these sissy little things you get today. The kind that get on a cup of milk and you have to go. Or you can even drink them.

But the painful memory of that was at Christmas time in our house people came by to visit. My folks are beloved where we come from. All kinds of people. Rolleys, friends, neighbors would combine visit. See that's what was missing for me. I didn't know how to visit. One of the most important things I've gotten from Alcoholics Anonymous is learning how to visit. It has a characteristic that's almost impossible for us because we don't have it.

You have to be at least as interested in the other person as you are yourself. It's a visit. And that's not in my nature. We mean visit. That means small talk. Real people can talk 15, 20, 30 minutes and never say anything important. My God, man, don't you know we have world issues to solve. Let's get with it now. I'm surprised we even ask each other, how are you, that wastes time? We are so funny. I spent a good deal of time each day visiting with God.

It's a form of prayer that's not formal. We just visit. It's comforting. To do that I've got to know where I am God is. And that's what this thing gave me. Sobriety is not a package that I sell. It's necessary. But that isn't the whole deal. Being just being sober in enough, I promise you. Just being sober is the most intolerable of all conditions for the alcohol. That's why we have to drink. We can't tolerate being sober.

It's not possible. Relief of pain is not something that I encourage when you come to me and you're new. In fact, I have a tendency to intensify whatever you have. Oh, yeah. See, my experience is the pain had to get so bad that I could no longer stand it before I let it go. Anyway, that's a two-hour talk all by itself. The bottom for me is that time at any time when I wake up in the morning and understand what I have in mind for my life is not going to happen.

When I was 19, I hit absolute rock bottom. But in 19, I could bounce. At about 20, I hit absolute rock bottom. Everything I had in mind, all my dreams were now dead. There was time to start over. At 20, I could bounce. At 22, at 26, at 34, I couldn't bounce anymore. There was nothing left. I don't think that bottom I had on Christmas night was any deeper than the one that I had when I was 19, but it was a complete one.

My two little boys and I had been without a mother and a wife for about four and a half years. She abandoned Chip when Terry was two and a half and Sean was one. And I've been trying to raise these little kids on my own. We were a single parent homeless family long before it was fashionable. And the alcoholism was catching me in any way. We ended up spending the last four and a half years running around the country because I was restless here to own this content.

We couldn't sit still. And I've given up on trying to be anything real, tried to be super freak for a while, almost made it. My little boys were raised in Hell's Angels crash pads and on the road. And they thought it was all normal. We lived in a tree, just low Mendocino in the big forest up there. Wonderful summer. The kids thought it was an adventure. And I'm so glad that one didn't hurt them. But that was our lifestyle in and out.

And I became a criminal, my choice. Couldn't be straight, so I became a criminal and I was pretty good one. Though I've been in three penitentiaries, it was one in 1953 and then it was 66 for I got caught again. How's the good one? I got caught because the fellow that hired us to move a very dangerous load of dope out of Mexico and across the border turned us in later so he wouldn't have to go to jail. But we got it done.

And one of the things along the way that I had to live with, the hurt, is to get that done, I had to dispense with my conscience. You heard it this weekend? We have one. Mine nearly killed me. I had to dispense with it. To bring that stuff across the border was very dangerous. They'd gotten it to war as Mexico. The guy who brought that far had gotten arrested on something else and it was sitting somewhere. No one knew whether it was being watched or not.

So they called me because I'm insane. Oh yeah. I have an ego that says they can be sitting on it and I can get it out of there. To get that across the border, my plan was very simple. I've put it inside of an air mattress and filled it with air. Put dirty diapers on top of it, put those two little boys on top of that. And when we hit the border I screamed at them so they'd be crying. They don't stop you then. They get you out real quick.

I had to live with that and I couldn't. So I drank more. Every time I drank more I did something stupid like that. And it just gets where you can't stand it anymore. We didn't have a Christmas tree because we were... I was now on federal parole. An age of dependent children couldn't get out of bed without taking a shot of speed so I could get up and go steal something to get enough booze to go back to sleep again. Oh Lord.

