

A Spiritual Journey, Strange Camels Group

1997 | Part 3 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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When I came here, I didn't even have a name. They took my name away from me and just put a number on me, which was correct. Put me away or I couldn't hurt anybody, which was correct. Nobody knew my name. Nobody had access to me. You took me at that point and accepted me as it was where I was, gave me back a name and a purpose and on and on and on. It's a very simple change that has taken place. It's been over the years by being with you and doing what I'm supposed to do here and just saying yes to life and the God and you. It is not possible for me to keep up with my mail. I'm corresponding with people in Korea and Australia and Canada and all over the United States. There's very few places I can go today where I don't know somebody. People call me when they're moving somewhere and say, who do you know here? I can tell them. I've had dinner there. I have history with people.

I don't know what that's important to you, but it was to me. I always burned you up and burned my bridges behind me and moved on. I have history with people. I'm not afraid to come back to Slidell. I've been here before. James was kind enough to let me live in his house. Well, I did a work on Waverland, Mississippi to have history with people. I've received in great measure and so shall you. Oh, God, what a thing to have happened. I could have done that. I'm home.

Next I can do the very absolute best I can do based on fact has put my children in a foster home and put my mother in a position to say on Christmas Day, you can't come to my house with your kids because I can't stand watching you die. So I don't even get any credit for her. I can honestly say I'm loved by thousands of people. So can you be? I'm loved by people who've never met me. I can walk into anywhere in the world and have done so and I'm a member of that group. I belong here. We walk into a meeting in Moscow in 1988, November of 1988, first meeting in Russia.

We didn't bring it there, by the way. They were celebrating their first year and it completely insane, egomaniac priest brought it to Russia. We love him, but he was a nut. But it was pure a. They opened away. I was used to having open. We had to listen to the interpreters. We were home. They opened the serenity prayer and read the traditions. And I said, this will be a second step meeting. And this rushing kid started to talk about his second step. And it's an experience to hear him say that and then have to wait while the English is being translated. And then when he's talking again, I get to think about what he just said. It was quite an experience.

And all of a sudden, he and I were the same. He was telling my story. And then he said, I have no history of God in my life. But I wanted to be sober. So I did what they said to do in this book. And I found spiritual power within myself. And I'm home. That's what we belong to, you know. That's what came out of this simple deal. When in a hospital bed, early MDTs, willing to do just what I beset here, straighten up to the past and start praying for strength and direction. My friend promised me these things were done. I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator. God does not exist way out here for me into some esoteric mystical thing. Where I am, God is. I have a working relationship with God as I understand God.

And it's stood the test of time. It's carried me through joy and it's carried me through pain and it's carried me

through flat times. It's carried me when I wasn't even aware of it. I have a relationship. My main relationship with God is my relationship with you. As a sponsor, I'm just awful. When it comes to romantic relationships, I can't be of any help to you whatsoever. I've never learned how to have a successful sick relationship. So all I can tell you is quit that.

If you would like to learn how to have a successful relationship with God, I can tell you precisely what I do. And since I got that one straight, all the rest of them are straight. That means I have enemies. My relationship with my enemies is absolutely correct. Not everybody on the planet is going to like me. I have a parole officer telling me one time, I'll know you're okay. Now I'm going to meet somebody who's just met you and they can tell me the truth that they didn't like you at all. Because then I'm real. If my relationship with God is right, all of the others will be.

If it's not, none of the others will be. That's just my experience. It's both a scary and a wonderful thought to be able to have a relationship with God. It means I have to trash everything I believe about God or think about God because I'll limit it. Well, what an idea. If I go here, will you go with me? I won't go here if you won't. That I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. And they are these, belief in the power of God. So just believing God is not enough. I believe in God. I believe He created the heaven and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. And for me, He was still resting. Chuck believed in God. He hated the son of a bitch. I believe in God is not enough. I believe in the power of God because I saw it at work. Plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things with the essential requirements. I hear funny stuff sometimes throughout the fellowship that there's no musts. I don't know what the hell requirement is if it's not a must. There's no must for your showing up here. You've got an urge to hang out with a bunch of lunatics. Come ahead. You're welcome. Recovery has some requirements. One of which is the belief in the power of God.

And enough, honestly, willingness and humility to establish and maintain a new order of things that's required. And I have trouble with the idea of humility. At that time, I was thinking of humiliation. And that's not what it's about. And I searched, deliberately defined something. There's all kinds of really cute things on humility for me. It's simply humility is the willingness to seek and do the will of God. That's all it is for me. If I'm willing to seek and do the will of God, that's all humility I'm ever going to get. I am prone to false humility. Oh, not me.

Which is just ego in a new face. Simple but not easy. Price had to be paid. There's a price for everything in life. I used to love when Chuck would say, I can either live by my own will and pay the consequences thereof or live by God's will and pay the consequences thereof. The price that has to be paid here and throughout the book are departure points. And here is one, where without this, don't bother anyone any further. It meant destruction of self-centeredness.

That's the price I have to pay for what has happened to me. That's the price I did pay. We don't hear well. Do you know why I first hear destruction of self? That isn't what it says. It says destruction of self-centeredness. Let's discuss that for a minute. Let's play with that. If God had made any two of us the same, one of us would have been unnecessary. That means that I am a completely unique model of the human condition. Never in all of eternity has been another model just like this one. And never again will there ever be another one just like this one. Same goes for you. You're it. One time around for this model. And that means I have a very specific

contribution to make to life. And if I don't make it, it will never be made because you can't make my contribution. And you have a contribution to make it. If you don't make it, it won't get made. There's only one thing I can do better than anybody on the planet. And that's be me. If God is in truth everything, then myself is also part of that.

