

Big Book Weekend

2001 | Part 1 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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Don P from Colorado. All the young healthy ones crapped out, you know what I'm saying? Whips. My name is Don. I am an alcoholic. And I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I've been continuously sober since December 26th of 1967. And I always say that, two reasons. First of all, I want to impress you. I don't want you to be impressed with me, but I think we need to begin to impress you. Everybody in AA with the fact that relapse is not a necessary part of recovery. If you're an alcoholic, you don't ever have to drink again. Some will, but it's not necessary. I had not been for that simple little message I probably wouldn't have stuck around. I have a home group. It's simply known as an AA group. When we're looking for names, we went to the traditions and it said that any two or three alcoholics gathered for sobriety may call themselves an AA group.

So that's what we call ourselves. I'm not sure about you. We meet in the basement of a community correction center in Denver every Friday morning at six in the morning. We're an outside group that meets there and pays rent. So we can be available to the inmates who are getting ready to go to work or who may have a late shift and come back. There's another meeting at Monday night at six o'clock. We're just there. And this is a hard decision for us to make.

I want to tell you a little about the group. I'm going to try to get comfortable. There's too many of you. I don't wait too many of you. You're all big book experts. I had occasion to go to North Carolina for 97 years or so ago. This, by the way, is the legendary Jackie. I was smart enough to say yes when she begged me to marry her. So I was gone for two years and I'll undoubtedly over the weekend tell you about that because there are some incredible spiritual issues.

I can't even call them events, movements. It took place as a result of that. But the upshot of it wasn't a left everything including home, group, family that people were sponsored. Every support that I had because having made a choice that the third step years ago, the time did come for me and it has come more than once. There's just me and God. It's all or nothing. And then I get attached to or supported by. I'm forced then to let go of it. Having done so then I can have it back. We were laughing earlier.

When I do these kind of weekends alone, I don't allow them to be taped. I'm adamant about that. No microphones, no tapes. But since there were three of us, it didn't really matter. He got me again. Anyway, I came back to Denver after two years and one of the fellows that I sponsored. And when I sponsored, when we're through doing step activity, it's your turn now. Go to work. And he had been, but he called me up and he says, I'll knock you back. I just like to go back through the steps with you.

And I said, don't be absurd, David. If you want to go through the steps, pick somebody new and take them through the steps. That's how you do that. But if you and a number of the other guys would like to go through the steps just so we can re-contact each other. That's cool. If you'll pick a time when nobody else wants to come in a place where we won't even be discovered. And promise me that no one, no one, will bring a big book. We'll go through the steps together the way it is in the big book.

So I read technical experts and they just make me tired. The big book can get in a way, you know. There's many meaningful spiritual growths. We'll explore that. So we picked Marty's place. Now, I don't know how I did it, but Marty came out of active alcoholism, rich and cute. And he married a woman who was also rich and cute. So they lived rich and cute in a loft in downtown Denver with gorgeous furniture and food for coffee.

And Mozart's just there. You don't know where it's coming from. It's just kind of there. Big leather chairs. We were, this was a great meeting. And when we were all through, we decided it was so much fun. We went through the traditions together. And then we went through the concepts together. And in doing that, we woke up to our conscience. We were not available. We were becoming an inbred little group of arrogant jerks. Not outwardly. We're all too cool for that.

But it was coming. It was coming. So we had group conscience. And this group of highly enlightened spiritual people still took four group consciences to conclude that we needed to make ourselves available to give up our poofoo coffee and all that. And become available. So we picked the most unavailable place possible in Denver and became available there. And you're all welcome anytime you're in town on Friday morning at six come see us.

And he's about 15 of us and generally 15 to 20 inmates. And it's a lively meeting. We have very few rituals because we've also, I've also discovered and some others seem to agree with me that we have ritualized ourselves sometimes into uselessness. The time all the readings are done and all the teas are crossed and the eyes dotted. It's time for a coffee break. Nobody has time to share anything. So we just kind of did away with that. We have one person that keeps us on track because our format is very simple.

We cover a step, a tradition and a concept back to back. And then the next one. That's just kind of how we do it. And we don't spend a lot of time with the concepts because most people aren't interested in them. And that's a shame because they're a fine set of spiritual tools and principles that you can live in dealing with the world that doesn't live by spiritual principles. So anyway, now you know a little bit about my group. Interestingly enough, I'm in that time of my life when I'm being separated from this group again.

I've been able to make it for two weeks in a row. That's just the way that is. Another thing that I'm used to is that we go around a little bit so we can get to know each other. Getting some of that same basic information that just gave you who I am, what I am, how long I've been here, why I'm here. I would say that I'm sponsored and I do sponsor but I don't even like that word anymore because of what we've done to it.

Nobody knows what it means anymore. I know what it means to me but I don't know what it means to you or to you or to you. It has different meanings. So I'm going back to my big book and to my mentor who is now, he's only 49 years sober but he'll do for starters. I'm his protege. That's right out of the big book. That's the word that has some meaning. He's my mentor. I understand that. We're peers but he's ahead of me on the path and he's mentoring me.

And I'm his protege. He sees great things in me. If I live long enough, I may become a worthwhile citizen. And he shows me how to do that. This is a man. You'll love this story. Got sober, became an attorney. He hasn't always been all right. Became a very good one. Twelve years sober, he was put forward to be on Bobby Kennedy's cabinet or one of those advisors. And at the final meeting where the people were being discussed, one

of the other fellows said, I'm not sure we want this one Bobby. He's an admitted alcoholic.

