

A Spiritual Journey, Strange Camels Group

1997 | Part 2 | Reading edition

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As with real life, we do things and then we break up and go do other things and then get back together and do things together. The spiritual experience is one as a unifying experience. So throughout this deal, if we're doing this right, when we take a break, you're all going to break up and go talk to each other. And when you come back in, half of you're going to keep talking to each other. We have a common purpose in this room. I need to refocus on that each time. And I'm going to give you just a childish image that has helped me. Please don't ritualize when I'm about to say. This image has just helped me get centered. And it's a simplistic view of pottery. Any of you potters or no potters. It's a very simple thing they do. It's very spiritual. To cast a good pot, all you need to do is get the clay centered on the wheel. If the clay is properly centered, and when the potter begins to spin the wheel, the natural forces of centrifugal force and gravity tend to throw it right straight up. And all the potter has to do is kind of form it and encourage it a little bit. If it's a slightest little bit off and the more off center it is, the more it tends to throw it out this way. You've got to drag it back in. It's a lot of hard work.

There are several places in my experience that I can center. Right dead center in my head is a centering place. There's another one right here in my diaphragm. And one of the Chinese called the Tomtiant, which is a power center, is right down in here. My spiritual center, when I close my eyes and think about going within and centering is just right here. I don't know where yours is. But I'm going to suggest each time we get together, we just get quiet for a minute, get centered, empty our minds, and then we'll know what we're going to do next. Suit everybody however it is you do that. We're doing retreat inside a barber in the monastery. It's a really good place to do a retreat by the way.

With a group out of Los Angeles and it was really hard to get them quieted down again after each break. We had some singers with us. It was in her profession. So one of them just went, and her partner caught it and did a harmonic counterpoint to it. It was pretty. Just split the room and got it quiet. So after the next break, she did the same thing. He did it and pretty soon the group started doing it. And I got this horrible image of what was going to happen. They were going to go back to AA in the LA basement and say, Don taught us to start meetings by going, hmm.

Oh. I see a lot of you brought your guidebooks. Would you turn to page one please and read along with me? On page one? Okay. We have alcoholics anonymous. Believe that the reader will be interested in the medical lesson under the planner. I'll set you to page one. This is the book Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm on page one. Oh. Mine's the first edition. Okay. Now there's a couple of reasons that did this. A lot of people don't know of the massive change that took place in 1955 in our book. The Doctors' Opinion is page one in all editions of the first edition. It's a part of the body of the recovery process. Good morning Danny. I was hoping to hear it. Where's that chair? That was for Danny. So I have to consider when I tell someone, go read the big book, which one?

Are we on the same page? Are we carrying the same message? The message that got carried to me and the reason I'm here is because someone carried me through the doctor's opinion and that's so important because otherwise I could not have identified as an alcoholic. And there's a thing that runs through a that I hear drives me

crazy. If the recovery process is in the first 164 pages, then leave out the doctor's opinion and the forwards and the preface, but particularly the doctor's opinion. Now I don't care why it happened. I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and part of my job as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous by concept and by tradition and by the force of spirit is to pass on the entire A message.

And the reason I'm making a point of it is we've started working with a lot of people who had come to us and they drink again and then come back and they drink again. Y'all call them slippers. I just don't think they ever put drinking. And the common thread was that they started on page one like we had told them to do and read the first 164 pages and missed this piece. We don't miss it. I know y'all don't. When you read with somebody you read it, but I've been guilty at one time of saying the first 164 pages until I thought about what I was saying. There's all kinds of stuff. I don't want to make it an editorial out of this, but currently at the next General Service Conference at the last one they asked the literature committee to bring back the possibility for a fourth edition big book.

There's some changes in stories and all because nobody's going to change the body of the text. And I don't have any problem with that. I don't see any need for it, but I don't have any problem with it either. But what a grand time it would be to restore the big book to its original condition. We now have a reason for a fourth edition I think. At least one to consider. Just put it back the way it was. Now that will really cause some confusion.

You need to understand that. It means that I will have to at every time I do big book work explain the difference. I have to start at the right place. I will have to become a better 12 step and a better sponsor because if they get a third edition or in my case a second edition, we're not going to start on the same page unless we agree to. We don't confuse Danny. We already have him baffled. I don't want to worry about falling into here. Okay? It's that important.

A couple of other wonderful changes in this thing too. I work out of a second edition simply because when I came for the first five weeks we went out to talk. We went through a 12 step study school and at the first meeting they informed us that for five weeks we had nothing to say. If we knew anything at all we wouldn't be where we were. We should just shut up. Then they read the big book to us and shared their experience of the big book with us.

I'm doing what I was shown how to do 29 years ago. This is how it was brought to me and I just keep doing it. If there's one person in the room in the 50 it doesn't make the slightest bit of difference. This is what I do. If this is all I do I'm causing you a grave disservice. We got to take what happens here to the street. That's what this week is about is talking about how that viewpoint attitude is critical in this deal. Here's a book.

Now I would suggest to you let me tell you how important this book is to me. I've had some visions along the way without the peyote. We're in Greenwich Connecticut one night for a meeting. Why I came over them I don't know but it came about a hundred hundred and fifty people in this room and it struck me that there were more people in that room that night than there were in all of Alcoholics and Islands the night they decided to put this book together.

There were about forty that night and it transformed my mind and I would suggest to you there are more people in this room in Slidell, Louisiana this morning than we're in all of Alcoholics Anonymous and I built Bob

and the few that were there realized that what they had was so important that it rated a book. Not a bestseller but a book where the integrity of this message could be carried forth when they were dead and gone when I'm dead and gone when all the interpretation is over the message is intact. That can either be great ego or a great spiritual insight. Forty people don't want to write a book and y'all know the story of the book we almost didn't get it selling bonds at 25 bucks in the bars five bucks crack if you don't have 25 we'll take whatever you got. It has been in the hands of millions of us literally millions of us over the years and we haven't really changed the order. We change how the words are presented sometimes. There are places that are now in italics that used to be in big bold print but the integrity of our message has been kept intact. That must be a pretty important book because we're good at changing things. I have some minor concerns today because I've seen some changes that have taken place in our book that caused me a great concern and it's not from the outside people who are not publishing our book which they have ever liked to do we don't have a copyright on this. Do you know that?