I was getting to Jesus. We got a tree for a dollar on the 24th. It was wonderful. The process of me getting where I am today started by me running out of lies. Not by the truth. I just ran out of lies. We had this tree. It was a marvel. We bought the biggest tree on the lot per dollar. Our sinning was about 7 feet tall and this tree was about 9 feet tall so it tilted it to stop. And we decorated it with garbage crumpled up paper and cut out stars and that kind of stuff.

And I can still remember looking at that tree and thinking this isn't right. This just isn't right. I didn't know what was wrong but it wasn't right. I managed to get a pair of cowboy boots and a little shirt on credit so the boys of each have a present. And my little boys wrapped up everything in the house and blue paper towel it would fit and put it on the tree so I'd have a decent Christmas. And I can look at that and I just know this isn't right.

I started to break. All those defenses started to break. I would have told you and truly believe we're okay. We're our little families intact. The kids and I are together and we have a warm home and clothes and food. And I saw the lion that week. We were on ADC and we lived in a pig pen. And we weren't an intact family. There were two little boys living in a house with a madman. It wasn't a family. And I saw that lie.

So that broke. On Christmas day we went down to my folks place so we could spend the day with grandma and grandpa unheard of that you couldn't do that. You heard me describe my family. We got there and my dad met us at the door and he said, No, I'm sorry but your mother says I can't let you in here anymore. She can't stand watching you die. And I saw the truth. The lie broke. I'd have told you earlier that they just leave us to hell alone.

I'm not hurting anybody but me. And it suddenly became a lie that I could see. And dad snuck us in. Into the basement. And tore up my very last lie. Nobody loves us. Nobody cares about us. And he made a lie out of that.

And I didn't have any left. So I jumped quickly into the warmth of self pity. Got home on that. And then stepped out of self pity into the light of truth. And the truth that day was that I was useless.

There was no reason for me to be here on this planet. Everybody I knew would be better off if I weren't here. And that was true. It's not possible to live with that. I think that the absolute depths of human pain is when you feel useless. One of the promises we get here is you get to be useful again. From the day you show up, you're important. You may be so sick of your willingness. We can still use you. Because the next guy that comes in the doorway can sit him by you and say, Now if you keep drinking that's going to what you will be like.

I had nothing left to surrender to. That's not a requirement. You'll hear us if you're new talking about surrender. You don't have to surrender to anything. I did the ultimate surrender. I quit. I took a two month supply of the garbage I was using and put it up my arm and drank everything in the house and laid down and died. I don't believe it died. I haven't had a drink since. Haven't had a thought of a drink since.

Got a new mind the next morning. That's a spiritual event. Let me tell you something. It didn't feel good. If you think there's all this talk we do about spiritually awakenings and spiritual events feel good, I've got to tell you the truth. It usually hurts like hell. Huge emotional displacements and reorganizations are like pulling all your teeth at once without anesthetic with a veterinarian doing the job. So I woke up the next morning reborn and differed and hurting like hell.

And in a magnificent place, I was now on a body that wouldn't die carrying with it a mind that wouldn't work. I was finally available. You see, I have to laugh. You tag me as a speaker. And God has made of me a listener. And if you would be with us and if you would have the whole benefit of what's here, become a listener. I've become an asker of questions. That's the only way you get answers. If you have all the answers, what are you going to learn?

The power of God went to work in my life before I ever heard the name. All of this is, I think, by the power of God. I met the only requirement necessary. I surrendered. The police picked me up that morning. They had nine charges and the first one called for three years to life. And the DA told me he'd bring the other eight one at a time. But if I beat him on that one, we got these waiting. But I was done. And I still owed the feds five years because being arrested by the state's parole violation.

So I'm pretty well-contained now. But I was wanting to go anywhere anyone said and do anything anyone said. If it meant it didn't have to be me anymore. It just couldn't stand being me. So I just kind of went with the deal. I detoxed for six weeks. I don't want to ever forget that. I don't believe it will keep me sober. I've had far worse detoxes but it didn't keep me sober. But it's made me a really good sponsor. So I laid there for six weeks and feet on my legs and my head.

And had cramps and just awful stuff. So if you come to me at five weeks and say I'm going to die, I have to die. I want to die. I can look you right in the eye and say no. You got a week to go. We did a little plea bargain by the grace of God. They came to me on the day of my trial and said we've been talking to the federal people who had me down as a sociopath and a psychopath and a medic compressive drug addict. And they convinced us you were really sick.

