

A Spiritual Journey, Strange Camels Group

1997 | Part 6 | Reading edition

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They're created by my mind. If I try to run my life based on how I feel, I'm usually screwed up pretty good because that isn't what I'm doing anyway. It's what I think, because of me problems. Grant me sanity here. Grant me proportion. How important is it? I'm an alcoholic. Lack of proportion is easy for me to understand. I'm angry, but I go from Mr. Cool to killer rage just like that for really important reasons. Fear is something that I'll pay a quarter for. Get on rollercoaster and get to your adrenaline cooking. What I like is terror. That's got meaning. I can go from quiet to raw terror.

Against me out of bed, so I'm going to work. There's no proportion in it. If one works, take ten. That's really not very smart, but it's smart to me. That's how I think. No proportion. I'm lonely. Get two girls. Can't even handle one. I didn't have a car in high school. I had an image. I had a maroon, forty-nine factory convertible with leopard skin seat covers. I got that car because I knew it would put two blonde girls in the back seat, and it did the first day. That's who I was. The girls broke the top the second day, and I didn't want the car anymore, and I just did what I do, let my dad take care of getting rid of it. Lack of proportion in the ability to think straight.

So I pray. Give me some sanity, some proportion. On a very practical level, this becomes an awareness deal for me. If I start using profanity, it's a guide for me. It tells me whether you feed it or not, chump your start to get angry. Slow down. Get some proportion. It's unnecessary. If I yell, I'm already out of control. God never yells at me. Why would I yell at you? And why would I ever yell at a child? Well, I do, dammit. That's when it's time to back off. It's my guide. I'm automatically wrong. I can be absolutely right. And if I'm yelling at you, I'm automatically wrong. It irritates me to know that. A portion in the ability to think straight. I ask for that. What can I bring to this situation? Not a bad guide.

And for strength to do the right thing. That's the basic A prayer. Now we've all gotten spiritually. We've all gotten wisdom. We know what's wrong. We know what's right. Oh, now what? I don't have it. I can't do it. What an order. I can't go through with it. Do the right thing. Grab me the strength to do the right thing. Basic prayer. Danny, you're new. You want to know how to pray? Just ask for guidance and direction and strength to do the right thing. That's where you start. That's where you end. After all this work, that's where we ended up. Not a bad guy. It works. If any problem is very troublesome, whether it be sex or work or money, if it's very, very troublesome, our answer is we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. That's the answer. Whatever the problem, we go help somebody else. It takes us out of ourselves. My problem is always self. We hope you're convinced that God can remove whatever self well has blocked you from it. And that's what we're talking about here. So I got that done. The first two pieces of inventory. It was a shabby when it was a short one. I didn't have much memory left, but it was this way. Some of the inventory I carry, you'll notice it looks pretty much the same and it spans a number of years. I haven't changed it much. There's a couple times that I have to put in after the third column. Why is this a threat to me? Just to clarify things. I usually find it out afterwards. It's not important. It's just a little thing I do. But I finished this deal and I've got to tell you, I wasn't about to go back to my sponsor. Remember, he had told me that's garbage get away from me.

And I'm taking no chances to do it again. And so I used the book as a guide. It says in there, there's a principle. It says such parts of our story will tell to someone who'll be unaffected. They're talking specifically about a different deal, but there's a principle there. So I looked around for someone who would be unaffected by what I had to say and I picked a following name Jim who had come into the program the same time I had. He was as new as I was. And there was another funny thing going on. It was a feeling I could not identify. I knew that somehow by me telling Jim about the garbage of my life, his would become better. And he really needed to have something happen for him. Jim was the first one in Colorado to be doing time. He was doing three to five for vehicular homicide. He had done what every one of us in this room has been terrified we would do someday. In a drunken blackout, he killed some people with his car. He had no memory of it. He didn't know that as a truth, but he was doing time for it. I knew what I had done.

I was there because I'd done what they said I'd done. And I belonged there. He was baffled because he didn't have any memory of it. And I knew somehow this would make his life better. So I did my fifth step with Jim and he never said, oh that's not that bad. He said very little that day. He listened to me. And when I'd run dry, he'd poked a little bit. And we stirred some stuff up that wasn't on the paper the way he went ahead and got rid of. And I had an incredible experience that day.

I stopped being alone. Up until that point, the only way I can describe it is that there was me and whoever I needed you to be. None of you were ever real. And somehow that afternoon with Jim, it became me and Jim in that room. And he was separate. He was himself. He wasn't who I needed him to be. He was just Jim. And somehow I stopped being alone. I also recognized at the end of it because I went back to my cell to do the little review that I'd finally finished something. You know, I've been eating my whole life. I've been a sprinter in the game of life, not a long-distance runner. Now I'm in for the game. I finally finished something. It was a shabby little thing and I knew I knew I had a lifetime of work ahead. God finished this. It was as dumb as could be done.