An interesting thing as I've played with this over the years is that if I don't make my contribution, life seems to go on anyway. It doesn't seem to make a damn difference. But if I do make my contribution, it seems to me that the fabric of life is just a little bit richer that day. Don't know how, but it is. But Danny, this isn't about finding out who you are. It sounds funny. This isn't about finding out who you are. The inventory is to find out who you're not. So you can get rid of it. And then who you are will show up. Self-knowledge will not do me any good at all. So finding out who I am isn't what it's about. I know who I am. I know who I've become.

Now I've got to find out what God would like me to be. Anyway, destruction to self-centers, that's the price. There's a question implicit in this. Am I wanting to do that? If I'm not wanting to do that, I'll go home. That's what it's going to cost me. Self-centers. Let's put self-centers in street terms. I have to thank those street terms. Where's mine? That can't be mine. It's not big enough. It's the wrong color. There's not enough. When is it my turn?

That's not fair. You can think of a thousand others. That's got to go. Why me? Why not? Is somebody special? Yeah. Somebody extra special? No. Someone said one time, and I believe this, but it takes all of us to be the Christ spirit. That's the spiritual link we have. And if one of us is missing, I'm just not complete. And I need to go help you so that I can be complete. We are a selfless program that's based on self. Welcome to the lunatic asylum day.

The only way, I'm going to define spiritual for you so that you need to write something down can. This is not the whole truth. Spiritual, to be spiritual, is enlightened self-interest. It means I finally understand the best way for me to get mine is to make sure you get yours. It's enlightened self-interest. It may or may not be true, but it's one of those things Kurt Vonnegut used to call the kind of lies that make people better, if it is. Yeah. I must turn it all things to the father of light who presides over us all.

All things. Test that one. Oh, I've had fun testing that. It's a little crude, but I want to tell you one of my tests. And I do test God constantly. How else am I going to get rid of myself? I woke up one morning constipated, and I'm in there busy trying to force the issue. When I remembered all of this business, when agitated and adopted, we paused, asking for the right thought or action. So I just went inside and started doing that, started relaxing. And I don't know how much time, but pretty soon I got relaxed enough it was all over.

Because I took my mind off the problem and just went and paused and started asking for the right thought or action. I didn't get any answers, so I just kept sitting. That's what you're supposed to do when you wait until you get an answer. If you wait long enough, whatever you've been having difficulty passing will pass. I just couldn't resist that one. This will, if it's true, whatever this book says, if it's true, it will fit any circumstance I can bring it to. And if it doesn't, I need to find out why I can't see. That's all. Then Bill had that wonderful experience. Now, all through this book, there are descriptions, clear descriptions of what spiritual looks like, feels like, and tastes like. Because we are so bright that we have a spiritual awakening and we only know what the hell happened.

Here's a description of a spiritual experience. And my suggestion is, while Bill's was, boom, let's look at the elements of this and see if we've had any of this happen to us. These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. Have you ever had a sense of just like an electric shock or a meeting or with a friend or something, since you've been sober just?

There was a sense of victory. The battle's over. The war is over. I am victorious. There's just that sense of that. And it doesn't have to be a big deal. Have you had that happen? Followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. I've had that. There was utter confidence. We're scared to death of that. In the presence of God, I should be utterly confident. It's not an ego thing. I felt lifted up as though a great clean wind of a mountain top blew through.

I didn't get that one until later. In the eight step, I had a lifting up experience. And over the years, one of particular pieces of truth hits me. I've had children through me. It's almost like walking from a hot room into a cold room within the inside out. I expect that must be kind of what he's talking about. I've had all the elements of this. If you've had all the elements of this, you've had a spiritual awakening. Someone challenged Bill one time and said, yeah, Bill, but she had the advantage of that wantless experience. They said you've all had it.

But just for some, it comes slower. A piece of the time. For a moment, I was the alarm. I called my friend the doctor to ask if I were still saying. There it is. Every time I have a spiritual awakening, the first thought is, oops, I've lost my mind. And the reason for that is I have my old mind just left my old way of thinking. I've just lost it. And I have no idea how to live with a new one yet. And so it's a little scary. For new people, we talk about spiritual experiences like they were fun. Haven't had one yet. That's fun. They hurt. Getting born is not an easy deal. And and Bill and the people that brought this to us gave us one of the most critical pieces of all. We must walk day by day with a new man on this journey. What a horrible thing it is to wake somebody up and then leave them. My house is full of babies right now. So all my analogies have to do with babies. I can't conceive of enough meanness to wake this four month old baby up sharply and then just walk off and leave her. And I have to ask myself, do I ever do that with the people I'm working with? It's the same thing, you know. If I'm going to wake you up, I'm responsible for walking with you for a while. Well, you learn how to function. Now I play with babies. I don't know about you. She and I have fun. I plop right here on my lap and she gets a hold of these fingers and I hold on to her little ditty wrists and I can feel her starting to tense so I lift her up. She wants to stand up and she smiles and I sit her back on her butt and she smiles again and she tenses and I lift her up again. We exercise over and over. That's our game.

She's getting stronger. She's exercising her muscle. The same thing with going through the steps with somebody and working with somebody over and over and over again. While we exercise that muscle, that spiritual muscle, that new mind. Silk work was one of the most loving, understanding, brave human beings that ever walked this planet. And remember, he's had Bill twice before and he's the one that said Giddy MacKeeper. There's nothing left to pick up here. Bill calls him in after coming out of the DTS with this new thing. Talk, I feel like a cold wind blowing through me.

And so, of course, response to Bill, I'm still saying is something that's happened to you that I don't understand but hang on to it. It's better than what it was before. And then Bill has the nerve to say, you know, this is so good. I think I ought to give it to everybody else. Stop. Can I visit the other patients? What a brave man. This is a guy

that needs a straight jacket and so forth sees something. What happens to us is so profound even the world can see it.

In fact, they usually see it long before we do. Am I a living example of that? If you look at me, can you see what God has done? Not in a great profound way. If I'm going to go out and try to convince you that you ought to walk this way, can you see that I walk this way? Or is it all words? So when I sponsor you, you get to come to my house. Generally about six in the morning. Right now, what the hell? That's when I'm up.