And Bobby is supposed to have said, well how long has it been since he had a drink? And they said 12 years. Kennedy's response was, is there anyone else in this room that can make that stink? And he got the job of course. So those are some of the things that you need to know about me. But I need to know some things about you all too. And if we go around like we usually do, we got, I did the numbers. If each one of you took about a minute, we'd be here for just over two and a half hours. And I don't know anybody, including me.

You can get it all done. It takes me that long to get to the important stuff. But I would like to have some sort of an idea. And I know it'll help Jerry when it comes in the morning. We think he got a little food poisoning. It's what's happened here. And so he should be weak but functional by morning. And weak, where I come from, weak doesn't mean anything. You show up anyway, as long as you function. But it'll help him also to have some idea because I'm not kidding. We're in a group full of experts here.

I've been listening to you for two and a half hours. Most of you know this book better than I even want to. Oh look, here's Alvin. Oh my God, we're all right. I know that some of you are quite familiar with Joan Charlie's method of presentation in the book. Which is excellent. It's an awakening call. I know some of you are familiar with Joan Mark's presentation in the book. At least from the last time they were here. I know some of you have heard me talk before.

So yes, I'm a storyteller, right? Don't do a whole lot technically. I can get technical if that's what you want, but you got to be new. Oh yeah. Oh, they're after me already. I didn't know the lights went up. What do you all want to do with this weekend? This will not be the definitive big book weekend of all time. My intent is that I will share myself with you in love if that's what you want. If you're my experience and my strength and my winnings and my loozies.

And it will all be from my source book, which is this one. There are other good source books, but I haven't finished the big book yet. Somebody keeps adding shit to it. It didn't mean that much yesterday, would have said that. I do not continue to do steps to grow spiritually because the book I read made a very clear, I don't grow spiritually by doing steps. I grow spiritually by working self-sacrifice for others. I awaken spiritually by doing steps.

I know some of you do the work. You need to know that I think that's preposterous. Because if you do the steps all the time, that's not the work. That's preparation for the work. The work of Alcoholics Anonymous is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to those who don't know if you're alcoholic, you don't have to drink again. And I've got that from day one. You're not going to get a lot of new out of me. My first five weeks in Alcoholics Anonymous, I got almost everything that I know, which was that I don't know hardly anything.

I had a really good sponsor. He said, we should guess, we don't think the truth is going to work for you. First of all, told me why. I take the truth in this Alcoholics self-centered mind, and my ego catches it. It says things like, uh-huh. I can use that later. I can catch an edge with that. That's my ace and a hole. I'll hold on to that. And then I warp it so that fits the rest of my mind. He said, we suggest you forget anything you think you know about anything, particularly about spiritual matters.

Because if you knew anything at all, you wouldn't be here. I was in my third penitentiary. He had a point. And I fought a little bit. I've come from literal death, and I'm still willing to fight a little bit. Surely, as I've learned something of the truth, he said it's doubtful. But it is possible. So we will concede the possibility. If you know anything at all about truth, when we're all through, it'll still be truth.

And all the rest of it is garbage anyway. So why don't you just put it down? And by some form of God's grace, I was able to do that. And I know some people don't even like the idea of grace. I don't understand it, but I sure do like it. Okay? I cannot earn what I've been given. If there were justice, as I understand justice, oh, please God, not that. There's mercy here. How many folks do we have under a year here? We can show you how to learn the live life that will make sense to you.

So we'll show you. The first time I heard those words, I was in the fish tank of the Colorado State Penitentiary. Proceeding that was the same guy that said that said, your very best thinking got you to the penitentiary, you're not doing too good, are you? But we can show you a new way of thinking. We can show you a way of living and a way of thinking that will make sense to you. And that was such a novel idea. It caught me.

I had never tried to live my life so it made sense to me. Despite self-centeredness, I was trying to live my life so it would make sense to you. Because if my life made sense to you, then I was okay. If it didn't make sense to you, well, we'll change it a little. I didn't have an original idea when I got here. I had stolen everything that I knew. I had been stolen from somebody. From movies, from books, from people, from the guys on the class ahead of me.

Wherever I could get it. Because know this, at heart, I am lazy. I am physically lazy. I am mentally lazy. I am spiritually lazy. I would much rather have somebody else praying for me. It's just easier. If you go through all this stuff for myself, I would much rather be the boss. Not because I'm smarter, but for a while while I'm the boss I can get somebody else to do my work for me too. God uses that, you know. I'm one of the most efficient workers you'll ever find because I'm lazy.

I want it done quickly, and I want it done right the first time, so I don't have to do it over again. Because I got some serious laying around today. I come from a functional home. And what I mean by that, it was not a perfect home. The human condition produces difficulties. Just the human condition all by itself. I don't think life does. I hear people today talking about learning to live life on life terms. I don't believe life makes terms.

Only people make terms. Life is as it is. And I need to learn to live in harmony with it as it is. But that's all philosophical. My family is functional because they met every challenge that came by. And one of the best ways I can describe my insanity, and by the way, I'm into descriptions rather than definitions. If you came this weekend looking for definitions, talk to some of the other people here, but don't talk to me.

I'll mess you up. If you press me for a definition, I'll give you one. And it'll take you six months of inventory to get rid of that one. Back in the late 20s, when it was more of a political movement than anything else, my grandpa and my dad were the two leaders of the Colorado Ku Klux Klan. And that slopped over into the 30s. When I was more. And we had some funky ideas around my house for a while. And I knew from the beginning they were funky.

So I didn't even have much resentment in relation to that. When it came time to resent my dad, I attached that to him. Now my dad and my grandpa in the mid-30s awakened spiritually through some process of their own. And they took off those robes and they spent the rest of their lives making that mistake right actively. I left the robes on them for years because that's what we do. That's what resentment does. I laid the robes on you years after you took them off.