We lost a copyright to the big book in 1967 it went into the public domain. By a fluke when we put out the second edition in 1955 we assumed that it renewed the copyright to the first edition which it did in Canada but by a strange twist of the United States law it didn't. So in 1967 the first edition of the big book went into the public domain. We didn't even know it until 1985 when somebody came up with a actually late 84 came up with a mock up of our first edition for 25 bucks to sell a Montreal which by the way still has our copyright so we couldn't sell it in Montreal but it woke us up. It hasn't hurt us any but what I'm concerned about is the changes we're making in our book and I may be nitpicking but I ask you to consider we will read at least twice in this book we will make references to a group of stories in the back of this book and they'll tell us how really really important these stories are and we now publish a version of our book that doesn't have any stories in it. It's about that big I don't care about the size I'm concerned with the integrity of the message and it's my view. Here's the bomb quent. You can either put the stories back in or take those references out of the text. I love it. Nobody wants that piece of it. You and I are responsible for that not day. I'm personally responsible for that having happened. I wasn't paying attention. There's a knee jerk reaction to somebody else putting out a little book without stories in it and you know why they couldn't put out the stories? We still have the copyright on the stories. This one. It's just alcoholics anonymous but it's not intact.

Now I don't know about you but I don't start campaigns or go to war. I've quit fighting anybody or anything but I talk about that. You just heard me talk about that. I talk about that with my delegate. My DCM, my GSR, and anybody who listens to me and I'm just saying okay don't you think we'll do something? We're responsible. It happened while I was a member of alcoholics anonymous. I didn't mean to start it that way. Well yes I did too. Because we're gathered here. If I'm going to use this as a guide for my life and if I'm going to say to Danny, Danny, all of the answers to all of the life problems that you will ever have can be found in this book. I better be sure that I'm giving him the right one and it's intact. I don't want to lie to him. If you lied to me or give me anything less than the whole message I would not be here. See when I came to you I was certified as an associate path type II of psychopath and a manic depressive drug addict and the whole idea of A wasn't in my mind because nobody knew I was alcoholic. My alcoholism was hidden behind madness. You know it was such an integral part of my life. It was part of my life. Nobody ever saw that. They saw the other high drama that I created. So by that surrender that I had made, and by the way the elements of surrender, not the definition of surrender, the elements of surrender for me was I got tired, bone weary, absolutely so tired. I could no longer stand even breathing one more second. I couldn't be me. That's a tired of God. I died. I woke up, and when I

woke up it was a new attitude. I was willing to go anywhere anyone said, do anything anyone said to make any difference, as long as they didn't have to be me again, ever. That made that it died. I was in a wonderful state, a complete failure at living, and now a complete failure at dying. Makes you really willing to listen to what they have ever. Everybody says, okay. You're stuck in a body that won't die carrying along with a mind that won't work. You're still breathing. I told you last night that's my definition of doomed. So when you talk to me, I listen to every single thing that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous have said to me from day one till now. The first thing you gave me was a bullshit sifter. It's a book called Alcoholics Anonymous. Whatever else is heard in AA, I think is wonderful, but if I can't check it here, I either don't, I'm either too stupid or it just isn't so. So I don't do anything about it. And that includes my best ideas. This is my bullshit sifter.

When I get charged with a really good idea, there's a couple things I do. I talk to my wife first because when I get charged, I do things. I don't know about you, but I'm a doer of things. And everything I do affects your life. And one of the guys here is when I'm going to affect people's lives. I've consoled them anyway. Then I read this book out loud to somebody. The richness of my life is not because I read the big book. It's because I read the big book out loud to somebody. So I can hear what I'm saying. This is a journey of discovery for me in this book. My God, I was reading with one of my guys Tuesday morning and read something and got so excited. I've read it thousands of times. And all of a sudden I saw what it really said. And he thought I was brilliant. I had just discovered it. Of course I was brilliant. The lights went on. And I told him what I just found. He's 20 years sober. He said, My God, I didn't see that. We both got a little different experience on the deal. He was talking about this vital sixth sense.

Remember that piece? Just before that, the sentence says this is God consciousness. And I've known that, but all of a sudden it was clear to me. God consciousness is the vital sixth sense that we're going to develop here. Whoa. I should have known that. Anyway, viewpoint, this is the message that made it possible for me to continue. We of alcoholics and all of us are more than 100 men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. I was 100% sick. I need 100% recovery. If you tell me I'm going to have to stay sick the rest of my life, I would rather die. I really would. I'm not even interested in whatever you have in mind.

You tell me you have a way I can learn to cope with alcoholism or whatever's wrong with me? I would rather die. I coped for 34 years. The word cope means, from the big dictionary, to fight the good fight. I'm tired. I'm going to fight anymore. We, Danny of alcoholics and all of us, are more than 100 men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. What the hell does that mean? Alcoholism has definable, recognizable symptoms. I do not suffer from any of those symptoms anymore. That's all recovered means. It doesn't mean elevated, special. It means I don't suffer from the symptoms of alcoholism anymore. One of those, one of them is an allergy to alcohol that causes me to need another drink if I take one. Well, I don't drink. It's all suffered from that one. The other is an obsession with alcohol that causes me to take the first drink. There hasn't been a thought of alcohol in my mind for 29 years. I don't know how it is with you, but it has been removed from me. It's gone. Thank God. I've lost the power of choice in drink. It's gone. I have no more choice today than I did when I quit. Every time I had a choice, I made the wrong one. Thank God. I did not get up this morning and choose to stay sober. It didn't occur to me that I wouldn't be sober today. My lives in God's hands. Okay. There's no work to this. I can't cope with alcoholism.