And that's when you're at your weakest. No. Part of the reason for that is that I want you to see how recovered alcoholic and his family live. First of all, we have an address and you come to it every week and it's there every week. You can't say the same for your life. We start up on the couch. Now, there's been some changes but this is up on the couch in the family room right by the front door. My family and I have had group conscious. They know exactly who's coming into our house. Thieves, rapists, murderers, lunatics, drunks, unstable people of all kinds.

That's okay with them because they know I know what I'm doing. I'm keeping them on a couch in the front door. My family has seen some really dangerous people come into our house but they're not dangerous while they're in my house. They're really not. We're there for God's purposes and they're not dangerous. They won't hurt anybody. They see how we get ready for work and school. My youngest daughter is mouthy. Is that fair opinion then? And not the least bit concerned about sharing her opinions with you. She's very direct, a lovely child, just very direct.

She's an activist. When I met her, she was three years old and running a Montessori school. She was. So I got one of the lunatics sitting on the couch and we're busy engaging and doing this big book thing. She was probably 12, 13, came down the stairs and suddenly I hear, excuse me, and it's pretty well known when I'm busy working and don't interrupt me. So it shocked me and I said, yeah, what do you want? She says, I live here too, you know, and you've never introduced me to this person. And we both got a big lesson out of that. So you come to my house so I can learn too how to interact. And it was so important that she meet him as soon as she got his name. She's gone. We make massive dramatic deals out of shit like that. Okay. Sue's circumstance. She was put into an arena where the idea is about people aren't the same as they are in our house. And I sponsor a lot of gay guys. I don't care. I sponsor drunks. Whatever the hell your deal is, that's your deal. I don't really don't care.

But she came downstairs one day talking with her sister making noises about gay people that were ugly, truly ugly, biased and prejudiced and mean and ugly. She'd heard them somewhere. And Sam was right there on the couch. Sounds gay. And he's watching me now to see what I'm going to do. And I said, Kelly, you need to know something. Some of the people that you love the most and that love you the most are gay. Oh, dad, tell me who. I said, no, no, you get to figure that out.

And left her alone in about a couple weeks. She came back to me and said it just wasn't worth the effort. And the idea is we're gone. We fight nobody. We fight nothing. Okay. It's 130. We finish this little piece up. We'll take a little break and then do another one. I hope it's right with you. I'm just wondering and telling stories. What you ask me to do. Okay. My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. That means a couple things. First of all, I've got to have some. Okay. Like working family

neighborhood and whatever. It also means that I'm not to have more affairs than I have principles.

So we ease into it. Don't like that. I practice principles pretty good at meeting. It's easy. You got to lingo as long as I sound right. It's easy. If I do not give my children the same love and attention and tolerance that I give the people I sponsor, I'm not doing this at home. And I've been guilty of that. Okay. If I can't wait for Jackie, like I'll wait for Danny, I'm not doing this deal. Particularly was an imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Well, this is how they did it with me. 29 years ago, they sat me down and said, you can't talk for five weeks. Shut up and listen while we read this to you. And then they did the same thing. They told me stories. And when he got to directions, had me do things. After the meetings, they'd visit with me. And I still do the same thing. And I'm still here. And it works. Faith without works was dead. And how appalling the truth for the alcoholic for if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life to work and self sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials in those spots ahead. Little departure here. A lot of the folks that are in my immediate family, A is a big family. But as an any family, there's immediate family, there's kissing cousins.

My immediate family, our people are so sick, they just have to have this thing at hand all the time. We're busy big book people. We're working steps and all that. And we'd sometimes say that the steps are the work. I suggest to you the steps are not the work. The steps prepare me for the work. The steps get me fit to do the work. The real work is working with others. That's the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. A business that takes no regular inventory will soon go broke.

A business that stays in constant inventory is also going to go broke. You've got to be open for business now and then. I continue to work the steps on a regular basis, mostly because I sponsor at least four or five people all the time, so I'm always in the step process. Periodically, I've been on to just turn myself into somebody and let them take me through the steps. I think the last time I did that was six years ago. And it was an interesting experience.

Took about three weeks and not not a bad experience. But I do not grow spiritually through the steps. The steps are what put me in touch with and help me learn how to relate with God. I grow, by sacrifice and work with others. That's how I grow. That's what it says here. That's what my experience is. I've been on the road a while. Just a little example of that. Let me take a break. Recently, my work is an incredible high stress. Don't need to be elaborate, but from the moment I start and tell the moment I can finally get out of there, there are no free moments. There are always four or five things going on at once and most of them are life threatening in one way or another.

It's just one kind of business. It makes me kind of tired sometimes. And then I go off and do a weekend like this. And it rejuvenates me that leaves me a little tired. Anyway, I was in North Carolina two weeks ago. And we'd done this whole show and tell business and it was fine. I had fun. I loved the folks. We had a great time. But Saturday night I was tired and I really just wanted to go home. And they had me set for a prison meeting in the morning and I just didn't want to go do that. But they took me out to maximum security prison and put me in a room with four guys who were working at that time on the eighth and ninth step. And I had something specific to share about that because that's where I hit it too. Locked up when they wouldn't let me out to make a mess. And we had an hour and a half that rejuvenated me and I grew spiritually and physically and emotionally and I came home just fine. Not because we were working steps because I had something specific. It was a sacrifice for me

that morning. I didn't want to go. I had to pray for the strength to go. Shame on me. After all the sobriety I should go just because it's mobile. And here we were.

The four of us locked up. Spiritually alive to each other. We grew up through sacrifice and work with others. Chuck just lies on the mind. My work with Chuck carried me through some very difficult times. Business was good. Family was good. My life was good. My insides were getting so rigid that it took work with a guy who had nothing to work to loosen them up. It's a sacrifice for somebody for over a year. Bitch and moan and whine and gaw. There were days I wanted to push him out of the car in the traffic. He did not work. He would surely drink again.