How stupid of me. But we'll examine that as we go into step four. I'm just kind of like some groundwork here so you know. Because I don't know what else to do tonight. This is about change. Nothing less. If I'm the same person two years from now that I am tonight, I will probably drink again. You knew people. If you're the same people that you are tonight two years from now, you will probably drink again. This is about change.

And it's not just about changing a few attitudes. I'm talking from my experience. I'm trying not to preach. These are things I know to be true about me. I cannot be the same person I was 32 years ago December ever again. I can't live with it. I'm an alcoholic of the absolute hopeless variety. There is no treatment for what's wrong with me. Thank God. There's no way I can ever do anything right enough to keep myself sober.

Thank God. I've tried most of them. I've been sick since I was little. And sick just means I've felt separated. Healthy people aren't separated from other people. Sicker will. Do you know what I'm saying? One of the most aggravating things about spiritual people is that they just seem to fit in wherever they go. Damn. And they don't seem to be different with different people. They seem to be the same person wherever they go.

Until the next time you meet them. Then they seem to be the same person only. Is that a fly? You're quick. See that? She reached out and pulled out. The first time I drank alcohol, I had what is described in the book Alcoholics Anonymous as a spiritual experience. Without quoting it directly, Carl Jung says that ideas and conceptions that used to rule the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side. An entirely new set of emotions and motives begins to dominate them.

That's exactly what happened to me when I drank the first time. I don't know whether I was 15 or 16. It doesn't matter. I was a mess. 15 or 16 year old people are. It's the very nature of the beast. I was also an alcoholic waiting for a drink. A friend of mine and I got some guys from our Air Force base to buy us a bottle of bonded bourbon and went out east of Denver to get drunk and have fun. Didn't know what either one of those things was.

I hadn't had fun in a long time and I'd never been drunk. But I'm game. So we were not started drinking this bonded bourbon and I had the transforming experience and I will use that word this weekend. This is about being transformed and changed. Dr. Silkworth says we must have an entire psychic change or there's very little hope of recovery. You can stay sober without being recovered, you know. I'm not inviting you to my house, but you can do it.

Two damned heart on the furniture of the dogs and the kids. All the standard things that we describe happened. I got taller and broader and cuter and all that sort of stuff. What really happened inside is suddenly in my mind I had some plans for the evening. This was a new experience. I was a reactor to life, not a responder. Life would happen. Something had happened. I'd react to it. With what I thought was the correct script, I began to get all my scripts lined up.

Because it was getting busy in here and each script has as its ending. The curtain falls and things get quiet so I can think and find out what the hell's going on in here. And that changed. I ended up with some plans. A couple drinks of bonded bourbon is all it took. And I awakened it to my own power. There was a guy in my class that had not been treating me well, a class bully. And I had the notion that because I don't like pain I was a coward.

I have since found out that that's pretty smart. To avoid pain when it's possible, don't get in it. But then I was afraid, so he was pushing me around. A couple drinks of bonded bourbon. And the plan was to meet him back at Bill Bonsie's drive-in on East Colfax. And in front of everybody, whipping. Could have done it. Could have done it easily. And there was also a girl in my class that hadn't been treating me at all.

And we were going to have a visit in front of everybody. Hampshire, in front of everybody. Everything was going to happen in front of everybody. So you could see my power. Wonderful plan. First, fifteen or sixteen year old kid, there's nothing wrong with it. My God, if that's all the booze did, I'd buy you all a drink. Take this little old misfit. This frightened, angry, confused little boy. Put him in the heart of things.

But it's in my nature that if one works you have ten. And it's just in my nature. Twenty if you can stand it. And so by the time I got back to the drive-in, what the people there saw, instead of me whipping the bully and visiting with the girl, was my partner's carrying me by the elbows while I puked in the driveway. And that really essentially covers the way I drank. I drank, for the effect produced by alcohol, got the effect, whether it was for a minute or ten minutes or whatever.

The effect was so profound, the change was so profound, I would pay any price. Oh Jackie, you're late Jackie. You ought to get to pick on people you love. I would pay any price at all for a few minutes each day. Of that sense that it's alright for me to be me. It's alright for you to be here. And that was at the beginning. Along the way it didn't matter what the effect was. I drank. In fact, drinking became such a part of my life that nobody saw it.

When I got to Alcoholics Anonymous, I was certified by one government agency's Associate Path Type 2. I have no idea what that is. I just know I don't need it. It's not good. I sheet you have that too. We have to talk later, Perry. I wear the Type 1's better than Type 10. Federal parole officer said I was a psychopath. The psychiatrist said that I was a manic depressive drug addict. And what I was was just born very tired.

Christmas night of 1967 followed the most thorough inventory I have ever done to this date. Meaning simply, I looked at my life for what it really was and it was nothing. I had to come absolutely totally useless. I could find no reason to stay. I think it's the bottom of all human pain. To know you're useless. I had two little boys. Because their mother had abandoned ship four or five years before then. And they were with me.

Also, I'm one of the freaks that came out of Berkeley in the 60s throwing alleys, they asked it around and screaming out where there's dope. There's hope burned down city hall. I'm not a drug addict. I'm just one of those along the way did some dope. I'd hurt everybody in the world. Particularly the people who love me the most. We're really good at that. It's almost like we just go looking for Christmas day. The kids and I visited my folks and my dad met us at the door and said, Don, your mother said that I can't let you in here anymore.

