

DON P ARCHIVE

Big Book Weekend

2001 | Part 2 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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Now what it is and where they got it. So I jumped in his hip pocket and oh he was funny. He was our GSR. I didn't have any idea what that was. Probably some kind of disease. I didn't know. But they were gonna treat it over Montrose and area assembly and I just said I'm going and he's gonna take his wife and daughter. He had no intentions of me coming along. But I said I'm going. Because he was one of the people who taught me you don't say no to the legitimate AA request. I'm going. So I went, had a terrible experience. You ever been doing assembly?

Jesus. Well at that time in my life I was about two years sober maybe. And I really did believe that everybody in AA loved everybody in AA. And I went to my first assembly and they started talking about each other's mamas and of course it was awful. It scared me. I broke another one of my illusions. And I was really frightened. And that night at dinner they had laid out the long table at the restaurant. And it was a little three step platform leading down to it. I can remember standing up there looking at that. And here's all these same people who had been arguing and carrying on that afternoon.

All sitting at that table with each other laughing. And what caught me was the quality of the laughter. I had never heard that kind of laughter before. And I can remember thinking I wonder if I'll ever be a part of that. That's the basic human urge I've laid. I want to be part of that. Whatever the hell that is. I want to be part of it. And our area chair, Old Big Frank, got up and came up to the platform and invited me to the table. So my experience of that is just that simple.

We should watch for those who are standing there wondering I wonder if I'll ever be a part of that. And they're easy to see. They're not part of that. They're standing outside. They're real easy to see. Just invite them to the table. They may not even like to food but invite them in. And then everybody laugh at them. By laughing at ourselves. You know how we do this laughter thing. I think we're living on God's amusement park planet.

I've been around it quite a bit. And it's getting funnier and funnier. And the right attendants are really something to watch. And I'm told and believe I'm one of God's children. So I get to thinking well what is it that children are supposed to do most? Yeah. They're supposed to be playing most of the time and we get so serious. Don't be serious please. This is only life or death. Lighten up. Shelby you in here? Yeah. Lighten up Shelby. I do not have the power to bring about any of this. I can wish it with all my might. In fact I have.

And I can't seem to bring it off. I want to be a good father. I want to be a good son. I want to be a good husband. I want to be a good friend. And I just can't seem to pull it off. And I don't know why. So I put more effort into it and it gets even worse. I hurt you and coming back to tell you how bad I hurt you. I hurt you all over again trying to straighten it out. And it just eats me up and I don't know why and I drink. Now I used to think that some most of the time that I did the things I did because I was drinking.

The truth is most of the time I drank so I could go do the things I did. Because I'm not only lazy, I am by nature a coward. I'm a moral coward. I have no integrity whatsoever. It's just another way of saying I'm selfish

and self-centered, dishonest and fearful. No integrity. I'm a chameleon. I'm whoever you need me to be today so I can get from you what I need from you. I'm the actor. It could be mean or gracious. It depends on how tough you are. The thing is I'm going to try to get it from me.

That's a problem. My problem centers in my mind. My problem is my thinking. The fellow told me one time you can't solve the problem with the problem. You got to solve the problem with the answer. Isn't that? Alcoholics love that. I say something like that to my wife and she says, you better sit down. I can't solve my problem with my problem. I can't solve self-centeredness by being even more self-centered. Self-help groups are wonderful for other people.

They're no good for me because they are exactly for me what they say they are. Self-help. Help yourself to whatever's at hand. And when I'm sick in that state, I don't want solutions. I want help. I want comfort mainly. And I want you to appreciate how much I hurt. You obviously don't appreciate it. So let me share some more of it with you until you get it. It just won't work for me. At one point in time, self-centered prayer is fun too. We'll cover some more of that this weekend because we do a lot of that.

I heard somebody the other day say, God just isn't working for me. What the hell should he? What is this? Oh boy. That's how most of us pray. Come boy, fix this. My mind will say, if I will just say this prayer right, I'll get the relief I need and then it'll be okay. Because that's what okay means. If I'm okay, it's because I feel good. Please understand that that's crap. It's band-aid. It's only temporary for me. If I'm going for feel good, one of the days is going to come when feel good is not good enough.