And if he drank he would surely die. Great. Good time. He wouldn't be back. Whatever you say it's your party. I hear two. Do I hear two two five two ten two five two ten two five two. It's one one thirty five two o'clock back here. Okay. We have alcoholics anonymous and no thousands of men and women who are once just as hopeless as Bill. They're all heavy covered. They have solved the drink problem. That's the AA message or part of it.

They all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem. The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree. And upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news. This book carries those who suffer from alcoholism. I have a friendly enemy at home. I don't like him. And he doesn't like me even more. We got together one time for lunch because he had come to make amends to me. About all the ugly nasty things he'd been saying about me before he ever got to know me. I want to know what he could do to straighten it up. I said well let's go lunch and get to know me. We discovered over lunch when we were through. He said I don't understand this. We seem to agree on almost everything. And one of the things we agreed most to on is we didn't like each other. So the best thing for most people would be for us to just kind of stay away from each other as much as possible. It's a friendly thing. Hi. How are you? Fine. I'm glad. Bye. He and I have been on 12 step calls together. I didn't work with people together but no problem whatsoever. We can join in brother and harmonious action in that. Five minutes after it's over. It's over. It's nice to know right where I stand with him. I know some people who've actually hit him. I'm not really prejudiced. He's not likeable. And there's times when I must now be and we can join in brother and harmonious action. Do you know how wonderful it is for me to sit here and see Danny come here and know that whoever's talking to Danny, Danny's safe because he'll get the same message out of this group from whoever it is that's talking to him. Different words, different styles, but he'll get the same message. And you know why I know that so? Because Danny's still here. And we've been shooting at him since last night. If I were him, I'd have gone home.

You can still smile. Okay. We join in brother and harmonious action. I want to be part of whatever it is that it does that. I'm going to surrender to whatever it is. It can cause that to occur. That's what I've been looking for in my whole life. This is a very basic human need, a principle. We all have to belong to something. Whether it's a club or a gang or a movement. I'm a very private person and I still must belong to something.

I must be able to join with you in something to feel it together. We're doing something. It's just a basic need. And we got that. I've got a common solution. Bill calls me and he's got a friend or relative in Longmont, Colorado that suddenly decides he wants to get sober. And he wants to know who can I put him in touch with?

I'm telling him. Because what he's really saying to me is who will present the same message you and I understand that to this person. I don't.

I also know who won't. I'm not afraid to let him go there but I won't send them there. It's kind of a deal. There's a joke about it but it's true. Left a meeting one night and one of the guys says that was some of the best BB I've ever heard. One of the other guys says, what in the world is BB? I have no idea but it certainly wasn't A. Without being arrogant, we have a way out on which we can absolutely agree. And one of the things we have to agree is that you may not want our way out.

Once we present it to you, you have some decisions to make and we're going to bring you to them if we're doing our job. I do. I bring people as I was brought to departure points. Here's the decision. Make it. No matter which way you go from here but you have to make a decision at this point. Do I want to be part of this? Danny's sitting there and that's going through maybe not consciously but part of him is wondering do I want to be part of this?

Are we presenting anything he would want? I want to tell you what they presented to me. I didn't know I needed sobriety so I certainly didn't want sobriety. I just knew I'm trapped in a body that won't die and in somewhere between the next year and a half and seven years they're going to put me back on the streets of Denver. I wasn't afraid of the penitentiary. It's just another community. You earned 11. But they were going to put me back on the streets of Denver and I had no idea how to live out there. Had me terrified.

Part of the message to me was that you're not thinking too well. We can show you a new way to think. We can show you how to learn to live a way of life. It'll make sense to you. That was an interesting piece of information. I've been trying to live my life so it made sense to you. It didn't make sense to anybody. Today the joy of my life is that my life makes sense to me today. It still didn't make sense to a lot of people. There are people who think I should be locked away.

I wish they'd hurry. I'm willing. Tell them she'd go with me. One of the questions in this basket asked me about where's the line about disease. I'm not sure there is one about disease but on page 18 it says an illness of this sort and we have come to believe it is an illness. It involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. So whether it's semantics in the word of disease or illness or sickness I have no problem with any of those words. We can define them and chew them up but that's the only place I know where it says that if that's an answer to that question it's not a definitive answer but it's my answer.

I contend that everything that we know of any value at all about alcoholism came to us from non-alcoholics. I contend that most everything we know about recovery and any value whatsoever came to us from non-alcoholics. Most everything we know about spiritual things came to us from non-alcoholics. We think nobody understands but us. It was a non-alcoholic we got to build. What we have however is a unique talent, a God given gift. The problem with most alcoholics is that they really do believe that nobody else understands. I did.

How could you possibly understand me? I don't understand me. I listened to people as I grew up and knew I was different. I listened to them talk about how they thought. I didn't think that way at all. I listened to them talk about how they felt and began to feel weird because I didn't feel that way at all. I knew they didn't understand when they'd say why did you do that and I'd say I don't know and they'd say well you must know. That's a

message of that. It means they wouldn't know if they did it.

But I don't know. Nobody understands me. What you and I have is a unique ability by talking about ourselves. The ex-problem drinker who has found this solution and who has properly armed about facts about himself can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, a little or nothing can be accomplished. So we have a way of presenting the information in such a way that the person believes finally somebody does understand me. I had some fun the other day.

We had a newcomer to me about three days sober and he'd also been doing some other things because he had some twitches that I recognize. But he was being cool and real cool. I just leaned over and quietly said I bet it feels inside like you've got 10 million needles all pointed out and ready to go all right through your skin. When we became friends on the spot I knew exactly what he was feeling. I've been there and he was being cool so nobody could see that he was about to explode and make a mess in the whole room. That's what we do.