I can't cope with anything. God, I certainly can't cope with this world. I'm about you, but that's too much for me. I'm barely able to cope with the room clerk of the motel I'm going to do. So there's a message it got to me. You don't ever have to drink again. You don't ever have to feel the way you've been feeling ever again. That's a promise. We don't promise trouble free or pain free life, but you don't ever have to feel the way you've been feeling ever again. The shame and the mystification of why did I do that? What's wrong with me? You don't ever have to feel that again. That's what I needed to hear. That's all it says. I'm going to give you another viewpoint because I'm going to do some exploring this weekend too, and there's some new things that happen for me. For years I use this book to validate my experience. There's nothing wrong with that. Today I must tell you, my experience validates this book. I am one of we of Alcoholics Anonymous. Everything that I have done that they did, the way they said they did it, I've gotten exactly the same result. There's only one result here. When I hear people say it's either working or not working, I don't know what the hell to talk about. I heard somebody say the other day, I've learned to live life on life's terms. That's interesting. I didn't know life made terms. Only people make terms. I checked it. I don't find it anywhere in here, so I'm just going to ignore it. I'm one of we, and I'm sure you are too.

I feel the warmth in the room. We of Alcoholics Anonymous. What a great deal. I'm all, I can't do it. We can. To show other Alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. That's all I need to do for the rest of my life and I'm useful. Remember I died because I was useless. All I have to do is show you precisely how I recovered, and that's a broad scope. How I recovered is different than how you recovered because I recovered in a penitentiary. So I didn't have the luxury of being able to call my sponsor when I felt bad. He didn't have a phone. I didn't either. In fact, quite often we were sequestered. And I used that word because that was one of the changes that took place for me. I started out in a prison cell. And as I awakened spiritually, it occurred to me one day sitting in that place, this 8 by 10 room with a bunk and a toilet and a sink, and this is how monks live. In fact, they call themselves. They are sequestered in a safe place where they have time and place for solitude. Same kind of room.

And my cell changed from a punitive place to a place of solitude and safety. That took place in here. They didn't do a single damn thing to change it and either to die and you move the pillow. It changed in here. In the first edition, to show other alcoholics, the forward, precisely how I recovered this big, bold black type. It was a little more important than it is now, apparently. I don't know. Isn't that nice? I can be useful at my worst. One of my dearest friends was old Jack Brennan. I don't know if any of you ever heard Jack. He's long dead now.

Old wheelman for the New York mob got fired from that job, by the way. Jack was a good driver, but he was a bad drunk. And he'd call him the next morning after a big hold-up and whatever else they did and say, what did we do last night? And the boy got a little nervous and thought maybe Jack, despite being a good driver, they probably couldn't use him because they didn't know for sure where he was going to take him. Jack got thrown out of the apartment one time in the police and spent a number of years every time he got drunk doing battle with the police.

And by the time he got sober, it was an eye gone. His tongue was chewed. He taught funny. Jack always taught me a little funny because his tongue was all battered up. And he was in bad shape when he got here. Couldn't tie his own shoe. He couldn't use fork and knife for about six months. He just kind of nursed him. He used to laugh because he's a staunch Irish Catholic and God sent a little Jewry spell out to 12 step him. And he

used to tell him, Jack, you're really important to this group. You're really unimportant. And he said it was six months sober, tying his shoe when it hit him that he was tying his own shoe. And it pissed him off.

Because this little Jewish fella told him how important he was. And he's aware for six months I haven't been able to tie my shoes. How important can I be? And he went and complained. And this little sponsor says, Oh, Jack, you have no idea the number of people you helped. You're so important. When new people come here, we sit up next to you and tell them, you keep drinking. That's what you're going to be like. There is a place for everyone in Alcoholics Anonymous to be useful.

My little friend Chuck was so useful to me because I had become big book bound. If you weren't doing it precisely this way and the timing and you've been here. Everybody who has a big book gets there. Chuck had been sober eight years and had actually become a counselor at Hazleton and was doing fine when he drank. And he had two or three other times when they did that and he drank. And when he got to me, he hated everybody. When I asked him what he thought about God, I said, I hate the son of a bitch. And I understand that we each get a couple seconds with him somewhere down the road and I can't wait for my turn.

I'm going to tell him what I think of this deal and I'm going to go on to hell whistling and happy. Because of the way my mind works, my whole thought was, well, that's nice. He believes. We haven't had to problem. Okay. Chuck can look me right in the eye and tell me, get that thing away from me. I tried a big book. It didn't work. That was the truth. He had and it didn't work. What am I going to tell him? Hated A, reserved the right to drink one last time. That was the deal when he asked me a sponsor. He didn't ask me a sponsor.

He hated sponsors. He wouldn't call me sponsor. But he's only to work with me. For a year and a half, I carried Chuck around in my truck every day. While he vented this venom and healed, how useful to me. Everything I knew, all this grandiosity, this stuff you make me do here, like you think I know something, had caught me, I thought I did, in which Chuck there was nothing except right around the van. One day we came home and Jackie made some chocolate chip cookies.

And we gave him one. And he made a mistake of saying, well, that was good, which to a cookie baker means here Chuck have a bag, gave him a whole sack of cookies. And we got to the car and he said, why would she do that? Why would she give me cookies? And I was able to say, Chuck, well Chuck, that's because she thinks you remember the family. And that's the day and that's the time his life changed. Nothing we had done to that point except he had been allowed to come and go in my house for a little re-year.

And when I identified that as being a member of the family, it was true. And when you belong to anything, you're no longer alone. The healing begins to take place. So our first job isn't to slam people with a big book. The first job is to touch them and say, we're really glad you're here. You poor sex on it. I really understand that you need a cookie. So I know people are really, really useful because they keep me there.

They keep me from getting smart, bringing back to just why we're here. I might as well, I've got six more, five more hours. I might as well tell you the rest of Chuck's story. You know, we finally got through the steps the way they're on the big book. Chuck is a big book fanatic these days. He's about five foot two and means a snake and doesn't mind telling you. He really still has a bad attitude problem. I love him dearly.

He won't hurt you anymore. But he's very picky as to who he likes. Very opinionated about the steps and not altogether well. But we got through the steps Chuck awakened. It was a time he would not use the word God, he hated it. Now he'll, he's in touch with God. You did not dare touch Chuck. You've been around those kind. You touch him and they will bite you. This was a wounded animal. So we messed with him all the time.