You can't stand watching you die. You got to really push a functional mama to get that done that I had. By

the way, for those of you who are thinking about making a man's, one of the ways that I will do that, considering my mother's. If she's ever in the room or ever likely to hear me tell the story, I will not tell that part of it that will hurt her badly. Anyway, when I looked it all over, I realized the kids will be better off if I'm not here.

Even on a foster home, they're going to be better off than they are with me. I couldn't think anybody would benefit. I had no more hopes left. I've been trying to get Wilson since I was little. Any of you tried anything but a long way? I started with Dianetics. That was good with me. I just came out of my first penitentiary when I was 19. I was in the big eight army stockade penitentiary over there in Tokyo, and went running briefly through some marine brigs, and then got a bad conduct discharge.

I'm home at 19, full of success and ribbons. So when I think about, okay, there's something wrong here, and I did that because alcohol isn't, by the way. I went on a 24-hour liberty to turn into a 23-day drunk. And by the time I got back to my ship, it was on the way to a war zone. I missed the ship moving to a war zone. They really get irritated with you. Man, no sense of humor at all. Well, that wasn't the worst of it.

The guy that was with me was also a drunk, and we're pretty resourceful. We knew this was a possible shooting offense. Or some big long time was along with missing a ship to a war zone. I don't know what he did, but he ended up getting us on a Pan Am Clipper that took us to Japan, and we beat the ship to Japan by three weeks. Sounds smart, but... No. That skipper, I don't know how mad he was when we didn't show up, but I can tell you from looking at his eyes when he pulled in and standing there on the dock, he was not pleased.

So... So I think about, okay, I know I'm sick. I've got all this going on. I've failed totally, not only. That's rock bottom. Bottom is simply the morning I wake up and know that whatever I have in mind for my life isn't going to happen. And at 19 I could get new dreams. So to solve a problem serious enough to put a 19-year-old kid in a federal prison, I turned myself into a science fiction writer. That's who Elrond Hubbard is.

He's a very good science fiction writer. He must have answers for my problem. Now, we just saved about 14 years, because I went from one fantasy maker to another. I've had visions, good visions. I was privileged to share the Easter meeting with the powder people in Nevada with a washer. Had a vision, saw a great bird flying high with no head and understood clearly that was me in my life. Flying high, no direction, going nowhere.

It kept me sober for months. If some of you new guys are looking for visions, they're good for four months. It's my experience. I don't have four months left. This is either all the way, or I'm out of here. I don't have four months left. I still like dying that ex-best, because we... Well, they gave us amphetamines so we could talk freely and become uninhabitable. No, it worked. Took a lot of booze to cut the rough edges of it, but it worked.

What I'm trying to share with you is by the time you found me, and I did not come looking for you. I did not know I was alcoholic. The alcoholism was so pervasive that nobody saw it. It was a natural part of my life. I was seldom ever drunk. I don't like drunk. For me, drunk is described as knee walking and puking in the gutter. That horrible experience that comes at three o'clock in the morning, this one leaped out of me out of the big book where we should have slept the day around.

They shut down my favorite bar at two o'clock in the morning and I wasn't through. I hadn't found it yet. If you're ever going looking for it, it's a fast and moving thing on the planet. I almost caught it twice, but it got

away. I'd get to Denver and it'd be in Los Angeles. I even had the address where it was going to be. And I'd get there and it had just left. On the way to Salt Lake. Me right behind it. Never caught it again.

I caught it once. The first time I drank, I caught it. It's the edge. Never caught it again. Anyway, there was a point to all that. I've lost it, but it was a point to all that. I shut the bar down and I had to go home because I knew I wasn't going to find it tonight either. There's another description of the bottom. Sometimes you know what's never going to happen. Sometimes you just missed it. It's not going to happen tonight, but I've got to get through tonight.

At this particular time, I was living in a chicken coop that I had converted into a little one-room apartment. It's really pretty nice. You clean a chicken coop up. There isn't a whole lot. Yeah, chicken crap. Get rid of it. Smash room. I had a bed and a table. You had flowers and curbs. It was a nice place. It didn't laugh at me. I got back to my chicken coop and I was in that state of drunkenness where you have to stay awake because if I lay down, I know what's going to happen.

The bed is going to activate. It's going to spin and fling me out onto the floor. I'm going to start vomiting on my own floor. It's easier to just stay awake and keep drinking. Because if you keep drinking, there's another state you get into. It's called passed out. Drink into a coma state. Then the bed doesn't spin. You don't throw it. Well, some people do and they die. We lose people that way, you know. They choke.

But most of the time, I'm okay. By 3.30, I have drunk myself into that state where I can lay down and I leave the planet. I should have slept a long time. That's a cute alcohol poisoning. I'm up a little after six looking for a drink. I found me in that book where I had never found me anywhere else. I have memories that I bring to. Maybe over this weekend, we can stir the memories because that's what we do with new people.

I share one of my memories and you say, oh, I've got one that looks kind of like that. And I'm not sure of you another one. You see, I got that sounds familiar. This happened to me and pretty soon we have contacts. And it's with contact that you don't ever have to drink again. If I don't, you don't. If we share new stories. So, there's another state of drunkenness. It's just before knee-walking. If you're not through in the evening and you don't dare go knee-walking yet, you've got to have a drink.

But you can't drink one more drop without throwing up on somebody. Well, go back in the alley and stick my finger down my throat. We're fine now. We can drink again. I've got plenty of room for alcohol. Do you know that there's people that don't understand that? They drink and they puke and they quit. And so I begin to see some of the differences because of this book and your descriptions. I can say, yeah, that sounds kind of like me now.