So in my seven-step prayer, I added something to it because I knew I had a lifetime of work ahead. After I said the prayer, I asked God, please don't let the stuff I haven't found yet kill me before I get to it. I've got some fresh inventory here. I'm still getting to it. And it's no longer a tale of the hunt. It's a little boy who want his pants. The stuff I find today is so shabby. I just wonder, how in the world can I be so petty? It's not oral shaking stuff. It's petty crap.

But that's what'll kill me. I believe that the entire spiritual process hinges on these departure points. And there's one of the six steps. The whole business would hear forward hinges on one word in the sixth step. Objectionable. We ask God to remove from us those things we have found objectionable. It is in my nature as an alcoholic that if I have, let's just take any bad character trait I've got. You cannot threaten me with anything and get me to change. It's not going to happen.

You can't offer me great rewards and get me to change. I'll change my behavior while you're watching. But I won't change. The only time I ever change is when I object to being what I am. I have to personally object to me. The instant I object to it it changes. But until then, nothing will change it. So the inventory is a little hard on me. It shows me all the things I don't want to be. Inventory is not so I can find it who I am. It's so I can find it who I'm not.

So we can get rid of that. And then who I am will show up. There'll be room for it. That's just kind of how I view the thing. Since I was little until I got put off on it when I was little, my heart's desire has always been to be able to stand anywhere on the planet until whoever walked by how much I love my God. And I stopped doing that because I make fun of you when you do that. Today that's what I do. That's who I am. I must tell you if you get close to me how much I love my God. I don't care if you believe me or even want to do it or not. It doesn't matter.

I just get to do that. What a wonderful thing. And I belong to an organization that not only lets me do that, encourages me to do that. Well paint my airfare to come and do that. Isn't that weird? I love it. So I finished that deal with Jim. And I entered into my evangelistic stage about them. Around the six or seven step. If you're not eager to go save the world, I worry. We've missed something. That's the experience. That's what happens. Because at this point God is alive and well if you've done this. And I really wanted to make a mess. And straighten the past up and they wouldn't let me out. So my personal experience may be a little different than some. My experience was that I did not get free at the nine step making a mess. I got free at the eight step getting willing to make a mess. My sponsor gave me an exercise. There's all kinds of principles in the big book about how to handle each situation. There's only one real principle there. If I've harmed you, I owe you. And I must do something about it. It looks like for all the words that's really what it comes down to. If I harm you I owe you and I must do something about it. I must be careful about doing something about it. So I don't harm you all over again. But I must do something about it. So Bruce says, look, we know who you harmed. We've got this list of people.

He says, we know what you did to them. But you are so insensitive you have no idea what it did to them. So how are you going to figure out what you should do to straighten it up? You don't even know what you did to them. He said, I want you to go back to yourself tonight and take this list of people and separately write them down. Then add anybody else you can think of because you met on the mess alone. I don't believe all the whole world demands, but that was a correct attitude.

He said, I want you to close your eyes and picture each one right in front of you. And see if you can feel a willingness to look each one right in the eye and say to them, I have been wrong and I've harmed you. Would you please tell me what I have to do so we can get these books to balance? And as I went over the list that night, I felt as if I had been lifted from my chair. No weights were lifted from me. I was lifted and set free. Because I really, to this day, if I have caused you any harm at all, you tell me what I have to do and we'll get a square and set me free. Oh, pretty soon I got to start wandering the tears, talking to the guys who couldn't get out of their cells. But I was free in here. That doesn't mean everything was wonderful. I had a guy who went to the main sponsor school. He said, I know you're anxious to get out because I was anxious. Thank God for that 12 step study school because I had some place to let the energy off. He said, look, some of these things can be dealt with by mail and some of you just have to live with till you can get to them and some of them you're just going to have to live with. Jack Brennan put words on that for me. My garbage doesn't stink anymore. It doesn't mean I don't still have some garbage but God took the stink off. So this vicious human being that I was being sponsored by had me go back to myself and make the list of who I can write a letter to and who I would have to wait and see. And then he reviewed my lists and changed it. It seems his view were some of the people that I thought I should go see. I could probably take care of a little letter and some of them I was eager to write. I probably

needed to go look him right in the eye. And we began that wonderful process. I had our Christmas day.

We didn't have any money as I already told you. And I went down to the drug store where I'd been passing a script and got a dollar and a half worth of Christmas tree lights on credit. I had to write this guy a letter, tell him who I was, where I was, why I was there, and that I had ripped him off for a dollar and a half on those Christmas tree lights. I made 10 cents a day. That was my wages. And out of that I had to buy all my toiletries.