And he claimed to be dyslexic, so we'd make him read the fifth chapter. And he loved a ace so much that he memorized it so he could do it right. And then I caught him one day. I said, if you memorized it, you had to read it to do that. Don't give me that, Chuck. And he quit being dyslexic. Okay. Vinoy Shaw was in town for our convention. Vinoy's a big animal out of Texas. And she just loves everybody and hugs everybody.

And I couldn't go to the convention. But Chuck was at a time when we were not touching him. And he jumped and all. He'd tell you about it from our own hug. Don't do that. So I said, do you be sure to hear Vinoy's talk? Because she gives the best A talk. I've heard in a long time. She said, I don't know me, nothing. And when you're through, you be sure you go up and thank her. And he follows directions. He does do that.

And she told me later, this nasty little person comes up to her to thank her. And Vinoy just threw a big bear hug on him. That's what she does. When he looked up at her and said, lady, I don't hug. And she said, tough, Sonny, I do. His dad died and Chuck got a little money. We got his financial immense taken care of. And he still had a couple grand in the new car. And he came to me in tears. God gave him back that gift.

He said, I've got one last thing to tell you. I've never, I haven't told anybody for years because everybody ever told us left in me. But I have a dream. And I'm afraid to tell you. I said, well, tell me, Chuck. He said, I'm going to be an actor. He was a good actor from the day I met him. There's no question about that. And I believe that people ought to chase their dreams. So I said, look, you also want to go to Disneyland because Chuck didn't know how to play.

And part of my sponsorship is you will learn how to play if you're on me. It's a suggestion in the big book. Each family plays munchers little. Newcomers could see no fun about this. They wouldn't want to stay so we played. He wanted to go to Disneyland. So I said, look, you got two grand left. You got the car. Disneyland's open. You just got fired from another job so you're not working. Why don't you go on out to Disneyland?

And while you're there, I'll make a couple calls because I know some people in the business. And you can talk to a successful actor and he will be able to tell you what the price you have to pay will be to be an actor. So there's a price for everything. So he went and I've made the contact for him. And my friend took him out to Warner's and was showing him around Warner's and just talked with him. Took him on to the Murphy Brown set and they were fooling around and the producer of the Murphy Brown stopped and talked to my friend.

And any introduction he says, and this is Chuck, and Chuck would like to be an actor. And the producer says, oh, good. We can use him. And he became an extra on the Murphy Brown show that day. Less than two weeks out there, he's already on television. Got into acting school, was doing fine. His car was hit by a truck on the freeway in the next three years. We're not good. It was badly hurt. Went through his, I hate God business.

Why is God doing this to me business and all that anyway? At eight years, he drank again. Thank God. Because he was off into pain pills and self-pity and hate. And he was divorcing himself from everybody. And he

drank again. Thank God. He had one last reservation. He had told me early on he reserved the right to drink one more time because this didn't work. He was going to drink himself to death. Well, eight years now he screwed that up.

He tried. He lasted three days. He just didn't have the heart for it. Came back and he's been sober ever since. We worry way too much about people drinking. I hate to see it. It hurts me every time it happens. But sometimes if they don't drink, they'll kill themselves. Sometimes if they do drink, they'll kill themselves too. But who would like to make that judgement? Heard from Chuck last week. He got married. Please pray for him.

But after the hospital stuff was all over and he got a little settlement. Not enough to do much, but enough that he got back on his feet. Back into acting school. He just closed it in one play and his home put on another one. He's on five stage in Los Angeles. Don't know what he wanted to do. Sober, back hanging around with the people he hates the most. It sounded pretty good. And he was so useful to me because I got to watch this and be part of it.

And no, we on a shadow of a doubt. Nothing I did had anything to do except the one thing that this is all about. I let God demonstrate through me what sobriety is. And when the time came I showed him what I did. Well I suggest this to you. Sobriety by itself is the most impossible condition of all for any alcoholic to live with. And to recommend sobriety by itself is almost criminal. The reason we drink is because we can't stand leavens over.

It hurts too much. It's too confusing. When I'm filled with self, there's nothing but pain. When I was going through that business with the interferon and hepatitis and all that stuff, I got furious with the pain. In fact, I inventoried the pain because I was so mad at it. Because when you're in pain, it forces you to be self-aware, self-centered. There's no way out. But by the grace of God I found a way. I'm still in pain.

Always will be. That's part of the human condition, by the way. But I no longer suffer from the pain. There's a difference. We have an incurable disease, but we don't have to suffer from it. I'm not cured of alcohol. As am I recovered from it. I don't have the symptoms anymore. One of the symptoms is self-centeredness. And if I start getting self-centered, I'll start suffering. And when I'm suffering from self-centeredness, I try to fix it.

If I'm suffering from loneliness, I can go find another girlfriend. The only reason I'm lonely is because the last one couldn't stand me left. Because I was too self-centered. Let's go back to the big one. I need to not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. As a sponsor, I need to continue to be aware of that. That the people I'm working with, like myself, but particularly the new ones coming in are very sick people.

And I need to treat them that way. I have never yet heard a nurse yell at a patient. Have you? That's all we are, is nurses for sick people. We got a nurse in the lawn for a while. What do you say, Clint? Bed pan hairy. Bed pan hairy. Okay. And I need to remember that. Because after I've been through the big look several times and got, it's all damn smart. I started instructing instead of nursing. Well, you mean you haven't got your four step done?

You picked up on that. I don't do it that way. I've got one right now in inventory. And we'll go over how I do that. There's a step-by-step method. And we meet every Wednesday morning at seven thirty. She called Tuesday

evening and said, I haven't finished. Is there any reason to meet? Reason to meet? I said no. There isn't. We have nothing to talk about. We're in a process now where everything goes on the paper. If you haven't finished that, we have nothing to talk about.