We agreed on that. Said if you, we made an arrangement with the federal courts that if you plead guilty to a reduced charge so we don't have to have this messy trial, we'll give you a one and a half to three and then suspend it and give you back to the feds. They've agreed to take you and they'll take you over to Fort Worth to the hospital and fix you. I signed it right there. I'm a drunk. Not an idiot. You put me in a hospital with doctors and books and I'll be on the street in about six months.

A year at the latest. Fixed. I know all the games. I signed it. They kept their bargain. They reduced my age to 17 so I could qualify. I don't know what that's going to do my social security, but I'm much younger than I look. On paper. They gave me a year and a half, suspended it and gave me back to the feds. And if you know anything at all about power, you know my next trip should have been to Fort Worth, Texas. Five days later it was in the fish tank of the Colorado State Penitentiary.

I actually heard myself say, you can't do this to me. I wasn't in touch with reality yet. They had just done it to me. And that's where you found me. And I didn't come looking for you. You found me. I troll the beaches of the world looking for drunks. I do not believe that if they want what we have they have to come here to get it. I didn't even know what I needed. You came and found me, God bless you. You did not look like angels.

I've come to believe you are. He didn't look like it that day. The three guys they sent over to us were wearing grain uniforms with numbers on their chest. And one of them was a really ugly man. He looked like he might have been a criminal. This guy got up and he said, my name is Doc. And I'm an alcoholic and that means that I'm powerless over alcohol and guards and drugs and all of the other circumstances of my life.

My life's become unmanageable. And if any of you smart bastards think you can still manage your lives, look at the reward the state just gave you for the nifty job you've been doing. God took me to a place where my feelings were of absolutely no consequence to the people who loved me enough to tell me the truth. Cold, hard truth. Now I believe that truth without love is cruelty. And I think the confrontation without a real answer is brutality.

But we've got a real answer here and we love you. And I'll tell you straight out, if you have alcoholism, you're doomed. Good, we can quit fighting now. We were carried through the step process, the recovery process, in five weeks. Every weekend for about four hours on Saturday and Sunday, we went to school because you couldn't go to the regular AM meeting. Or they let real people in from the outside until you completed this step process.

We went up to the school, my friend Jim and I, and the first thing they said is if you knew guys for the next five weeks, they had nothing to say. If you knew anything at all, you wouldn't be here. There it was. We did a lot of talking outside the school. They didn't want to hear our whining, not in the school. It was showing us the recovery process. They taught me about my disease. The allergy to alcohol that I have.

And they helped me bring my memories to it so that I could understand it. It's not just words to me. I can describe numerous events where that occurred. I must be one of them. A strange mental quirk that I've got. It's called my mind. The most dangerous thing in my universe. There's only twice that I use it. I'll bring my mind out to show it to you so we can both avoid it at all costs. Or if there's nothing really good on television, I bring it out and watch it play.

But what I've done essentially, what God and I together have done is I have taken the keys to the car away from the five-year-old. I always want to take him with me because he's found on a trip. I came to believe in the power of God because it walked around on two legs. These three men that were working with me had been changed. They were different human beings. Bruce had killed a couple of people in a shootout. That's why I was in the penitentiary.

But the man talking to me about the alcoholic rage he was in when he did that could not have done it. He was a different human being. That's why I stayed here. He has never promised me that I could learn to cope with my problem. And I'm so glad because my cope were broke. To cope means to fight to good fight. I'm too tired. But they promised me in the very first sentence, in the first edition of the first big book is what's been given to me.

We are more than a hundred men and women who recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. I'm not cured anything, but I've recovered from alcoholism. By my personal experience, I am only four thoughts away from a drink. You've heard a couple others talk about it. I've got to slip this in because I think those of us who are in what you could call long term sobriety. 15, 20, 25 years are in grave danger from ourselves.