We worked out a budget. Would he accept a quarter of a month for me until that was paid off? That's really hard on a big time gangster's ego. Quarter of a month. He said yes he would. I've been taught to pray before each amen. The big book says that while I'm trying to put my life in order that is not an end in itself. My real purpose in making amends and getting straight with the world. My real purpose is to fit myself to be of maximum service to God knows about me.

And one of the ways I do that, I'm free already before I come to you. Okay. So that can't be the purpose of me coming to you to get free. I'm already free. I'm there because I owe you nothing more. And over the years my experience has told me that in doing that somehow I make it possible for you to get free too. That's the service I'm going to provide. And so I got thinking about that. Did you ever sit around and listen to people talking about the one who isn't there? Because I don't like him anymore. If only Joe could admit he was wrong I could forget him. I don't know how many times I've listened to him or heard that. If only they would admit they were wrong I could be free. And that's what it says I'm supposed to go.

Go say I was wrong. It's hard for an alcoholic. The word doesn't fit one in the mouth. I mean I can say I am contrite. I'm sorry. My sponsor said I was never allowed to say that. It says you've been sorry your whole life. You get to say I was wrong and I harmed you. And here's what I think I can do to help straighten it out. But what do you think? I must leave it open for that. You know what that does? It made it possible for me to make amends to my mother.

Because what you do after you ask the question what do I have to do? You shut up and listen. Well I tell you it was a great concern to me because I was fully aware that I had put my mother who was a very loving person in a position to say on Christmas day you and your children cannot come to my house anymore. How do you make up for that? Nothing that I could ever think of would square that deal. So I just laid willing and ready as soon as I know how I'll square that. And the only person I go to is her and she wouldn't see me. It was months later. So I mean by you get to live with some of that shit. Months later I went to see her after I got out. She was really reluctant.

I don't blame her. Chamberlain sent me free of that. I single-handedly destroyed everything worth while in my life and I have no right to expect anyone to ever talk to me again much less for giving me for anything. If they say pissed at me forever that's correct. They should. So I don't go to impress anybody. I just went to find out what I could do and I found an easy way to ask for you. You don't just come right out and say well I was on my what do I have to do?

I don't get it. I eased into it and then I shut up and listened and she said to me honey all I've ever wondered for you is that you'll be happy. And I had an answer. My action in making him and some other has been since that time to this day. I go by her house on a regular basis happy. It worked. She told me it was six years before

she really believed I was going to mount to anything. But that was fine. I wasn't expecting her to ever believe in me again. I gave her what she wanted she had to see me happy. That's the deal. I wish you were more dramatic isn't it? We took her to dinner my Sunday. She's just having a ball she moved into my sister dad died in March and they've been living that 48 room house and it just got too much for her. So she's out with my sister and she showed us her little room and how cozy she is and it's really pretty neat. That's what this is about repairing those relationships. It says we commence this way of life as we cleaned up the past. I'm a believer in getting your man's done. Don't waste any time but I don't believe you can ever get them all done. Some of them take some time to get cleared up. You can address it and begin to do it but they may not be done. I don't want to have to wait. It was 22 years before my brother and I made peace. If I wouldn't have moved forward with my spiritual life for that 22 years I wouldn't have been there. It took a long time for my kids. I damaged my children. I taught my children to be invisible because we ran the streets and it was necessary to be invisible. What a thing that has to do to a child is to teach a child to be invisible.

That's a very harmful deal. How do you undo that? I don't know. I created a place where they could become visible if that's what they wanted it in. James has told me how long I have. There's that much tape left. He's going to hold a finger of him. Give me that little pair of cowboy boots and the shirt I got on in credit. I got arrested the next day. I never paid for them and I knew how to go back and pay for those. When I got out of prison I got hired by this little company, Dicks and Paper Company. They wouldn't hire me directly. They put me on as a daily neighbor pool worker eventually hired me. Have I already told you the story of how I got the truck driving job? Wonderful stuff.

They didn't hire ex-cons of Dixon, which didn't bother me because I'm not an ex-con. I'm a man and I've been to prison and there really is a difference. I don't be an ex-con and I have all kinds of problems. Anyway, they took me from the box car into the dock and I was working on the dock and I've been taught to be completely straight. When they finally had me put in an application I put down all my job experience including drug smuggler. Well, that was one of the jobs I had. Okay, check writer, document forger. They went, what can you do? Well, that's what I've been doing. I'm working on the dock and the dispatch would call me in one day. He's got my application and a really funny look on his face. I said, did you really do that? And I said, yeah, that I really did. He said, well, I've been thinking. We got this little truck that delivers paper to the print shops in downtown Denver. It's a tough route and it seems to me the kind of skills that it takes to move marijuana into this country the way you did is about the same kind of skills I need for this truck driver. You seem to know how to get stuff from here to there in difficult circumstance. I got me a truck driving job because of my past. In God's hands, everything works out to the best. Okay. Now, the only drawback to that little job is that I never knew what time I was going to get off. All the other guys did. Part of my truck's job was to take the packages of paper that were going to be shipped by bus to the bus station at the end of the day and drop them off to be shipped. Well, all the paper companies did. So there's a line of trucks out there I never knew for sure. And I was a little irritated by that little low grade irritation. And I'm sitting there in line one day waiting and two prison guards come in with you.