Finish it. That may go on for a while. If it goes on more than eight weeks, the chair is empty and someone else will fill a chair. That's all. You're just unable to do it. I don't know why. I will continue to encourage, but I never try to force. How would you like to have been forced by that? I wouldn't. It was imperative that I do it. They didn't force me. Then it says, besides we're sure our way of living has its advantages for all.

Now, in my self-centered arrogance, I used to think that means that you all live the same way I do. It would be good for you. What it means is that my being sober has its advantages for everybody around me. My way of living, it's much more advantageous to you to have me living the way I am than the way I used to. Just another view. That's why we keep reading this over and over again. Yeah. My children are better off because of this way of living.

My boss is much better off because of this way of living. My parents are better off because our way of living has its advantages for them. Then I learned some things about how to conduct myself as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous publicly. Because we're not a secret society. We're an anonymous society. Simple means that we're equal. Nobody speaks for A.A. I speak for my experience of A, but not for A. It says when writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our members, or each of our fellows to a many's personal name, by designating himself instead as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

So, in open meetings, like this one, my name is Don and I am an alcoholic. And I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. On a more personal level, you get my whole name. But in a public level, I just comply with this. It's nothing fancy. Old Bob White, who is one of my heroes, said, all we do here is comply with the conditions. See, you may not like that. Comply doesn't fit well into the alcoholic makeup. So we do just comply with the conditions.

So if I do that, that's what I do. People find great whimsy in my little group's name. We finally find it cool. We're complying with the conditions. Any two or three alcoholics gathered for sobriety me, call themselves in an A group. And that's the name of my group. That's how I was writing an A group. Our central office spent three weeks trying to figure out, telling us we can't do that. We said, we are already doing it.

Just write it down somewhere. I was in my first federal penitentiary when I was 19 years old in Japan. It was not because that was a big time criminal. I was a 19 year old drunk. And I was baffled by that. I mean, when I joined the Navy, I really had it in my 17 year old mind to come home a hero, having saved America from the communist menace. Truth was, Denver was too small for me. Already, my head was too big. Nobody, but I ran with some other guys who nobody else liked either.

We ran up and down Colfax, Drake and Barron looking for girls. I remember the night we found some. It was a terrible night. All we knew was looking. We didn't know what to do when you found them. They didn't know either. It was a bad night. So I joined the Navy. And I really loved the Navy. I loved the work. It was challenging. It was a radar man, a radio man, on a destroyer. At 17 and 18 wars, exciting. We went to Korea.

We'd blow them up during the day, and they'd fix them up during the night, and we'd go back and blow them up during the day. I have no idea how many people we killed, but I do know we killed one of the whole herd of cows. They were where we were supposed to be shooting. So somebody ate a good debt week. I loved hanging out with the guys where you'd custom spit and chew. And we drank everything. We drank some stuff that was just downright dangerous.

Thank God we didn't ever have to fire our torpedoes. Because there wasn't a fuel left in them. There's a way of straining the lead out of that, mixing it with grape juice, and it'll put you to the moon. One of our guys. I know today he was an alcoholic. As they were taking me off the ship at handcuffs, they were bringing him back on at handcuffs. This guy had drank some much torpedo fuel that his stomach was rotting.

And he would tell you, if you mess with me off puke onion, he could just, without even thinking about it. But they brought him aboard and I was listening to him tell the quarter deck watch why he'd been gone for 30 days. He'd been kidnapped by the communist Chinese and held in a shack tied to the mid-fold for 30 days. While they interrogated him for all this incredible information, secret stuff he knew. I thought, I like that.

It won't fly, but what a story. He's one of us. I hope to God he got sober somewhere. It doesn't surprise any of you, does it? Of course, someone important to me. They knew right away, kidding half this one. I went on liberty and kept getting back late. When I drink alcohol, I get lost and can't find my way home. On time. Or at all. So I'd get a captain's mask because I was a couple of hours late getting back. The last time that happened, I was 23 days late getting back.

I've been given a 24 hour liberty in Long Beach. 22 days later, I'm still in Pershing Square in Los Angeles, mooching drinks, wanting to do and having done anything as long as I can keep drinking. Lost and baffled and scared, but I got to keep drinking. I could not go back to that ship under any circumstances. I couldn't even run away and go home. On day 23, whatever that was, wasn't there anymore. The madness was gone.

And I turned myself in and returned to the ship as a sane human being to face the consequences of my act, which put me in a federal penitentiary and gave me a bad discharge. But I was baffled. Why would that happen? What's wrong with me that that would happen? Because I love the Navy. Well, in the book *Alcoholics and Nautilus* and the portion of my doctor's opinion, it tells me precisely why I did that. Since I'm the only one with the first edition, we'll go to the Roman numeral number 27.

That's X-X-V-I-I for those of you who are illiterate. Well, when I first came upon this, I was a sociopath type II, a psychopath, a manic depressive, drug addict, dog tired, and not knowing what the hell's wrong with me. And they read this out loud to me. I did not hold with those who believe that alcoholism is entirely a problem, mental control. I've had many men who've had, for example, worked a period of months on some problem or business deal, which was to be settled on a certain date favorably to them.

They took a drink, a day or two prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving once became paramount to all other interests, and the important appointment was not met. These men were not drinking to escape. They were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control, and there it was, my first duck feather. I took a drink in Long Beach, and 24 hours later I was due back on the ship, and it was 22 days before I could go back to the ship.

Some kind of craving took over that became paramount to all other interests. It wasn't that I didn't love the Navy or my family or my job or me, it had nothing to do with anything except when I take a drink, I must continue to drink. It's paramount to all other interests, including life, family, work, health. This is serious business, and I've got it. That's what's wrong with me. What a wonderful thing. Did that ever happen to you?

There are many situations which arise out of the phenomenon of craving, which cause men to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight. They kill themselves. They are unable to go on. My second duck feather I had just done that. I thought it was because of the drugs. See, I'm not a drug addict. For 14 years I used amphetamines. For four and a half I injected them, massive amounts. But I was always able to stop them on rate, to not use them.