And I'm in more danger today from the truth than I am in the lies. So we pretty well cleaned up the lies. You'd all have to work real hard to convince me with any kind of perverted logic that it's alright for me to take a drink. But I've got something up here that will do it by tricking me. Let me tell you about it. Well, I know that by experience. I fly a lot, and because I fly a lot, most of the airlines, if there's a seat available, I can get it for 25 bucks.

And I was coming back from somewhere down here. I don't remember where it was one of those long evening flights. And I've gotten bumped into first class and I've just come from a conference. I was spiritually fit. I was at ease. Everything was just fine. Truly just fine. They were serving dinner and up in first class they served real food. And real forks and knives and everything. Glasses and the ambiance of the room was wonderful.

Yeah, I just learned that word. It sounds good, doesn't it? The lights were right. It was warm and cosy and I'm reading my book. I mean, it was good. I'm getting ready to go home. I'm horny and my wife's always horny. Just life is good. And out on the corner of my eye, I watched this flight attendant pouring this deep burgundy colored stuff into this photo. I looked over at that and my mind said, that really looks good.

That's the truth. Didn't associate it with wine or anything else. It's just that looked good and it really did. And then my mind said, I bet that would really taste good too. And that's the truth. It's not wine, it's not alcohol. It's just stuff that would taste good. And then my mind said, I bet that'll make his whole dinner taste better. That's the truth. That's why she's given it to him. That's the truth. And then a prayer began in me.

I did not start praying because I didn't know I needed to. There was no danger apparent to me, to this mind. But a prayer began in me. And I've learned over the years when that happens to pay very close attention. But I'm in grave danger. And so I withdrew from there and went to my garden, within myself, to hear the prayer better and realize that my very next thought would have been, I probably ought to have one of those two.

Still, I'm not even associating it with anything. And that's how serious this deal is and that's how marvelous

the grace is here when I don't even know I need to pray. Because of what I've learned here, I'm protected and safe. The Spirit will pray for me. All I got to do is cooperate. And I cooperate by doing the steps over and over and over and over. I don't use any other kind of a guide except this book. And the way I stay involved in it is the easiest way in the world.

I'm constantly working with new people. If I sponsor you, we have a deal we have to make. I only know one way. You have to show up at my house at six o'clock in the morning. It's the only time I have available, I'm sorry. And because I don't know what your real problem is, you can't read. Well, over the years I've watched us say to people read the big book. And then they do that and then they go get drunk. So apparently they can't read.

So I read it out loud to you. And we do everything that it says together. And so I'm constantly involved in that process. But I don't believe that by itself will keep me sober. Just the steps won't do it. I've seen people with whiskey marks on the book because they were working the steps and that's all they were doing. Nothing so ensures sobriety, says Bill, has intensive work with another alcoholic. And that's what does it.

Nothing else works when prayer doesn't seem to work. When my relationship with my family doesn't seem to work. When I start getting restless and irritable and discontent again, begin to feel the symptoms of alcoholism and nothing's working. When the workshops don't work. Intense work with another alcoholic works every single time. I highly recommend it. And I'm after you because I need you. I need you desperately. Without you I'll die.

I'll die praying. I'll die singing God's praise, but I'll die. I need you. Well, I've only got a couple minutes. And I get frustrated anymore because I have been living hand in hand with God for this length of time. Which means every day of my life the extraordinary has occurred. And I'd love to tell you all about it. The most important thing in my life is my family. You are my family in general. As in any family, there's also immediate family and kissing cousins.

So some of you are just kissing cousins. And I need my immediate family. My immediate family is composed generally of Big Book Nazis. Well, no. I hear them because they're constantly saying, oh God, we're doomed. But it's also necessary for me to put the pieces back with my blood family. And I had damaged them beyond belief. How do you make amends to the mother that you put in a position on Christmas day to say you and your children can't come to my house?

There is no way I could think of, no way whatsoever. But my sponsor gave me an exercise at the eight step that opened the door for me. He said, Don, we've got this list of people you harmed. You know what you did to them, but you're so insensitive you have no idea what it did to them. So what I want you to do is go back to yourself tonight and go over that list. Each one, close your eyes, picture them in your mind, and see if you can feel a willingness deep within you to look them right in the eye and say to them, I've been wrong and I've harmed you.