When they let him out, they didn't want him in Colorado anymore. They were sending him back to Florida. We got five minutes. Mr. Guy did my fist dip with. We got close. I got out before he did. We got to see each other. He's okay. I'm okay. We haven't met since. But in God's hands, it all comes together. If it hadn't been for

that stupid little job, I'd have missed it. That's how it works for me. I just get in line and wait my turn when it comes out. Okay.

I'm into my dad. They're very important to me. And I went to him with my list because it was a big one. I really screwed all that for me. But I haven't taught how we do it. I open the door gently if I'm going to make a minute to you. First, we just kind of get some general stuff. And if you want to get more detail, it's there. And I said, pop, you know, I've lied to you and I've stolen from you and I've cheated you. And he saw on the list I had and he said, please stop. All you can do by telling me the dirty details again has hurt me all over again.

You and I are going to have to start from here. Well, that was so important. At one time, my father and grandfather were the Grand Quagal and the second command of the Colorado Ku Klux Klan. They had some really funky attitudes. I never understood it, but that's who they were. If that's the image I'd have kept of my father all these years, we knew that had been a shame because he had a spiritual awakening. And he and I on a particular day got to start from here, not from back here. We started from here and we built a brand new relationship from that day forward. I'd have missed him if I'd have kept him in those robes. And he'd have missed me.

And we had some fun, my dad and I, I owed him some money. He said, well, I'll start from here. And I said, I still owe you some money. He said, I know you do, but I don't care. Just call it square. I said, I can't do that, pop. He said, all right, a little exasperated with me. He said, I don't want to be involved in your bookkeeping system at all. And don't tell me how much you owe me. Don't tell me nothing. Just whenever you feel I could combine and give me some money and when you think it's done, it's done. So I did that and had the experience of being a service through my making of amends.

They were both on old age pensions. And my mother's mother died. And she got an inheritance. And my mother is straight in her own. She went and told the state and they cut both pensions off. And mom discovered a new dimension. Now she had all the money. And she started nickel-and-diming diamond him. Okay, I love her dearly, but that was kind of mean. But every now and then I'd come by with a \$20 bill and squaring up the past, I became his pocket money. Okay, I was able to serve both of them.

I finally got a nice job. I've had my financial amends have always been nickel and nine. I want to save up the whole hundred and give it to y'all once. You're never going to happen. Don't pretend it's going to happen. It won't happen that way. Finally got a job where I had a coat and tie. Looked pretty good. It was impressive. I was the job developer for an agency that got jobs and housing and stuff for guys coming out of prison. Rather impressive.

And they called me up to the desk one morning and here's this bomb. Unshaven smelly bomb. Unfortunately, I recognized him. He was a former landlord of mine from Overland Park, Kansas, whom I had skipped on. And he was there inquiring if perhaps I might have some money to pay him the \$80 or so that I owed him. And he was doing it rather loudly in front of all these people who were at that point impressed with me. So I gave him what I had. I don't know five, ten feet, whatever the hell I had. I gave it to him and I immediately calculated out of my next paycheck, I don't want this happening anymore. And I asked him for his address so I could get him the rest of the money so I don't have one. So kind of regularly for a little while this bomb would come in and I have to go up in front of all these people and give him the money.

And it turned for me as I began to be aware that today's he came in. He was hungry because he didn't have a job or a place to live or nothing. And my money fed him that day. So by putting in God's hands, it benefited everybody. It reduced my ego and it gave the people that I was working with an opportunity to see Alcoholics Anonymous in action. We do things like this. We became more credible because of that. I miss him. Apparently he wasn't impressed with me because as soon as the debt was paid in full, I haven't seen him since. He did that one ongoing renewed relationship.

That's the start. Came by dad's one time and he said, look, do me a favor, will you? Old Mac up at the Texaco station where I get my gas. Every time I go in, he says, one's down going to come in and give me the money he owes me. And I didn't even remember I owed him any money. Had been several years. It was a blank spot for me. He said, will you please go square that up? I'm tired of listening to it. I only had five dollars in the pocket.

So I went up to Mac. I owed Mac 75. It turns out. I drove into Mac's place and went into my spiel. Mac made a mess out of my life. He says, you sure as hell did. Why don't I get my money? I said, well, I've got spot already. I said, I'll take it. I wrote a matter of receipt. I said, Mac, I'd like to set up a payment schedule. He said, don't give me that crap. You've never kept your word in your life. We're not setting up any payment schedule. You just come when you can and give me some money. That's all I owed Mac. That's all he wanted for me. And that one got paid.