I had some control over that, I misused them terribly. But if it was important, I could quit. With the alcohol, once I take a drink, I can't find my way home. That's all? That happens to you, probably alcoholic. I've been all the other things that you read in there. I'm not going to read this whole book to you. I was never all these all at one time. But in some part of my drinking I was the psychopath, the plan, the drinking.

We used to drink ourselves over, my friend Jordy and I. You're normal people don't do that. When we get what I call knee walking drunk, which means that's the only way you can walk is on your hands and knees. And we weren't through. I mean getting drunk is not the mark of an alcoholic. A lot of people like to get drunk. That means they finally drink themselves to a place where there's enough and they go to sleep or pass out or whatever.

When we reached that place, we weren't through. I have memories of reaching that place and sticking my finger down my throat so I could chuck all that stuff out so I had room for more. That's not normal drinking. That's not even unhealthy drinking. Okay. And then Jordy and I found one time that when we got to that place, it was a particular brand of domestic champagne. I don't know what it was, some cheat crab. If we started drinking that, we would drink ourselves sober.

Meaning we would drink ourselves back to where we could get off our knees and felt like we were back in control where we could start drinking again. Did you have one, a brand like that to do that for you? Yeah. That's not just hard drinking. I mean maybe once if you're on a tooth and want to finish the tooth, but we're talking about a lifestyle here for me that I did not see that nobody saw. My friend Angie Dil says the second name for alcoholism is I ain't got it.

I do not see what's going on. I'm blind. So he goes through the different types of alcoholics. And this is just viewpoint, please. And he says that all these and many others have one symptom in common. And this is a doctor talking to us. They cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. Now I had to get straight in my mind. That doesn't mean I want to take a drink. I do the in here, but not in here.

It simply means if I take a drink of alcohol, I will take another drink of alcohol. There are no circumstances possible, or I won't be able to get another drink of alcohol. I've either done it or heard hospitals, jails, prisons, detox centers. You always have a friend like me. We had a lot of our friends end up in the psychiatric ward of Colorado General Hospital. And a good old dawn would bring it in. You always have a friend like me if you like me.

I know what you need. The doctors think you need Thorazine. I know you need a drink. Now the doctors really baffled. They had you pinned down until you mixed the Thorazine and you found the hoodies and where they held the guy. The phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people and sets them apart as a distinct entity. Another duck feather. I have felt my whole life that I was different.

And my sponsor now says that's because you're different. I am not like my mother when it comes to alcohol or any other way. I am different. I'm not like the people I even hung out with. I'm different. Unless they happen to be alcoholic and then we're different in the same way. Put a lovely piece of information. I'm different because I'm different. And you're different because you're different. Our body chemistry is different.

I watch Jackie drink. It's disgusting. About once every five, six years. She'll have a Kahlúa. And I know the night's over. About 30 minutes later she goes to sleep. I've even seen her have two. Kahlúa and cream cream. That lasts 23 minutes. What would you do with a Kahlúa and cream cream? Now let me out of here and get something good. The party's on. It has never been by any treatment with which we're familiar permanently eradicated.

If you've got it, you're doomed. You've got it. You've got it forever. There's no treatment possible for this aspect of alcoholism to this day. And they have tried. My God, they've come up with some pills and some enzyme changes and all that. Alcoholics and drinks still drink. Nothing can be done. All we can suggest is entire accidents. Don't drink. This will never happen if you don't drink. And the identifier here is that if this phenomenon of craving does not happen to me, then all the bizarre behaviors that follow that first drink don't happen to me either.

Since I've quit drinking, I can not only find my way home. I'm usually on time. I've been living in the same house for coming up on what? I've got 21 years. Over 20 years. They're heading in a single night and I've got lost and couldn't find my way there. I can't say that I quit going to the penitentiary. I go a lot. In fact, I have the keys. But I work in corrections. For two years, I stood in front of a prison in North Carolina while they literally handed me the keys.

And that thing ran through me. I wonder if they know who they're giving these to. I supervised programs in 15 penitentiaries. I came in one of them and thought, what a marvelous thing. What a change that is. Because I never had like penitentiaries. But I hadn't experienced it in a maximum security penitentiary five years ago. Four years ago. It was a burning bush kind of thing. It was night. We were in the center of a maximum security penitentiary surrounded by bad guys.

And a sense of safety came over me and they thought, I have never been any safer. No will I ever be any safer than I am at this moment. Completely at peace with that. Let me tell you, those events are important. That's what I carry with me into that penitentiary. If I'm going to go, here's an axiom for you. It's not in the big book, but it's here in different words. Large caged animals are nervous. Minnesota farmers know that.

That's why bulls have plenty of room to move. People who are responsible for keeping large caged animals caged are even more nervous. New people who come to me, because God sends me the psychopaths and the sociopaths, are large caged animals and they are nervous. So it behooves me not to make any sudden movements.

Do you ever watch somebody work big bulls? Easy does it. I never have had any trouble at all ever, including the psych wars of maximum security penitentiaries.

I've never had trouble with the inmates. I have to be really careful of the keepers. They are nervous. So if you're going to do this work, then you probably will. Just remember, don't make any quick moves. You'll be okay. Around Chuck, you didn't make any quick moves at all. Here, Chuck. Yeah, good. Right? Oh, yeah, quick noses. We got a guy six foot four and one of our groups back home. Chuck's about five foot two and this guy made the mistake.

What's that for you working, Sonny? Sonny just quietly informed me, so you big sum bitch. I can climb up one side of you, cross your head down the other side and chew your ankles off. You can take another breath, back off. And he did. So I've got a disease, an illness, an actual physical allergy. If I had an allergy to tomatoes and I ate tomatoes, I'd break out with a rash. The symptom of my disease, one of the symptoms of my disease is simply that I break out with any itch for another drink if I take a drink.

That's the manifestation of my allergy. It will cause me to have to have another drink. And it will be paramount to all of it. Can you see what that does to the guilt in the human being? I really love my family and my children. But I'd take a drink and they became secondary. And I don't know why. I just know if I have to make a choice between them and a drink. I'll take the drink. And it just eats me alive. I don't want to be that way.