People will say to us after 12 step call has been worked right. That's how I felt too. That's how I thought too. You just described me. I didn't know that about me. That's what they'll say to us sometimes. That's our unique gift. That's all we have to do. We don't have to be smart, educated, knowledgeable. It's harder for me at my time sobriety to make an effective 12 step call on a brand new person than it is for a person a week or two.

Incredible. I don't look like an alcoholic. I don't sound like an alcoholic. I don't smell like an alcoholic. Unless I'm very careful I will already have forgotten how bad it feels to be one or two days sober. It's a new guy doesn't so I hang out with new guys and take them on 12 step calls with me. They think I'm teaching them how to 12 step call. Now I'm just there back up. Just the backup. We understand each other normally. The man who's making approaches had the same difficulty. My first sponsor was doing a natural life sentence for a double murder he'd committed one morning in an alcoholic rage when he was 17. I'd never done I couldn't identify with that. But he described what went on that morning. He woke up that morning with a feeling that nobody cared whether he lived or died. And the pain of that was such that he started to drink to kill the pain. That particular morning it didn't kill the pain.

It got him involved in the pain. When you're in enough pain you end up screaming out in rage. And that's what he did. I'll get mine when downtown drunken in a shootout killed some people in a street in a shootout with cops. When you're drunk you don't do a very cool job of it. I have had those mornings exactly like you described and did my own bizarre stuff after I could understand it. It was nice to know that I wasn't the only one that for no particular reason at all woke up one morning feeling completely alone and unnecessary and unwanted and unloved and didn't know why. I couldn't stand the pain of it and drank to kill it and it didn't kill it that got me involved in it. How do you tell that to a normal person? How do you tell it to a doctor?

They give people be complex vitamins when they're under high stress to reduce the stress. Ask Jackie what happens to me when I take be complex. In five days I am stressed out of my mind. My body does not respond to the same other people. Do I know a lot of others do the same thing? Okay. I'd be really weird if I didn't know that that's pretty normal for people I guess. We have strange reactions to particularly alcohol or for a lot of other chemicals too. I have to be careful with caffeine not because it gets me hyper because it takes me up and then boom I'm in depression. That's not normal but it's normal for me. Some of you understand that I can see your

head just nice to know that somebody else understands that. That's what we're talking about here. Then he obviously knows what he's talking about. We are the world's finest siding salesman. We saw siding to people who don't have houses. We obviously know what we're talking about. We don't have a clue daddy.

Except what I can tell you you don't have to drink again. Do certain things and your life will get better. I don't mean to be picking on you but you're the reason I'm here. But there's all department shops that's a new prospect that he's a man with a real answer. You come to my home because 20 years living in the same house with the same woman is a real answer and I can demonstrate it. You come to a home group because I'm going to ask you to get involved in a home group and unless I'm out of town you will see me there. I don't have to explain to you how to keep a commitment. I keep my commitments. If you show up you'll learn how to do it. Keep showing up. It'll become a habit. There's nothing noble about keeping commitment and he has no attitude holier than now. Well now then. With us it's mostly sicker than now.

You think you were sick while I listen to this one. Nothing whatever except the sincerity is hard to be helpful. There are no fees to pay. I like to ask myself because I look around my own fellowship. Is that true? I put myself in a newcomers place and look around and see if any of this is true. You tell me there are no fees to pay. No dues whatsoever. And then you pass a plate and collect money. Whoops. Now if you explain that okay but just to do that confuses me a little bit. You tell me that it doesn't cost me a thing to come to A.

And you tell me how she'd make 90 meetings 90 days and I watched the basket go by and everybody's putting in a dollar. It doesn't take a rocket sign to figure out what that means to me and he's going to cost me 90 bucks. And I don't even have coffee money. So my demonstrating what this says is that our new dues are fees. All we have to do is explain what the basket's for. Pay the expenses of the room. If you're new don't put anything in there yet. You don't really belong in. We used to say if you have it put it in if you don't take some out. We quit doing that.

The guys at the end of the line had big pockets I'm telling you. No access to grime. No people to please. No lectures to be endured. Are those the conditions that you will find in my group? Yes they are. They have no access to grind. We meet in the basement of a correction facility and I can tell you I work there by the way from nine o'clock on. I heard some of the staff I don't like. I don't talk about that in the meeting. I have no access to grinding that meeting. We don't discuss this damn place in the meeting. We got inmates come. Wouldn't that be nice if we were taking sides? What kind of a message would that be? As your sponsor you do not have to please me.

In fact if you start trying to please me we may have some difficulties along the way. It's not about pleasing to hear anybody else. And I do like to lecture. I really do. The sound of my own voice is just music to my ears. Particularly when I know what I'm talking about. Which is most of the time. You're not nice. We don't have to sit around and be electric too. I pray God when I do these that it doesn't come off as electric because it really isn't. If it does please slap me. Our very lives as ex-problem drinkers are on page 20. Depend upon our constant thought of others and how we will help meet their needs. I have difficulty with some of our lingo. Hey is a selfish program. I'm trying to reconcile that with this statement. Our very lives as ex-problem drinkers depend on constant thought of others and how we will help meet their needs. Not constant thought of me and how I meet my needs. So I just listened to that and I don't fight it. It just doesn't reconcile so I don't pay attention to it. You

may already have asked yourself why it isn't so always became severely ill from drinking. Another reference to disease or illness or sickness. Doubtless you're curious to discover how and why in the face of expert opinions of the contrary we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. We have. Please don't misunderstand me. I have no problem with people who are in recovery. Everybody is in recovery for a while. It just breaks my heart to have people believe they have to stay in recovery forever. It is not necessary. I'm not cured of alcoholism none of us are. But you don't have to stay sick the rest of your life. What do I have to do?