But I got all these drugs going on over here. We don't care about that. What's going on with you drinking? Well, I got all this psychiatric stuff. That's very nice. How about you drinking? We don't mind if you're crazy. But be sober crazy. I work in corrections. And I tell my inmates, I don't care if you want to continue to be a burger. I really know. Be a sober burger. Your chances of getting caught are much less. Well, I know something. Come on.

I know if they really get sober, they're going to quit stealing. And I also know behavior modification won't work for them anyway. It never worked for me. Behavior modification. You just caught me. Oh, shit. Now, I

stand still and put on whichever face you tell me to put on. Then you tell me how I'm to modify my behavior. And I do that very quickly. I'm a quick study. And I do that as long as you're watching. But only as long as you're watching.

You have to change me a bit. If you watch too long, I will come up with a distraction for you. You don't play that, do you? No. So this is what I bring into Alcoholics Anonymous with me. We don't deal with it as an event. Because guilt, well, we deal with it entirely. And the eighth and I said, guilt is where you have caught me breaking one of your conditions. Or rules or values. And all I have to do is stand still where you tell me what I have to do to square it.

And I'll do that. A year or two years, shovel the walk, something. Guilt's easy. Shame is where I've just caught myself breaking one of my standards. One of my principles. And there's no doubt. I can't give myself any penances that are adequate to the shame. Shame is so devastating. And then I become aware of how totally powerless I am. Or I wouldn't have done that to start with. And I go do it again. And I don't want to.

And then I begin to think I'm insane. And I am. My sponsor though, God bless him. You said, we don't think you're a sociopath or a psychopath. We just think you're a good actor. I found the definition of insanity that will work for me in the story of the car salesman named Jim. So I'm very simple with this book. It says, it talks about insanity at that point. So I have to figure, if I have this disease, then this is what this kind of insanity means.

You know, Jim's had a drink and a y'all know the story. Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, it says, we call this plain insanity. How can such lack of proportion and the ability to think straight be called anything else? And I got it. That's what's wrong with me. I'm not a sociopath and a psychopath. I am self-centered to the extreme and have no idea of what proportion it is. If one works, take ten. It's that damn cinnamon mint he gave me one earlier.

And I got one for later. Don't expect a dog all the way over night. The fact is, I had two of them and I ate one just for a set down. So we shared one and I nailed two. Is that familiar? They had me applying this to my emotions. If this is the spiritual truth, I will be able to find it in every aspect of my life. If I'm going to work with you, this whole thing is about spiritual transformation. And truth is truth and will apply.

And if we can't find a way to apply, it's either not the truth or we haven't looked for it. So how does lack of proportion in the ability to think straight fit my anger? Very nicely, thank you. I don't get angry. I go from calm to killer rage. And it's always over some world shaking event. What really pisses you off? That quick. When the subway doesn't come. I know. Why? There's a place on the internet that I can find out how to build bombs.

We'll fix this place. That doesn't happen to any of you, right? 99 of you can tell me I'm wonderful. If one of you should happen to go buy and not tell me anything, turn the whole day. I may be cool about it, but by the time I get home, my family gets in front of it. By morning, I've got to find out what it is that I did to you so I can undo it. You can call me a son of a bitch, but don't ignore me. Because if you ignore me, I don't exist.

Lack of proportion and lack of the ability to think straight. And when it comes to alcohol itself, that is so clear. I cannot think straight in relation to alcohol. If I have a mind that can still think alcohol, I will drink it. My experience tells me that I must have a new mind. I must get rid of this alcoholic mind. It's all in here. If I have an

alcoholic mind, I will drink. This puts me in a place of great danger.

If I'm going to operate out of fear. It makes me extremely vulnerable. I have no more choice over whether I drink tonight. When I did 32 years ago, when I had molested, I've lost the power of choice. I cannot make that choice. I can't even think about alcohol. Because if I have the choice, I will make the wrong one. My whole life tells me that. I must have something else take care of that for me. Whether I drink or not is none of my business.

That's either God's business or I'm dead. And I know that from life experience. That's pretty scary. And what the hell would I want to do all this work for? Well, I don't know. Why not? I do all this step work so that I will have the information necessary to tell you about you by telling you about me. An alcoholic properly armed with facts about himself can generally win the confidence of another in a matter of hours.

And until that confidence has been gained, very little can be done. And if my life work is to help other alcoholics get sober, then I must bring to it the only weapon I have. Me. And my understanding of me as an alcoholic. That's all it works. At least that's what they said. That's what they did for me. Nobody likes being powerless. I think we're a riot. We sit around here and talk about powerlessness like it's chocolate cake.

Give me some more. Put all of that helpless topping on it while you're at it. Man, I don't like feeling powerless. I don't mind being powerless because then I will seek power. But I don't like to feel powerless. Nobody does. You enjoyed being powerless? No. So I'm powerless over alcohol when it's in my body. I know the kind of reaction I will get. And there's only one reaction I have to concern myself with. It has nothing to do with the drama that I create after I had a drink.

What's important is what happens to me after the first night. I got to sponsor a psychiatrist one time. Wonderful man. Crazy as hell. Oh. People who become psychiatrists ought to have their heads examined. The founder of one of the finest alcohol and drug recovery units in the United States. Fear one. University of Colorado. I knew he'd find a way out. So anyway, he's sitting in my house because the only way I know how to do this was the way I was shown.

We went through the big book the first time in five weeks. In order to go to the real A meeting on Friday night, we had to complete what they call a 12-step study school. And every Saturday afternoon, every Sunday afternoon, we gave up our yard and our movies and whatever else. And we just went up to this school where sober members of AA hand carried us through the big book and the steps. And they did it up by saying things like, you know guys for the next five weeks you have nothing to say.