And then I'm going to start feeling bad about not feeling good enough. And off we go again. It's strange. The alcoholics are all going on. Drink will fix that by the way. Wait, instantly. It'll fix that. But I can't drink anymore. So what am I going to do? I'm certainly not going to do what you suggest. I've been to your damn meetings. If you think I'm going to count on you, you're crazy. That's what you told me. Don't count on me. I'm crazy. I don't know where you go to meetings, but I hear that a lot.

I'm powerless. My life's so bad. I can't solve the problem with the problem. So where am I going to go? I can't rely on myself and I can't rely on you. Where am I going to go? I can't rely on chemicals anymore. Of any kind. They just don't produce consistent regular results. Can't go to people. They don't produce consistent regular results. Can't go to good books. They just don't produce consistent regular results. In fact, they don't produce results for me at all. I take what I need from them so that I can defend myself the next time you get too close.

They are my sword sharpener. I'm one of those people that reads just enough to be able to say the right thing at the right time and baffle you. Long enough for me to get out of town. What am I going to do? Well, I'm powerless. It means I must find a power and that power must be greater than myself, obviously. And you're not in. I love you beyond distraction, but you're not in. I have a commitment to my wife for the rest of my life and I fully intend to keep it.

So far we've got 23 years and haven't had a fight yet. We do not always agree. We haven't had a fight yet. She is not my source. I cannot depend on that for my life's stuff. I can't go to her to solve my alcohol as a problem. She doesn't know how to do that. And you obviously don't either. If this book could get anybody sober, everybody who read this book could stay sober. If I A meetings guaranteed sobriety, everybody who ever went

through a meeting would still be sober.

It doesn't take a genius to know that that isn't what's going on here. There's got to be something else going on here. Because all the stuff we do, while it's important, doesn't keep everybody sober. I know a man that stayed sober and has never done any of this and he's over 40 years sober now. It just isn't fair. Well, it is. It goes to meetings and smiles a lot and pisses me off. I must find a power greater than myself. It did not hear anything.

A simple review that my sickest tells me did not hear. I've tried all this out here. Cars, jobs, women, power, prestige, uniforms, music, performances, what are some other things? Are she what are some things you try out here? Religion? Religion? Yeah. Nothing wrong with any of these things. But I keep looking out here. The idea is take it from out here and put it in here then I'll feel better. That's what I discovered for me. Whether it was a personality, or a drink, or peyote, whatever it is, take it from out here and put it in here then I'll feel better.

Until I exhausted all of those and then it's clear all those things are going to work. So where am I going to go? Good ideas are a fun thing for alcoholics. Most of us have wonderfully slippery minds. One of the reasons I like to hang out with y'all. I'm rubber-minded. I'm sorry. How's that going to help me? Well, it helps me a great deal in my personal relations with children, which I seem to have been surrounded since I was born.

I love babies and I love children. When Jackie and I first got married, she had two little girls, three and five. A lot of stories about that. And I had two barbarians in their early teens. Well, that's the truth. So we had that natural thing of putting two families together. And I had to overcome the natural reluctance of these two little girls to me and my louts moving into their house. And my louts can take care of themselves. She said it straight on that. How am I going to make contact with this three-year-old, four-year-old, five-year-old?

Well, because I'm rubber-minded and I was taught to think by Abbot and Costello, it's easy. She called home one day and I recognized her voice and I thought I'd play with her for a little bit. That's how you get along with kids and you play with them. She said, is Mom there? And I said, who's Mom? She says, my Mom. And I said, well, who are you? Well, this is Kelly. I said, I'm sorry. Kelly's not here. No. She fell in love with me. She called back. We've been playing ever since.

Now, what do we most afraid of while we're on this line? One of my greatest fears that you would cause me to either look or feel foolish. One of the reasons I drank is because if I began to feel foolish and I drank, there was nothing foolish about me. It went away. That killed that one. I could either ignore it or I could be a damn fool, which was acceptable with the bunch I ran with. And being damn fool is different. I've got a little three-year-old granddaughter now that shows up at my house as often as she can come over.