It was hard every time I go in. I never had enough, but it was just fine. I kept it going. He got to see alcoholics and items in action. I don't know what it did to him. Don't care. He got to see it in action. And I got to see it in action. Let's go with this in the bag. I got square with him. I got square with my dad. What we do affects everybody around us. And so I have to listen. Do you know what dad asked me there?

Somewhere along the way he came to trust me. He came to trust the fact that I would take care of it. He couldn't have asked me to do that. That's pretty subtle stuff, but that's the way it works. My little brother was a case in point. It was 22 years before he would really even had much to do with me. And I'm clear as to why I was his hero growing up. I was his big brother. He watched me destroy all the dreams that people like us have. He watched me hurt the family.

I betrayed this boy. He became a world famous musician. I became an inmate in penitentiary. I'm going to bone. So it was a while. Because of the program, I believe they get to pick the time of the place. I just have to stay willing. And eventually, whoa, I was 22 years over. They finally had us over for dinner. He and his girlfriend. And after the dinner, he said to me, I'm not sure you and I can ever be friends. But this was pleasant. We can do this again. And we began to develop something.

Well, because I go by the folks regularly, we had a fun thing happen with Roy. When I was in North Carolina, I still went home once in a while. And whenever I'm home, I go by the folks' place. And I was visiting with the folks. My leg was crossed like this. And my brother came in and sat down. And all of a sudden, I don't know where he kicked me on the bottom of the foot. He says, you know, I'm really glad to see you. And he was surprised as hell. Because he was really glad to see me. I surprised him. He said, look, next time you're in town, why don't you and I just go up to the cabin and do an old fishing. We've got a little cabin up in the hills. I say, we is my brother's cabin. We made a little contribution to it. It's his cabin.

So on the next trip in, of course, we went up there. And it's scary if you broke trot and then went back to the cabin and talked and played cribbage. Because that's what it was about. We talked. Give me a great gift that day. And that's about a conversation. He said, Don, I want you to know something. He said, I'm 58 years old right now. And I think I've been able to make a decent contribution to life. That's pretty good stuff. We are healed. Because of that, my brother and I had the opportunity to detox my mother off morphine. She had gotten some shingles and I gave her morphine for the pain and it upset her stomach. So they gave her some stomach medicine and a combination. She began having visitors that we didn't. I had a conversation with them one day and she told me as soon as Don gets back in time, we'll discuss this further. She took some trips to Pennsylvania and never left that chair. Couldn't eat. She was starving. It was a bad scene.

Guess who they called it. I wonder why they would call me. And he and I spent three, maybe four days shifting around getting her off of that morphine. That's a nice thing to be able to do together. Okay. I could go on and on and on because this is about being square. And that means to change. Not to apologize. It means to change. One of the ways that I make amends to people what I have been ignoring is to pay attention to them. The way I make amends to someone that I've been lying to is to begin to not lie to them. If I've been cheating you, I stop that. And one of the ways I cheated people the most was I cheated them out of their time. God willing, I will not cheat you out of time anymore. I will be on time. I'm hard to live with sometimes because I'm on time. I have a really full rich life. And on time to me is if 10 o'clock is the time we negotiated, five minutes before or five minutes after is acceptable. Nothing else. At five before I stop all other activity, I'm ready for you. At five after I start my next activity. It's already two minutes. This is the end of side one. Please turn guess that over now and continue to listen on side two. Do not fail. And I do that because that's how I will be with you. I will never be too early for you. Not while I be too late for you. I'll be where I'm supposed to be. It's not a time it can happen. It's not more holistic or judgmental thing. It's a spiritual life. It sounds about how it can happen. I honor your time. You're busy. You have things to do. And if I'm one of the things you're going to do today, I just assume we were both on time because I got things to do too.

And we can get on about doing them. We'll be rich or surveying together. But I mentioned to you messengers and angels. We all haven't looked for them. We don't recognize your messengers. It's really important. Everybody is a messenger in one sense or another. But not everybody is my messenger. Six years sober, I thought that Paul Solomon was one of my messengers. He was the flying saucer prophet, fundamentalist Mormon flying saucer prophet. I thought he was my messenger. So I followed him to Arizona for four months, went completely lonely and had the greatest time of my whole life. He was not one of my messengers. Okay, Tom Ivester is one of my messengers.

And he has characteristics that I look for. And if I describe him to you, I'm describing me to you. These are the characteristics of the people I listen to. They are busy. Not busy busy. They tend to be almost visionary. They have a mission that they're on. It's important. What they do is important. It's not frivolous. And they're moving from here to there doing that. Even though he has a home base and I have a home base, that's really important. We have home group. We have home. We have family.