Would you please tell me what I have to do so we can get these books to balance? On the list that night, I had the experience I had wanted my entire life. I was lifted up from that metal chair and set free. Nothing was taken from me. I was lifted and set free. And I've been free ever since. What has done has made me a listener. What you do after you ask that question is shut up while I tell you. It's real easy to make amends.

Eventually my mom let me come by. Very reluctant. I found a way to ask her the question gently because you've also taught me I'm to be easy on you and hard on me. And then I shut up and listened. She said, Honey, all I've ever wanted was for you to be happy. So I've been going by my mom's house on a regular basis for 25 years happy. And it worked? Yeah. Worked just fine. It took six years before she believed I was going to amount to anything.

But I have no reason to believe that anybody should even talk to me ever again. My single handle destroyed everything worthwhile in my life and don't deserve it back. I just went by as if she could have what she had not had for me. Me happy. Made amends to my dad. And I'm so glad. My dad's 85 now and we're losing him. He's at that state where they were going to take his leg the other day and they just don't want to cause him that much problem because he's going to be here that much longer.

They all think he has Alzheimer's. I know he's tired. He knows me every time we come. He's cute. We came from the doctors where everybody decided he does have to stay at the home now because none of us can handle it. And he wanted chili. So we took him to Denny's for chili. And I haven't seen any of these symptoms that the family keeps talking about. He mixes strange foods together and all that. So he's eating jelly and I'm sitting next to him and I'm watching him.

In a middle he picked up one of those great jelly containers and is opening it slowly. And I said, oh my God, he's getting ready to put the jelly into chili. So I figured I'll cut him off at the pass so I don't embarrass him. And I took him off and stuck it over there and said, Dad, you know, I believe that probably tastes better on this. So he took a spoonful of chili and put it on him up. If I hadn't spent years necessary to restore that relationship, I'd have missed that.

Because when he did it, he looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and smiled a little bit and he knew that I knew that he was getting over on me. But I have taken the time to straighten up all my relationships. I can stand here this morning and tell you that I'm willing to be sad to see my dad go. But I will not have to stand at the grave and wish that I said something. But I did it. I've got it all said. Trapped him a while back when he was still lucid.

He said, pop, you got to know something. He wrote all my heroes. Tore him up. That's why I did it. I want to leave you with the most precious gift I've ever been given. My little brother really couldn't abide me for a long time. See, I heard him terribly. I heard our family name. I heard our parents. I was truly despicable. I sullied everything he believed in. That was his hero and I betrayed him. He had a hard time.

So I just made myself available and I've learned I wait for it. It's on your time. I'm available. It took 22 years. And he finally invited my wife and I to dinner. And after dinner he said, Don, I'm not sure you and I could ever be friends. But this was pleasant. We can do this again. And it began. Well, I've been in North Carolina for two years. Just got home. And I still go by the house on a regular basis happy. Because that's the deal.

So I fly home. And I was sitting here talking to folks with my leg crossed over and my brother came in. Sat down and suddenly reached over and kicked me on the bottom of the shoe. And he said, You know, I'm really glad to see you. And he was. He said, Look, why don't you and I next time you're in town let you and I go up to the cabin and do a fishing. We've got a little cabin up it. Fair play. So we did. I went home.

We went fishing. We didn't catch any fish. We crumped around scared a lot of brookies. Went back to cabin and spent the afternoon talking and playing cribbage. My brother had forgotten a cribbage is an institution game. I had to remind him it had been so many years since I'd played that he would probably have to coach me. And what the hell? Then you got two guys on your side. Oh, bless his heart. And we visited. And we talked about stuff and things and we got caught up for the twenty five, twenty six years that we'd missed.

My brother gave me the most precious gift I've ever been given. He gave me that piece of information that is him that you just don't give to anybody. He said, Don, you know, I'm fifty eight years old now. I believe I've made a decent contribution to life. I would have guessed to get that. That's his heart and soul. But the greatest gift is that I have spent all these years trying to find some way to adequately tell you how I feel about you.

I've told you the story of the the anvil and the story of Michelangelo and in an effort to tell you how I feel about you. I got it now. See, I'm sixty one year old now. And because of you, have enabled me to make a decent contribution.