That's what we ask. It's the purpose of this book to answer such questions specifically. We shall tell you what we have done. I just had a revelation and we shall tell you what we have done. I haven't done it. I can't tell you but I can tell you everything I have done and that includes I stayed sober one day and here's how I did it precisely. And what did I do? Well if you want what I have then I suggest you do what I do. If you don't want what I have then don't do what I do. You won't hurt my feelings this slightest little bit. One of the questions in this basket has to do with somebody who comes to me and wants me to sponsor them and doesn't pay any attention to all of what I say goes to the therapist and come back from the opinion of what the therapist thinks they ought to do. That's okay with me but I don't hear about it. If you want what I have then do what I do and if you don't want what I have then don't do what I do. Make a choice I don't care I'll be your friend anyway but there are people who are dying that need this hour and I must give this chair to them. We'll visit and have coffee and you can tell me about your therapist but I need this chair for somebody who's dying and that's I don't think that's arrogant. If you don't know what I have don't do what I do. On the other side of that one of the guys that I love the most 20-some-odd years sober now we both concurred at one time he needed a therapist not for any reason other than he had memories that he couldn't find and so deeply buried he was unable to locate the memories. So we went to the therapist and told him out front I want you to help me find these memories then I'm going to take them back through the steps about calling some monomers to deal with them. Found the memories did exactly that we got it all squared away what we've done. If I sponsor you we will sit down and read the big book together. You will also get access to my tape library. Part of why I'm here and part of what has happened to me is the result of knowing people like Bob White and Chuck Chamberman and old Wesley. ugliest man I ever saw.

But the minute he opened his mouth did love just gushed forth. I want you to be if you want what I have what I have is the result of these people so you have my tape library so you can hear what influenced me. I'm going to take you to several meetings. I'm going to have you go in a lot of meetings I don't go to anymore. I have a job I have a family but I'm getting old and I'm not about to make as many meetings as I think you need when you first come here. I don't need that many anymore. I have a real life doesn't mean I don't go to a it's just I just don't live there anymore in meetings. I'm going to also send you some meetings that I would go to if I were invited because you have to be invited to go to. I want you to see what the other brand of A looks like.

You may want what they have. If you don't you can come back and yell at me for something out there that's cool. I want to introduce you to my friends. What's happened to me is I now have friends. You ought to meet some of them. You think I'm going to introduce you to the idea of serving the fellowship and serving the people who are not here. I have an obligation to people who are not born yet. I'm going to come through one of these doors one of these days and I'm obliged to do my very best to make sure the door is there and a message they hear inside there is the same one I got. Maybe a different style but it'll be clear. I'm obliged to do that and I want

to introduce you to that and how you shake that out whether it's through general service or local service or we want to have one service anyway that's carrying our message. You'll have to do that if I sponsor you. I don't care which way you go. I love Bob Olson dearly. He's never been in general service can't stand it but he's been a great service to the fellowship because Bob's the kind that gets his Norwegian teeth into something that won't let go. And there were some places where he was meeting that wasn't even close to it. He brought a big book in one time and they said get that out of here. We don't want that in here. And he hung on and he hung on until we got up. They finally allowed him to have a meeting with a big book in the basement of the place as long as one of those people would come upstairs. And he hung on and hung on and now of course there's a great group as a result of that. That's a service. What do we do? We gather. I love these gatherings. These are family gatherings. I almost quit doing this. I've got to tell you I don't like being looked at as knowing something you don't know. I just really don't because I don't. I've got some experience with it and God's giving me a tongue that lets me self-citing. I can tell stories and I can make you cry and I can make you laugh and I can make you sleep and I can run you out of the room. I can do things with it. I don't like this. I love it but I don't like it.

And it keeps me out and around a lot and I didn't want to do this anymore. Particularly these long weekends. I work long hard stressful days and then I show up here and start Friday night and I'm on the entire weekend. I have to almost be rude just to go to a bathroom sometimes. Really. That's just the way it is. And I had come to a place where I was about to say I'm just not going to do this anymore. I don't understand why they're asking me. I don't want to do it anymore.

But I was in New York doing a retreat weekend which is like this only even more intense. And I voiced that to the little family that was there. And one of the girls says oh you can't do that. Since you're kind of like our uncle or our grandpa. And when you come we all get together and I had it. And that's why I'm here. If by my coming you'll all get together. I'll come. And if I have to tell a few stories along the way to get you to talk to each other I'll come.

And there's no more than that. And what a wondrous role to get put into then. Grandpa Don. I still feel 16 to it. A fellowship grows up about us. There's wondrous to behold. And it grows up about us. Yeah. Got a piece to do and then we can get into some some more stuff work if you like. Our way of lending is back as a piece is for him. Let's challenge something. Okay. Let's consider this in really dangerous proposition from that. Seriously ask this question.

Maybe I'm not an alcoholic. What if I'm not an alcoholic? Maybe I'm not. Maybe I've been kidding myself all these years. Maybe I'm not. I'm convinced we ought to ask that fairly often because there's a worm in my head that will grow and grow and grow. If I don't shine light on him every now and then. Is it possible that I may not be an alcoholic? Well the answer to that is let's find out what an alcoholic is. Okay. And let's see if I fit the profile. And on page 20 and 21 they very kindly made it very clear once again. Let's talk about moderate drinkers and I'm going to ask myself am I one of these. Modern drinkers have a little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it and leave it alone. Don't recognize that.

That's not me. Forget about that. Then we have a certain kind of hard drinker. May have to have it badly enough to greatly gradually impair him physically and mentally and may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason such as ill health, falling in love, change of environment, the warning of a

doctor becomes operative. This man can also stop for moderate although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention. Have I ever had any really strong reasons to quit drinking?