And I'm powerless over it. I can't stop it from happening. The only solution we have is don't drink. Well that means it probably doesn't. Silkworth must have been something. Smokers are getting restless. I can't. I can't. I can't. I can't. How will your brother the snakes come later? I need to smoke. What's your pleasure? Shortly after 11. We're going to run until about 11.30. We can keep running. We can break now and come back at 1.

We can come back at 12.30. This schedule is lovely. Don't pay any attention to it. We get to do what we damn well please. What's your pleasure? I really can tell that some of the smokers need to smoke. And we are at about a place where I want to start something that's going to take more than 15 minutes. Let's go up there. Break. Okay. Take a break back here at 12.30? Good. Okay. Enough's enough. Oh, man. That locked in.

Thank you. No. Not everyone's here yet. How long you want to wait? I'll let you go. We'll put you some more. We don't have an opening. We're pretty much done away with when you get my age things go. thing is your memory, then, uh, uh, I don't know what's the answer. Ritual. So at six o'clock in the morning, we gather and we get quiet. We've gone back to real basics. See, originally, it was forming the first group activities, of course, came out of the customs of the Oxford group, and that was simply, be still, until someone was inspired to say something.

That was the morning meeting at Henrietta's house and other places, so my little group does that. It's kind of interesting. We got concerned with ritual because we began to see that we were ritualizing people to death. We were teaching them our lingo and not teaching them our principles. And I don't know if you've had the experience I have, or I got, my group did it right for so many years, when I went to somebody else's group you weren't doing it right.

It all had to do with rituals, but anyway, we'd get still, and understand, our core group in my group, it's an autonomous A group that meets in a correctional facility, in a basement. But we are an autonomous outside A group, and that's just a rant and everything. We do that so the inmates have an opportunity to have access. We won't sign slips. We won't do anything. They can come and hunt. And since they don't know our ritual, when they come, they get still with us.

So their first exposure to A is, if you still want to listen. I just want to say it in my life. I just realized that by the way. We've been doing it. Most of the things that I tell you are the things that I just realized that I've been doing for a long time and I just finally realized it, that's very nice. You will think about the power of God, the greatest demonstration of the power of God for us is to be in a room full of alcoholics who are being quiet.

That takes a lot of power. Okay. So thank you. I'm resented. We're going to bounce along here. First time through Bill's story I didn't identify with much because I was looking at what happened. That has changed. I am Bill. He went to play golf. I went off to become a semi-pro bowler. I didn't want to be a professional because you have to work too hard. As a semi-pro, I could drink a lot and get by, which is not what I really want to do anyway.

But I would suggest something. This is just my experience and my viewpoint this weekend. Let me show you something I found here. Bill is at a state where he has been to Dr. Silk Horse twice. The last time Lois has been told he might as well get him a keeper at this rate, maybe a year, when you're looking at a dead man or an insane man, just there's nothing more we can do. He's sitting at home drinking gin. He is drunk, looking forward to getting even drunker whenever he shows up.

The awakenings that Bill talks about and Bill's story occurred while he was drinking and while he was drunk, not when he was sober. That's important for me. God doesn't have a rule that says, you've got to be drunk before I come visiting. You've got to be sober before I come visiting. It happened for Bill while he was drinking. Drinking to the point where right after he awakens, and let me see if the awakening is the right word.

It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last. That sounds like an awakening to me. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. Nothing more required of me to make it beginning. We're on page 12. I'm sorry. I thought I was a big book expert senior of the pages. I saw the growth start from that point. That sounds like an awakening to me.

Drunk. It's important to me because I need to remember and not be so damned arrogant in my 12th step work that I insist that you be sober before I'll talk to you. If that had been the case, none of us would be here. Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want him enough. At long last, I saw I felt I believed scales or pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came in to me. That sounds like an awakening to me, and in that state I went to the hospital where I was separated from alcohol for the last time.

Treatment seemed wise where I showed signs of glory and tremors. Please God, let me remember that, always. The suggestion in 12th step work is that a man's mind needs to be cleared before we present all this information to him, but it doesn't have to have a very clear mind to have someone come and be a demonstration for you and put the hope and wake you up anyway. I love this piece. If we could just be built and go through this,

we wouldn't need all the rest of it.

Because here it is. It's all right here. There I humbly offered myself to God as a man understood him to do with me as he would. I placed myself unreservedly under his care and direction. I had met him for the first time and of myself I was nothing, and without him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became wanting to have my newfound friend take them away a rooting branch. I've not had a drink since. Goodness, that's a lot of stuff.

The conception of a newfound friend is one that I can always deal with. At my worst, there's hope when there's a newfound friend, maybe this time it'll work. Here's some of the cares just enough about me that maybe this time it'll be okay. There's that sense of hopefulness. There's a concept to God I've worked with. It shatters everything else I've ever thought about God. Because God's going to be my friend. Anybody have any problem with that one?

Lots of people do. I was brought up believing Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so, but if you do something wrong you're done. Confused the hell out of me. My schoolmate visits it me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals admitting my wrong. Never was that'd be critical of them.

I was to write all such matters to the utmost of my ability. I like that much better than I'm in. We're not talking about a lightweight apology here. Lightweight apologies will not take care of the sense of overwhelming guilt that I have. Our message has depth and weight. I can tell you, Danny, there's some work ahead. You've done some shit that you've got to go back and clean up and it's going to just eat your lunch.

Thank God, because if we're any less than that he wouldn't have any meaning to me. I get to really go back and set right the wrongs I've done. Boy, boy, boy. Never was that'd be critical of them. Absolutely impossible to an M.A. Delcolon. I'm going to say it several times this weekend I want to shatter a new piece of water down A. In inventory I do not look for my part. If I have only a part so do you still have a part and this thing tells me I'm to ignore anything you may have done entirely and look for my mistake and not my part.

I'm to never be critical of you. You have no part in the way I feel about this, the resentment and the fear. Only me. We'll get to more of that later if you wish. I do not look for my part. I look for my mistake. What was I wrong? Me. Me. If you're a son of a bitch I picked you. Oh yeah. I was to test my thinking by the new God consciousness with him. We had an old assembly God preacher used to come. I love to meet with the assembly God folks because they sing and I love to make a joyous noise unto the Lord.