We have that base. But we're busy. Always wanting to stop and have a cup of coffee. But you have to understand I'm essentially on my way to Australia. Did you ever see that film? James Garner supports your local sheriff. He takes on the job of sheriff after explaining to them that he's a gold prospector. He's essentially on his

way to Australia because he knows there's gold down there. He'll do the job until the urge hits him and he's gone. And then as long as they understand that, he'll take the job.

Well, that's hit me in my heart because that's me. I'll just keep saying yes, but you have to understand I'm essentially on my way to Australia. So please listen, Jack Brennan was one of my messengers. Jack said something so important one day. I want to share it with you. Please listen to everything I have to say because I will never be by this way again. And it confused me because I know he's going to see him the next week. And then I got thinking about him. He told me the absolute truth.

I will never be by this way again. Nor will you. We will all be different next time. So let's take close attention to each other because we'll never be by this way again. And it's not as important as it sounds because if we miss it, we got something else. But this is it. We talked loosely about one day at a time. This is it. How fun that can be. The 10 step process in here is very simple when it just says to continue doing what you've been doing. And when selfishness and self-centeredness and dishonesty and fear of crop up, they will. When they do here's what you do about them. Keep riding this inventory. There's something you forgot. Begin to work with others as people work with you. And all that means is not the imparting of information. It's time.

I have done my very best this weekend to demonstrate to you at a level beyond your own understanding that I love you. I've only given you one thing of any importance whatsoever this weekend. Me and my time. I gave you my time. That's what it's about. Not information. I always have to chuckle at these things when I come down here and ask to come and talk about the big book. Read the damn thing. Every talk about read it. And then we'll share it with each other. That I will do.

You gave me a very precious gift this weekend. Your time. Your attention. That's what God gives me. God gives me time and attention. And it's important for me to give God some time and attention too. So I have all kinds of routines. I don't even like to tell people about my routines because they change according to my consciousness. There was a time when I could enter into the meditative state with a little incense in the tinkling of the bell. A little temple bell that came to me from India and I could go, oh it took me there. Today that's a distraction. Ceremonially I follow the red road on the pipe carrier and on the cedar tradition. And that's nice. But if I can't meet with God without death then I'm in trouble. And there's some warnings. I don't want to do that either. The ritual isn't what it's about. It's just God and I spending all time together in whatever way we can.

And it's up to me to create circumstances where that can happen. We in America are really really fortunate because of the hang-ups of this country. They provide us a meditation room where ever we go. There is a place wherever you are that you can go and be by yourself for a few minutes under any circumstances at all. Try it or not. But I must have a certain amount of solitude. The spiritual life requires a certain amount of solitude and the world won't give you that.

They really won't. You have to create it for yourself. So I have a place that I put together for myself wherever I go. I have a place in here that I have prepared within myself and I prepared it by keeping my house clean, by continuing the inventory, by working with others, by thinking of others' needs. And by looking for that, I don't quite know how to put it an entryway. Let me give you an image because it helped me when I needed images. And I still use it. This centering was getting to that quiet place within this old assembly God preacher came by

one day and we were singing. I love to sing.

And he started singing in the garden. I come to the garden alone. When the dew is still on the roses and the voice I hear whispering in my ear, the Son of God discloses and he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me on his own. And the joy we share as we carry there and another has ever known. And it was a burst for me. There's the image I can use within me as a garden. And I can go there. When the dew is still on the roses, that means first thing in the morning.

And what is my relationship with God? It's defined. He walks with me and he talks with me. And the voice I hear whispering in my ear never yells at me. It's very quiet voice. But the most important thing I've learned from not only the song but the experience of that is the word Terry. It means essentially to hang out with. Not to do anything but just to hang out Terry linger oil. So I began going into the garden and just hanging out. My garden is very specific.

I got a big apple tray with a wooden circle around it to sit on. Grass. And there's a brick wall out here. And there's little old man puttering in the flower garden down over here. I've got to say that's God but good cat. And we hang out. And if I want to visit him and visit him but don't he just putters. And I can sit there in the garden and be still. And I used to carry all my problems into the garden with me and show him to him. See what they've done to me today. Look at all this. And we'd get answers and come out. And then I learned to leave the problems outside the garden and just go in and hang out. And when I left the garden about half the time I forgot it brought in problems with me. He just left them there. We had the strengths to do with others. Got to be happy. It's on an airplane one at a time.

Music about this. And I heard the voice. Don. Become the garden. Oh, what an interesting idea. I knew I'd been doing that. That's what the 11th step is all about. But I had shifted a little bit. I was trying to be the garden. Not to become the garden. Life's about becoming all the time. It's not static. It's about becoming. Become the garden. Well, the garden has opened up a little bit. She and Jackie and I got to go to Winter Park a while back.