Well, not since the first time. Nearly dying of alcohol poisoning the first time I drank was not strong enough reason. Going to the penitentiary at 19. That's not a good reason. Have there been occasions when any sane human being would have stopped and I couldn't under those circumstances. I'm not a certain kind of hard drinker. No matter what the reason I cannot stop. Reason will not stop me. The threat of death, the prison, the loss of family, the loss of job, the loss of self-respect. No reason that I can think of will stop me. I drank hard but I am not this certain kind of hard drinker are you? Well, we're not moderate drinkers. And I think it's really important when new people that we get to this because we have a lot of this particular kind in A today. Nothing wrong with them. It's simply that they were brought up short by treatment centers and said go to A and so they do. And they look us right in the eye and tell us I don't need to do all this. I quit and it's the truth. Don't get angry with them. We're nothing but a support group. And isn't it nice that we're here to be a support group. But I need real alcoholics in my life. Now who the hell are they? Well, let's see. May start off with a moderate drinker.

May or may not become a hard drinker. But at some stage of his drinking career he gets to lose all control of his liquor consumption once he starts to drink. Oops. No drama. Isn't that a bitch? Everybody else gets drama. There's no drama in this. At some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption once he starts to drink. Is that me? Yes. That's a real alcoholic. And if you are one of these there's probably nothing less than a spiritual experience going to take care of you. Well, that wasn't so bad. A little scary.

Maybe I'm not. I'm going to take this little over a minute and a half. Damn right I am. And then I'll read on it. I put this profile. Jekyll and Hyde the whole business. Not all at once but at some time during my drinking. I did all of these things. This one I love. Does absurd of incredible tragic things while drinking. No shit. Anybody can come up with stories and we've met if we made that the topic of a discussion meaning we'd be here until some time tomorrow afternoon.

He's seen his son of Miley in toxicate. He's always more or less insanely drunk. Well that's the definition. I didn't quite identify with that till I really looked at the truth. There are periods of time in my drinking career when you wouldn't know I was drunk because I was the same all the time and looked pretty normal. But I was drunk by anybody else's definition. Insanely so. His disposition while drinking resembles his normal nature but little.

My uncle walked to this day. I love to get Uncle Walt drunk. Uncle Walt is just funny Uncle Walt when he's drunk. He's still Uncle Walt. Didn't change him. Uncle Walt loves to get drunk. And he started drinking again a few years ago. Doesn't seem to be out of hand and he didn't worry my mom too much. Where is the neighbor? They took all his booze away from him. So he called the liquor store and hadn't delivered so long. Walt may be working toward being an alcoholic but his nature did not change when he drank. He was just Walt drinking. One of the reasons I drink is to change my nature.

That's what I'm going for. If it don't you remember who said it once but if man A's would have done for me what alcohol would do I'd have been a man A's a holic. Whatever it is I'd drink for the effect to change so that's

me. Anyway I had not applied with all those. You can read all that. If you do consider this it doesn't happen to regular folks. Bring memories to it. He's the fellow who goes to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around. I have memories that fit that. I remember a horrible night one night. I didn't do a whole lot of bar drinking because I it's just in my nature. I'm the one that when the fight starts they started on me.

Okay there's just one of them in every bar. Oh he's the one hit him. So I just kind of moved through the bars. They were message centers. We gathered in places so we could go do something else. Anyway we were at the lighthouse down on thirteenth and two o'clock came and caught out of the close bars too. I don't remember the horror of that night. I'd been drinking all night when I wasn't through. And it was a horror that came over me because I knew I hadn't found it and I wasn't going to tonight. And it was over. At that time I lived in a chicken coop. I had converted a chicken coop. It was really pretty cool. I cleaned the chicken shit out and it worked pretty good. It had flowers, you know, doilies. I came home pretty drunk. And I was at that drunken state that I had learned it was a dangerous for me because if I laid down I was so drunk that I knew the bed was going to spin and throw me on the floor and I was going to vomit all over the room. I had also learned through drinking that if I drank enough more I could pass out and that wouldn't happen. So 230 or so I'm home and I drank myself past sickness.

Past where most people would die I suppose and drank myself into oblivion and fell out on the bed. I should have slept the night through. I should have slept for three days. I had enough anesthetic in me. About six o'clock I woke up desperate for a drink. So I have a memory that fits that clear and I can share that with new people. And that's what I'm supposed to do. Am I a real alcoholic? Yeah. I have never heard a non-alcoholic tell a story like that. Never.

They just hardly ever do things like that. In fact I've never heard a non-alcoholic living in a chicken coop. But that's just the drama. No hammer is harder than the fact that we have one experience after the other that's negative but with any sound reasoning would stop if we had any power would stop. Even if we want to stop we can't. We just keep repeating the same stupid thing over and over again. We know that the alcohol, the whole alcoholic keeps away from drink because he may do for months or years he reacts much like other men. When I was truly sober I was a good singer. I did my job. I was a good radio man. I did my job well. It's when I got to the beach and drank and I lost it. I'm much like normal people. Today I'm sober and I go to work and I do my job. I get home one time. I just do no big deal. We're equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever in his system something happens both in the bodily mental response which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confront this. Is that your experience? I'm fine until I start and once I start I can't stop.

It may be for a week. It may be for a month. I may take a drink on Monday and it may be Thursday before I lose it but somewhere after that first drink I will continue to drink no matter what's going on. These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore the main problem the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than his body ain't out of bitch. They spent all this time making it clear to me how my life depends on my understanding. I have a body that can't process alcohol. Now I got it.

I'm clear with that. That's why I caused all that trouble. Now they tell me that that's academic. It's

meaningless as long as I don't take a drink. What's my real problem? I keep taking a damn drink. Danny is this the first time you've been in trouble? No. Did you feel it was bad last time? Did you not want to do it again? I didn't want to do it again. It was a little bit less trouble so kind of lost the time. I didn't see you. But you didn't want to do it again? No. But you did it again?