If you knew anything at all, you wouldn't be here. And then for a three to four hour period, Saturday afternoon, Sunday afternoon, they would read from the book to us. They had learned something that took me a while to learn. Alcoholics can't read. They pretend. But alcoholics don't read. They interpret. You need somebody around that knows how to read if you're going to read the big book. Because you can't interpret this thing.

If you do, it'll just mess with you. Anyway, they read it to us. Gave us instructions, shared their experience of it and with it. Helped us begin to learn how to activate our own memories. To not be afraid to look in the depths of my mind. Remember I was terrified of that. The last time I did it, I killed what I found. Do you want me to go

back in there? The other day the description and the image came to me to explain that to you.

My first inventory, I had to kill myself when I finished it. Because I was looking at the darkness from the darkness. The one you helped me with, I looked into the same darkness, but I looked at it from the light to all the different worlds. As I read this thing, the common experience they had, the experience I had, is that I was spiritually awake before I got involved with this. I wouldn't hurt you. I'm not sure that everybody has that experience, but I was awake.

The first awakening is that I don't have the power to do this myself. That's been a good guide for me along the way, because I have a tendency, once something works, to get really good at it, to get locked in on it, and to use it to start managing my life. I've done that here. It was a period of time when I used the steps to manage my life. My life got unmanageable again. The first time, once we understood the disease that I had, this strange allergy, the doctor calls it to alcohol that condemns me to drink.

Once I start, I will drink again, getting back to the psychiatrist for that description. He wasn't getting the doctor's opinion. I was reading it to him like I had been taught. And I'm watching his eyes. When I sponsor, I want to watch your eyes. God sends me psychopaths. And the only safe place for them is in my home with my family. There's enough love in my home with my family. We're all safe. I want to watch them eyes.

I push buttons. And I need to know when to duck. Anyhow, I'm watching his eyes, and what I'm seeing is this information going into his head and getting lost and everything he knows about alcoholism. And he's getting lost in there because he knows too much. And I'm praying up kind of hard. I love new people because they forced me to learn effective prayer. Which is, oops, I can't do this. Show me what to do. What am I going to say to this guy?

How can I get any simpler than this? Please show me what to say. And I heard it come out of my mouth. I said, Don, what happens to you after the first drink? And he said, Well, around the fourth or fifth drink, I start forgetting where I'm supposed to be next. And what I'm supposed to be doing, and I have another drink, and the next thing I know I'm drunk. And I said, What happens to you after the first drink, Don? Over on the fourth or fifth drink, what happens to me after the first drink is the second drink.

It's all I need to know about this whole business. Now, I can intellectualize and quote the doctor's opinion, and I believe it entirely. But I'm working with new people who don't know what the hell I'm talking about. They're either too smart or too sick of what happens after the first drink, the second drink. If that happens to you, I've got some good news for you are doomed. Give it up. There's no treatment for that.

You got it. You got it. And it's going to be there forever as far as I know. To this day, we can take a man to the moon and back and do other incredible things. I can talk to Australia in less than two seconds these days. It just fascinates me. I push a button and the message comes back to me from Australia. But we don't have anything at all that you can take, that you can read or that you can do. It will keep me from taking that second drink if I take it first.

I've even got a new mind. I don't think alcohol. But I've ever taken a drink. I'll have another drink. I don't have anything to do about that. It's not nice to know how freeing that is. It won't stop me from drinking, but it sure does help me understand I probably ought to. And then my life becomes unmanageable. And my sponsor

said, we're not talking about drama again. And I was in a place where the stories were pretty dramatic.

My first sponsor had committed a double murder in an alcoholic outrage. Another one had thrown some people out of a three story window and one was a stick up man. Lots of high drama. They said, this does not define the alcoholism. What's unmanageable, the part of my life that is unmanageable, is this thing up here in my head, my mind. I cannot manage to order my thinking in such a way that it's going to come out right.

The subway isn't here yet. Now we may not be to the bomb making stage, but I bet you're a joy at work for the first hour. Yeah. Hi, how are you this morning? You're not talking to me. Bitch. Daddy, come play with me. Can't you see I'm busy? They didn't do anything. It's that son of a bitch that cut me off up there on the freeway. I said once, I heard the boldest lie I've told him years about six years ago at one of these things.

I was saying, I really don't understand these people that get cut off on the freeway and shoot somebody. And I realized, hey, how you don't. I understand that clearly. So don't give me any guns. My thought life is unmanageable. I've got to get that. If I can think I can think my way out of this thing, I'm probably going to have a very bad time. And I was not promised that if I drank, I would die. They knew full well that was not the thing to say to me.

Please win. Okay. Christmas night of 1967, when I came to the end of the road, I took a two-month supply of amphetamines and shot them at my arm, drank everything in the house and laid down and died. So don't threaten me with if you drink you're going to die. I can't wait. I'm in a hell of a fix. I'm now a failure living and a failure dying. Give me a break here. Well, I came to understand that I will probably live that way.

And I'll do anything to keep from having to live like that again. That way of living is trying to manage it up here so it all happens okay out here. And I can't do it. It's just too many pieces missing. And you never say your line's right. I love that part of the big book that Bill talks about the actor. The first time I read it, it terrified me. Because there I was. Clean and clear. I'm glad you all know about the big book.

It means I don't have to open it very much this weekend. We'll just refer to it. On top of just briefly, how many smokers do we have in here? I can feel somebody getting restless. Okay. Tell you what we're going to do. Because that last stop came my way, scared me. If you will trust Jerry and I this weekend, we will take breaks at appropriate times, which may be forty-five minutes, maybe an hour and a half. At the moment, I have a sense that maybe a little ten minute break wouldn't hurt.