Love a little weekend. And outside our window was a trot stream. And I was so impressed with it the next time I moved the garden I moved the wall back and put a trot stream there. Got to find out if that little rascal can jump the water or if I'm going to have to bread a bridge for him. Another time I was in the garden and I heard the voice said, Don, look over here. And I moved from the brick wall which makes it cozy. And there wasn't a wall here.

There was an empty space filled with stars and just an eternity of stuff out there. And a sense that we have forever to examine all of this anytime you want. And then back to the garden. I know it's not as childish but these are the kinds of things that have allowed me to get into that state. Don't use that image much anymore. There's that sense of that. I have found for me there are two different states of meditation.

One is actually prayerful contemplation meditation. One thought at a time. Contemplative prayer is an important deal. But I also find there's times when instead of one thought at a time there's very precious moments when I don't think at all it's completely quiet. It's very hard to come by. There's a sense there that I am unable to explain to you at all. It is my hope that that's where I'm going to leave this planet from. If that all works out somebody's going to find the hope to do with it as you wish. But in that state, just try it sometime. Quite often

that's where I hear the voice.

And I'm not schizophrenic. It's never dawn laid these people to the promised land. It's always dawn. Here's one you missed. You thought you were jerky yesterday? Well look at this one. But he terries there with me. And I terry there with God. That's the application of this. I'm to carry this into all of my affairs. Last week was an extremely stressful week at work. And after months of stress I don't care how fit you are you get to where you want to snap somebody's head off. I work in a business where literally the phone had three lines going there were three people in my office and there was a crisis bombing and I had a report to write and all this is all going on at the same time and I'm trying to feel which normally I love.

On this day I'd had enough. And as soon as I got the office clear I pulled in and the thought that came to me that all I had to do today was just bring the spirit of God into the building. Where I am he is. I don't have to feel all this. Just bring it in. That carried me through that day. Just that thought. All you have to do is walk down the hall as if the spirit of God were with you. I had to write some inventory to get to there.

Wasn't that fun? Isn't that awful? We have a thing we call sponsorship. It's defined by everybody in a different way. Very important. The whole idea came originally from just service club sponsorship which means bill belongs to the moose. And if I want to belong he has to say he's okay with me. And the moose say well bringing around for a few times we're looking over. But you're responsible for him Bill. You got to sign off on it. That's where it came from. Summer A.A. groups the one in St. Louis particularly. That's what you had to do. You couldn't come until somebody brought you and sponsored you. And they had to be at every meeting with you and you had to be at every meeting. And if you missed a meeting you had to go to the crash committee while they decided whether you were going to be allowed to come back on. Whether you met a business or not. And you got one drunk, one freebie. And then that was it. It was over.

And if you didn't come to a meeting you and your sponsor had to come. You had to come with a note from your doctor declaring that he thought you were alcoholic. It has changed. Yeah. Okay. But has it really changed? I ask you to look around in some places it has gone back to that. If you don't have a sponsor you don't belong here. That's the implication. Who's your sponsor? Let me look at my scalp roll. See who it is this week.

Sponsorship is defined in the big book only once. In fact the big book doesn't tell you how to find a sponsor. It teaches you how to be one. And only one place is defined to show others precisely how we have recovered. That's what a sponsor does where I come from. I will show you precisely what I've done to recover. You may or may not want to hang out with me after that. A lot of the people I sponsor are sponsors through the steps. We have the experience and they go their way.

And we meet along the road somewhere and I think that's as it should be for me. Others need the mentor relationship from a sponsor. Some people need that. I don't quarrel with that. I'm not a good mentor because about the time you need me I'm in a slide Eloise in. Anybody in Denver who needs me today is in trouble. If that's the relationship well it isn't for me. It just isn't. I have no quarrel with it. Some people need that. We need to be sure. I make peace with all the different so-called factions in AA because if I run into some guy who really needs mentoring. It needs to be part of a group for the hierarchy and you call every day and all that. I don't want to send them to. I don't have a problem. I don't send them right over there and will in a flash. And when they get

somebody who's too sick for that they call me.

Yeah. To practice these principles in all of my affairs and what are the principles honesty, self-examination, tolerance, calmness, love, the sharing of time, they're endless. You know all my affairs. You got to have some. You got to get back into life. We had a meeting in our backyard once a month or once a year. Much folks gone. We had a big potluck and had a meeting out on the lawn. And after one of those meetings the neighbor kid next door the next day caught me and said you seem to know something about alcoholism. He'd been listening to fence.