I didn't say I wasn't going to do it again. Did you? I'm Bob. And then you did it again? I'd pay a real close attention this weekend. That's exactly what we're talking about. I'm not making fun of you. That's what we're talking about. Don't have a question. He said we know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink as he made you for months of years, he reacts much like other men. My experience was when I stopped drinking the first time a whole year. I was more sick in the mind. I feel and behaved more resentment, anger, rage and feelings and I had not had a drink of over a year. So I didn't act like other men then, right? So that was the obsession of the mind that you read about again a second. Okay. Yeah. These are just observations from my experience. Once I take the first drink and set the cycle in motion, it may be months before that goes away. The craving. There are some alcoholics who once that stops, they also stop for a period of time and they appear to be quite normal. They will not become obsessed right away or sometimes for months or years. Then it'll come back. Others never lose it from the time they took the first drink. They never lose it. It just never goes away. It's the same phenomenon. However, but this brings me to a jumping off place.

No. At the bottom of that page, Bill talks about the real alcoholic. He says he has lost control on page 24 at a certain point in the drinking career of every alcoholic. He passes into that state with the most powerful desire to stop drinking is to absolutely no avail. The fact is that most alcoholics for reasons yet obscure have lost the power of choice in drink. I no longer have a choice. To this day, I don't have a choice to do all the right drink or not. I've lost the power of choice. It's gone. Thank God. We are unable at certain times to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory and the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink. That sounds like a death sentence.

That's the best piece in the news I could ever give anybody. We are totally without defense against the first drink. Isn't that wonderful? It's only then that my ego, which is massive, will begin to look for a defense. If I think there's any chance at all that I can beat this game, I'll try to beat this game. The almost certain consequences of all taking even a glass of beer did not crawl into the mine to deter us. I told you about my experience on the airplane.

This is true. It did not come into my mind, period. This was wine and that I was in any danger whatsoever. Because I don't relate to the program that way. After they got this information to me, and this was a Saturday and a Sunday and I had this, they hammered it in four hours a day. This was it. That's like a death sentence. I've got a body that can't handle alcohol and will kill me if I drink it. In a mind, it'll make me drink it. Can you tell me there's more treatment for that?

But they walked around. I came to believe in the power of God by watching three men in whom the power of God was being demonstrated clearly. Bruce had done that killing. The man telling me the story was not capable of killing anything. Ron Nichols was a stick-up man. He's just taking guns and going to stores and taking their stuff away from him. The man telling me those stories could not have done that. Phil Guterres was a wondrous human being. I loved Phil dearly. Phil came from Guam, bad actor. Later 17, they sent him to the United States

because they couldn't handle him on Guam anymore. Incredibly violent human being. He was doing time in this bad attention because on his last drop, he threw some people out of a three-story window and enjoyed it. The man telling me the story was incapable of committing that act and I knew it. I asked him about it. All of them, their answer was essentially the same. It had to do with, yes, that's true. I have been changed and God changed me. That's why I'm still here. I came here to be changed. Someone asked me earlier, what is the AA message part of it is change. This is about change, about transforming change.

So I came to believe that they had been changed. If they had been changed, I could be too. It was impossible. They told me precisely why. They didn't put me foot. Yes, I've been changed. God changed me. I'll tell you the same thing. God changed me. He didn't get me sober. He has taught me how to make a sobriety count for something. God got me sober. God keeps me sober. I'm a heretic. I have no problem with people who ask God to keep me sober in the morning. I've never done that. I was never taught that. It's to be presumed. I turned my way to my life over the care of God. The way I drank it was no longer my business. My business is to get about his business.

If I do that, he seems to keep me sober. Simplistic. The great fact is just this and nothing less. This is the AA message. We have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude about life toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. We were reading this the other day and a newcomer read it and blew my mind away. Here how she read it. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our creator has entered into our heart and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. Brand new. Brand new. Brand new person. Didn't know how to read.

Give me a whole new rule to look at. This is a living God. He's convinced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves. I'm sorry. This isn't about just not drinking. Not drinking is the foundation but that's just the beginning. If you're as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle of the road solution. Just do or die. Do or don't. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible and if we had passed into the region from which there's no return through human aid, we have the two alternatives. One was to go on to the bitter end blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could. The other was to accept spiritual health. I have no problem understanding how big my ego was and is when I have to be convinced that at the point of death I still have to decide whether I want spiritual health or not.

No doubt I'm insane. Shut this up for a minute. This little period of time when this first transformation took place and I must tell you they continue to take place. It doesn't end in the first one for me. That little business we just did was a whole new awakening for me, a whole transformation of approach. I was still cynical, desperate but cynical. I really didn't believe anything anybody said. I had to see them do it. I came to believe because I watched Bruce in action. He did on the tears and in the yard what he said he did. I watched him do remarkable things. One night when I was locked up in my cell and he came by and visited me, I realized that I was locked up in my cell and he was coming by visiting me. He had something I wanted. He got out of his cell and I really wanted that. Spiritualized a very practical life.

The associate warden for treatment messed with A1 time. I kicked this picture, maximum security penitentiary. This inmate named Bruce got up on his high horse and went to the associate warden's office and

raised hell and came back in a situation that was straightened out and he quit messing with the A. I painted a dramatic picture but that's what I saw. He had already established relationships and all that. All I knew is that this convict went and told the warden what was wrong with his prison and they straightened it right up. I wanted what he had.

Phil Guterres taught me how to touch physically in a penitentiary where that's a very risky thing to do. Phil knew something about all of us. We're like a bunch of puppies. We've never outgrown or need to be touched. I don't know why I don't get into speculation. We need to be touched. It's proven beyond any shadow of a gun that babies who are touched a lot grow healthier. They're fatter. They're happier. They're brighter. Everything in the bottom is better. They just touched a lot.

And I've never outgrown my need for that. And Phil knew that. He was the most gentle human being I've ever met in my life. This is the guy throwing people out of the windows. Funny story. He came to me one day and he says, you know, I just realized I've been in this penitentiary seven years. You're the first guy I've ever really sponsored. You will stay sober.