Does that suit you all? Ten minutes, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes. You want to go home? What do you want to do? No, it's very important that we'll be back and start on time. So we need to pick a time. Ten minutes. Ten minutes. I don't know if smoking the world can do a smoke break in ten minutes. Fifteen minutes, alright? Twenty minutes after eight. This facility? We have one request to make because of the facility.

The request is that we not eat or drink in here. That's what the cafeteria is for. If we would comply with that, it would be very good. Three blocks from the place where I work is a little establishment that is designed to help people who have serious garlic deficiencies. A little Italian restaurant named Dario's. God, it's good. So we all go up there to eat, pretty regularly. And it's so good that there's never any place to park within three blocks.

So we just walk up. As a result of some stuff, it's unimportant I have neuropathy. And in our days, I don't just

don't walk well. My feet hurt. In this particular day, one of the guys I sponsored came by and took me to lunch. I allowed that. And we drove my van because he not only can't read, he can't drive. And as we pulled up out front of Dario's, the car pulled out. And so we just pulled there until the slot. And he was just amazed.

He was very pleased that God got us a parking spot. I indicated with some kindness that I don't have a parking spot, God. So what had happened is that we were on time. If we'd been any sooner, the spot would not have been vacated. That would have been much later, it would have been taken by someone else. We were simply on time. And that's a critical thing to learn if you're going to learn to live a spiritual life. Because there's only one time it can happen, and that's right now.

This is it. It makes it a whole lot simpler. We talk about one day at a time. It's just much easier to just be here now. I think they wrote a book about that. It's unimportant. Being on time then becomes, oh my goodness, they're still filing it. Look at this. I'm used to that in prisons because they send different cell blocks at different times. We just stop and wait while the inmates sit down. Our spiritual way of living is a very much on the street way of living.

There are those who end up in monasteries and all that, and that's good, and I wish that's what would have happened to me because I like monasteries. I'm a very private person. Putting me in solitary confinement is just about the nicest thing you can do for me. I'm fine. It's just stuff having to deal with people. It's always created difficulties. So, I can only experience God now. I can hear about God from the past or I can dream about or think about God in the future.

I can only experience God now and that has been my experience. The illusion that I was under as we approached a conception of God that would work was that having had a spiritual event take place, that was it. It was over. I would wake up spiritually. I would get my fantasy. It was very simple. I'd get my tweed jacket with the leather patches on the elbows. A little place up on the slope up. I lived near the mountains and it would be part way up the hill.

In a not a big place, four or five bedrooms, nice wood, a big porch with French doors leading off of the study where I spent most of my time working on things for humanity. As people came by and visited, I would dispense a little wisdom. It was a simple life. I had no idea. My experience of it is that waking up is instantaneous. It has occurred before you even know it occurred. Once it occurs, it's too late. You can't change it.

We are warned here at that one of those points in our little process to be really sure this is what you want to do. Think well before you take this step. Make sure you are ready to let yourself abandon yourself utterly. Once that has happened, it's too late. You are going to get help now whether you want it or not. It's really difficult to watch someone who has surrendered try to un-surrender. I don't invite them. How does that apply in my daily life?

I found that the people who wanted to give me a job were really happy when I showed up on time and got my work done on time. If I would do that, they would reciprocate by giving me a paycheck on time. It got very critical. It went so far as to affect my life in that I had to be careful what I said to you because if I said I would be there in a particular time and I wasn't, I was participating in my worst character defect, rudeness.

I am not a human being trying to have a spiritual experience. I am a spiritual being, having a human experience. If I try to live by human principles once I become conscious that I am a spiritual being, it's going to screw me over. Not because there is any viciousness in the universe. I made a choice to live this way and I am trying to live this way. Being on time is a big part of that. I can only experience the presence of God now.

According to what this book says, the most important fact of our lives today is the consciousness of the presence of God. Nothing more, nothing less. That's the most important fact. Everything else comes from that. It gets really simple and it's almost impossible for me to grasp because the minute I say that I want to start thinking about it. As soon as I start thinking about God, I have lost touch. It doesn't mean God has moved anywhere.

I have just lost touch. In meetings, depending on how long you have been sober, ask yourself how much time do I spend in a meeting listening to what Calvin says and how much of what Alvin is saying is lost because I'm busy thinking about what my response is going to be when it's my turn. I'm going to start thinking about it. I lose touch with here and now. Does it bother you when you're talking to somebody and they're constantly distracted and you want you to go somewhere else and you know that?

It bothers me. They're thinking about something else. I have to realize sometimes that's my fault. I have interrupted them at a time when they shouldn't have interrupted. That's what's going on. Maybe I need to be a little less rude and ask, is this a good time? And if it isn't, I'm going to deal with the kind of people who tell me, no, this really isn't a good time. Get back with me later. And I have the kind that say, well, what time should I call?

I don't know. Later? Well, one's a good time to call. Well, now was a good time, but we missed it. He's making any sense. I'm trying to cover that thing that's impossible for me to describe because the continued step work, not our work, but step work, is based on doing it now. There's only one time I can pray. Now, I can think about how I used to pray. I can think about how I'd like to pray. The only time I can really pray is now.

I said apply. Well, you're making amends to my dad. I went to him with my little list. This was before cards. I'm that old. We didn't have cards that we had lists. Did y'all use cards? They're cute. They're nice. I like them. I had my notes. I was able to say to dad, I lied to you. I cheated you. I'm doing the employment area. He said, stop, please. All you can do by telling me all those details again is hurt me all over again.