It seems he had some friends who were in trouble. I've been talking to his dad. I never was in trouble. Had it not been for that little affair we were having he'd never been able to talk to me. He was going marijuana in my backyard for a while. Well that's naturally not going to grow in his backyard. He's never been sure what happened to him. I didn't mention it. It's just another weed to me. He got pulled up and trashed like all the other weeds. We had a big black lab and he asked me one day if I came over with a fence with that dog bite me. He's wanting to check on his stuff. And I said no I don't think he'd bite you. I quite do. There's probably each of the barrier bones under the apple tree. And he could come across the fence.

Yeah, stories. To carry this message to alcoholics. What message am I carrying to alcoholics? It's not the words. It's not the meanings. How do I carry the message? Am I a visible demonstration of the power of God that can transform people like me into useful citizens? Can you see that? That's what I have to carry. I've talked for almost six hours now and they're taping it because none of us have memories long enough to remember anything I said. I don't remember what the hell I said. How are you going to remember?

If God willing he will understand that this weekend where I am God is and I'll let him demonstrate through me what he can do which is simply we created a little unity. We created a little arena all of us together where we joined in brotherly and harmonious action this weekend. And then what it's about? We enjoy each other. We carried for a while in this little garden. Now we have a job to do. This weekend is absolutely meaningless unless each of us goes from here back out into the world and find somebody else that we can say you don't have to do this anymore you know. I can show you how to change life. That's what it's about. Is it not? I am more than what I was when I came here. I've given you everything I have. It's not definitive. I hope you understand that we missed a lot.

Your big book technicians know we missed a lot. Okay because I know your big book technicians and you don't need to go back and find it. Okay. I brought you a great gift this weekend. I brought the legend with me. If I ever got to meet Jackie she's saying she really is. It's just a joy to hang out with her. She's saying there's proportions she can think straight. She's very patient. Well most of the time. Let me tell you how I think she is.

When we first got together she had these two little girls and I had these two barbarians, teenage barbarians and things got all tense. And I remember one time the girls just got all over me and so I went upstairs and pouted. I'd been hurt. And I laid and waited and I knew that shortly she was going to come up and tell me it was going to be all right. She had straightened them out. I could come back down now. About two hours later I realized I'm going to starve to death up here.

Nobody coming? If I want to pout, go pout. When you're done come back down. That's sane. So I learned

from her how to carry that into my sponsorship. Chuck called me one night from a bar. I'm sitting here with an open beer in front of me and I planned to drink it. I said well wouldn't stop you for the world Chuck. Remember we made a deal. You reserved that right I think it's stupid but go ahead. And by the way this is a shitty way to trade a friend. To call me and tell me you're going to kill yourself when I hung up on him. And he came over to my house shortly after that. He hadn't drunk that beer.

He came to my house. We talked. She didn't know it but I learned somehow to do that from her. When my son was 17 years old I had to put him on the street one night. It was 20 below zero. It was a blessing when I had to put him on the street. Hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life. But based on these principles I have to practice these principles and all of my affairs and the unity of our home is more important than any individual in it and that includes me. And he was destroying our home. He was doing things that were completely disrupting our home. And he had been told the day before if you do these anymore you'll have to leave. You can't live here and do this.

The next day you did it again. And I had to pray for the strength to do the right thing. And I put him out and he hated me for a long time. And I got his kind and didn't let me know till later there's times he slept in the snow. But he came back to me later and he said I hated you for a while but I want to thank you today. I had to get it done. Part of why I put him out is in talking with her and praying and I became aware of something. I was killing my own son with my version of love. I kept rescuing him. In the middle of his life lessons I was rescuing him. And if you cut somebody off in the middle they don't get to start in the middle and finish they have to go all the way back to the beginning to start over again. And that's not love. In my hands he was surely dead. In God's hands he had maybe one chance in the thousand.

At least he had a chance. Well I learned that from you guys in sponsorship if you want to drink go. I don't care. In fact there's a place in the book where it suggests that if you're not convinced by this time go to low control drinking. And one of them asked me one time, will you sit there with me while I do that? How are you mind? I'll buy the first one and I'm going home. I don't have any answers but I do have a solution. I don't have any rules I live by but I have principles.

And the main principle is is this going to hurt anybody. That's the main one. If it is they're probably not going to cause harm. Is it going to get me what I want? I don't know because I don't want for much anymore. I'm so caught up trying to get rid of the gift I'm giving to me. I don't have time to want for much anything. My house is crowded with stuff and things. My head is crowded with stuff and things. My heart is crowded with stuff and things. And that's the great gift you gave to me. Since I was struck by the power of God and got in and into my life I have to find someplace every single day where I can tell somebody about that or it'll curdle on me.

Thank you for letting me come and tell you about it so it doesn't curl on me. I had to die because I was useless. You gave me a great gift and my brother gave me the words to tell you about that gift. I'm 63 creeping up on 64 and because of you I believe we'll make a contribution to life. I think it's time to go home. Let's go home.