I just can't get into it. I can't go along with much else. It's just me. I love to sing with him, and I love the people I have met among the assembly of God. This old boy used to come in every Sunday. He was doing what 8-12 steppers do, he was taking his own time out, going to the most hostile environment he could find to carry his message. So I listened to him. Don't disregard what spiritual people had to say no matter what their doctrine.

And he taught us how to do this in a very practical way. He said, there are times, and he claimed Jesus was alive and well, and he was conscious of the presence of God. He said, there are still times that I'm doubtful, I'm just not sure. And we said, well what do you do there? He said, well, I take him by the hand and say to him, if I

go do this will you go with me? What an awakening that was. I either get a yes or get a no.

If I don't get anything at all, it's no. I know where I am God is and will go anywhere with me, but that's a good test for my behavior. That has grown some. The question no longer is will you go with me? Would I do this now if he were with me? Well, he's with me all the time, and it really becomes a guide for my behavior. Good stuff. Can't do it unaided. It takes the very power of God to make me able to do that, but that's available.

Common sense thus becomes uncommon sense. It doesn't say common feeling becomes uncommon feeling. Common sense becomes uncommon sense. There's a sense of things that transcends feelings. Things are based on whether it's hot or cold or sunshine or dark or my perception of what's cute and exciting. Feelings aren't to be disregarded, but there's certainly not to be trusted either as the final gauge for any decision that I might make.

How I feel about things my sponsor said meant absolutely nothing to him. He just really didn't care. In fact, it seemed to me that he liked me feeling bad more than anything else. Never denied me my pain, and I will never deny you your pain. If I stop your pain halfway through your journey, you don't get to go back and pick it up halfway. You've got to go all the way back to the beginning and do the whole damn thing over again.

That's my experience. More better, I encourage your pain. And he did that in little ways like this. Oh, Bruce, I say, I feel so guilty. He said you should. You are. Finally, somebody who understands, Bruce, I feel weird and strange. You are. Bruce, I'm terrified of my own mind. You have good reason to be. Finally somebody who understands. There's freedom in every one of those things when I finally get it straight. And I get it straight because somebody says, yeah, I know.

So what's your point? I love you anyway. What's the difference? When I was to sit quietly, wanted asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems so that he would have me absolutely contrary to the alcoholic who you will nature. We mean to sit quietly when it's out. When you're worried or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout, create a diversion. Get them busy so you can get out. That's my nature. The minute you catch me off base and I'm wrong, I have a multitude of things I'm going to do immediately that will in five minutes have you begging for mercy and my forgiveness because you were so wrong.

I'm not about to look at me in my ego state. The basic A prayers are right here. Learning to praise what I'm about. If I'm going to have a relationship with God, I have to learn to communicate. We just call that prayer in meditation. Communications are two ways straight. I talk in a lesson. It's a new found friend. I'm going to talk that way, Tom. I talk to God just like I talk to you. And one afternoon I call him a big bully.

It seems to me that's what it was and seemed to bother me. Unfortunately, the minute I uttered it, I realized who the bully was, warned him. I say him. I don't know. That's a non-generalized him, by the way. I need direction and strength. I'm confused, so I need direction, which I get. Now I know what I'm supposed to do. I don't want to do that. That's going to take some time and energy and some work and some talent.

I don't want to do it. I know the right thing. I just don't want to do it. So I ask for the strength to do it anyway. You want to be careful of that one. That's a very dangerous prayer I've learned. If you pray for strength, that's what you get. You don't get relief. Okay. You get strength. God's very merciful. If all I want is relief, I'll get it. It may take a drink to give me relief. I'm allowed to do whatever it takes.

But if I ask for strength, I will get strength. Several times through this book, give me the strength to do the right thing, point me in the right direction and give me some strength. And in my experience, my strength comes from the partners that walk the path with me. That seems to be who he sends me. You are my strength. When we walk together, there's nothing can stand in our way, nothing. And out of that simple idea came the fellowship that brought us together this weekend.

Paul did this on his own for six months, and nobody got sober, and he was going nuts. It was not a good deal. And then he and Bob started doing it together and look at it. Here we are. Never was that a prayer for myself, except as my request might borrow my usefulness to others. This is not about me. My sobriety is not for me, it's for you. My life is none of my business, only the conduct in my life is my business. I am responsible for my conduct, or a easy solution to the ambition problem, don't have any.

I'm one of those people that my mother wrote me against, a man of that ambition. I have no idea what I want to be when I grow up. I can tell you this, I sincerely hope that I die before I grow up and become an adult. I've met two of them, and I don't want to be like that. They're a little judgmental, but they were certainly nobody I wanted to hang out with. They didn't have fun. I suggest to you that we are on God's amusement park planet.

We are God's children. What are the children supposed to be doing most of the time? Playing. And you know I take this whole damn thing seriously, and we miss it. This is our goofy place, this planet is, just never any of my fun going on here, and the animals on this planet, particularly the people types, are fascinating, better than any zoo that you can imagine. I need something, and I've known it since I was a small child, but I'm fully aware that now what I need most is a sense of the presence of God, that's all I need.

When I ran into this and it hit me, I cannot ask for that. If this is true, I can't ask for that for me. I can only ask for it, as it might bear on my usefulness to you. My schemer has never died. I just let it work under some guidance and direction, and I have a prayer I'm going to give you that has been with me for years, that comes right out of here. Something I do comes right out of this book, Dear God, please fill me with your loving spirit, and let it flow through me and into the lives of others, and that works.

As long as it's flowing through me, I am full, yes. Please fill me with your loving spirit, and let it flow through me and into the lives of others. Find your own variation on that theme. I used to say, fill me with your love, and somewhere in expanded it's got to be more than that. Anyway, that work. And it came from here. This is a guidebook. If it's true, it'll fit, and it'll be my guide. How do I conduct myself? Isn't that wonderful?

All the way to that run in front of us. Then only might I expect to receive, but that would be a great major.