I know all that. You and I will have to start from here. That's exactly what he meant. At that moment, he and I started building a relationship. It was both man to man, friend to friend, and father to son. And we built that daily. Each time we were together, it was a new deal. We had 27, 28 years of building a relationship. And when he died, I had that wonderful experience of not being sad for myself. Because I hadn't done everything and said everything I wanted to do and say.

There's nothing left to do. Nothing left to say. He was a tough old bird. He was 86 years old. Functional family. They had their 66th wedding anniversary on Saturday. On Tuesday, he went into his coma. And on Thursday, we had him pull all the plugs because he was tired and wanted to go home. That's functional. I know that's high function because I know he wanted to leave a couple months before that. He didn't feel good.

He had a dry gangrene in one leg. His memory was going on him. Which bothered my dad a great deal. My

father was an unmeasured genius. He did not have a test that would measure him. And he was a fun man. So when his memory started to slip, it really bothered him. He had more memory left at the end than I'm going to have the whole time of alive. But in relation to that, it was, but a sense of humor was such that he took me aside one day.

He said, you know, this memory loss thing has some great benefits. I only need to rent one movie for the rest of my life. So I was on time for his death. I was on time for his life through a number of years and I was on time for his death. And by being on time for that, I was able to help him to die. And he was in a coma. The way I was able to help him and the rest of the family is because I didn't have unfinished business.

I was available as was the rest of my family because the nieces and nephews. The young ones who had no way of dealing with what's happened in the grandpa. We were able to talk with them and tell them, oh, he can't talk to you because he's dying. But he can hear you. If you have anything you need said to him, get it said no. This was a good thing because we were all right there on time. It has a very practical effect.

So this weekend, if we have any business to conduct with one another, do it now. We will never be by this way again. Ever. First time I heard that it threw me. Jack Brennan said that. We pinned him down. I come from a group of eight people who won the speaker and showed up and they were all through the show until we cut them out of the pack and back them into a room somewhere and picked their brains dry. Oh, some of them even knew things.

Jack said, it's actually that same thing. He said, I'll be glad to go visit with you because I'll never be by this way again. And I thought that was strange because I knew we were going to see him the next weekend. We used to follow him around until we really knew we had it all. And I knew we were going to see him next weekend. And then it got clear to me what he was saying. I will never be by this way again. I'll be different next time we meet him so will you.

So anything we're going to do, let's get it done. Not that it's world-shaking enough that if we don't get it done, terrible catastrophic things occur. Because most of life is just this simple little transaction being on time. I can only write inventory now. The team has got a sack full. Right now. Don't get too close to her. She'll fist it with you. No, I'm telling you, that was a wonderful thing. She and I spent some time together going over process.

And it helped us to bond this evening in this room. She showed me some things that she's done. And the content was totally unimportant. She and I have business to try and say, we want to be with each other. Talk with each other and produce things with each other. And she wanted to show me that what we talked about was real. It wasn't just a fluff. But mainly we just got to spend some time together. And I really think that's all we've got.

Being on time is important because all we've got is time to spend together. We don't have anything else. You say you heard a take of mine? What did I say? I'm going to let you off the hook real easy. I don't remember either. We connected. We spent some time together. We got to spend some time together here. They helped me to understand that while the process and the method was important, it wasn't all that important.

It was what led to what occurred in the midst of all that. That doesn't mean I didn't get totally fanatically stepping while at a time. We were step locked for a while in Denver. We got to understand the Denver Young

People's Group was exactly what Bill and Bob had in mind when they put this together. We were it. We had polyester clothes, white buck shoes, an Elvis ad, an attitude. If you weren't doing it just right, you weren't doing it just right.

You didn't bother. No trouble at all telling you that. We all wore little butterfly pins. You've seen these little colored butterflies stick to them. When you came into our group, we gave you a little metal worm. When you finished your fist up, you got a butterfly pin. The emergence. Spreads me significantly. Used to draw the old-timers crazy in our area. And then we became jerks for a while because we were it. We had the whole answer.

The rest of it was not going to survive without us. We just couldn't get enough places fast enough. My sponsor and Lee and I at a state convention, a call came in. A 12-step call came in. And we leaped for it, obviously. Leaked. We made a damn sure everybody saw those white buck shoes. Got to the motel, classic man on the bed thing. The little drunk on the motel bed. We gave him an hour and a half of the finest available at that time.

Hey, I'd have gotten sober. We were good. We tripled team that forever. And pressed each other beyond belief. It's an hour and a half, a guy said. You guys obviously really have your shit together. But I need a drink. And we softened it a bit here. On the other hand, out of that group, and we're talking about a group whose core existed during the time from about 1965 to about 73. There's a core of 15 or 16 of us and a body of about 40.

Of the core, one died, froze to death drunk in an alley. The rest of us are all sober and still very active. And out of the 40, the percentage is well about to say. A few we can't find, all still sober. And we tried to look over, what was it we did? Well, you heard what we did. We did things together for one thing. Ours was a family. I'm this little old... This tooth had been knocked out in the fight along the way. It was still kind of snagged tooth.

I didn't know how to dress. I had learned to speak English. But I still dressed funny and acted funny. My kids were in a foster home. They want a woman and have anything to do with me. I didn't have anything to offer anybody. So I picked a guy, a family man, that's my sponsor. Because one of the first things I learned from my sponsor is when you see somebody who's got something you want, you get in their hip pocket until you find out what it is and how they got it.

You can't have what they've got. But find out what it is and where they got it. So I jumped in his hip pocket.