She's just a joy. And I'm 66 years old and I'm going to hobble a little bit. And if you'd walked in my house the other day, you'd have seen me down on the floor playing Barbies. Now, if I hadn't gotten past that, if I was too afraid of looking like a fool, I'd have missed one of the greatest days of my life. You won't play Barbie with me, damn boy. Of course I do. Not all damn day. I'm trying to share the spread of this thing because tomorrow we're probably going to get off into technicalities.

My note, Jerry's style, he's going to say important shit. Because in my sickness and when I came here, even though I had a relationship with the children, it was one of desperation. I'm desperately trying to make a home, to

find enough food, to provide them with some kind of emotional thing, to make them look good so I look good. It's a relationship with desperation. Now it's one of ease and comfort. That's the difference in living the spiritual life.

Much more better to play Barbies than to go through another federal narcotics raid where my four-year-old almost got shot. Those are my alternatives. This is what my life style brings me to. So my motivation in working these steps, if you will, must come from within. It can't come from out here. If I try to even get my motivation for change from out here, it won't work. Because what's out here, what will going to think?

That'll kill me, somewhere down the way. Because if he isn't around to tell me what he thinks, who am I today? Old convict gave me a little rhyme I'll give you. I cut a lot from them. My poor mother, I work in correct. Well, we'll get off of it. Remind me where I was. I work in corrections now and I transport prisoners quite often. My mother the other day, she's knighting. She said that it makes her a little nervous to have me transporting prisoners.

I had to remind her mom that time to be nervous was when I lived with her, nothing. Poor was I. Are you blind? Yeah. What is this? I don't know. Oh. Oh. I had to do with having anyone else define me. Period. He said, as good as you are, and as bad as I am, I'm as good as you are as bad as I am. As good as you are and as bad as I am, I'm as good as you are as bad as I am. I'm just rocking it through my head. Yeah. Because the other side of that is that I grant you that.

I grant you that. As bad as you are and as good as I am, you're as good as I am as bad as you are. We're square. He said, Prince, what are you worried about what anybody else thinks? Not one of them is going to put a scrap of bread on your table and open another door for me. It's kind of negative, but it don't come to go for me. That's the truth. Well, I care. As long as I'm not deliberately trying to cause harm or to acquire from you my assessments, what do I care what you think?

You are not my source. That's the spiritual shift. As long as I think you're my source, I will misuse you. Now that I know that you're not my source, I can love you for fun and for free. You don't have anything I need because you are what I need. Whatever you are. And there may be a difference. Isn't that us and Cherica's help, Bobby? It takes a new way of thinking to get a hold of that, and I can't think my way into that.

I can't believe in these kinds of things that these guys were saying to me because I watched them in their daily life. I'm truly grateful that the arena I was taken into was the kind of arena it was because it is one of this planet's most difficult environments. Prison. Maximum security. Single cell penitentiaries are a difficult environment. But it's the best environment of all if you want to get spiritual for Nathan because you're one of the other place to go.

My cell became my sanctuary as I began to move into the... And it comes from conscious thinking or conscious images. I realize one day when I'm in a solitary cell and I got to thinking, my goodness, this is just like the monastery I've always wanted to live in. They even call themselves, the monks live in cells. And they're about the same size. And they have about the same amount of decoration. None. In fact, I'm ahead of the game.

I got a toilet in mine and they have to go down the hall. And so it became sanctuary. For 18 hours a day, I

was left alone. Nobody to bother me. And it changed from me being locked in to you being locked up. I was given a wonderful year here of a sabbatical. I learned how to work. This deal is about being productive. What I learned then 32 years ago in that penitentiary has gotten me the best job I have ever considered having in my life.

I don't have a job. They just pay me. It doesn't get any better now. They're going to ask me to do some things one of these days and I'll do it. What I had to learn, first of all, was to how to work. In the dish room, in a penitentiary, it's much like the real world. You hang out and you wait and wait and wait. And all of a sudden a thousand trays show up in the next ten minutes. You're going to have to pull them away.

Right? Yeah. And it was a crew of 16 people to do that. All reluctant workers. This is not to cream the crop. And I learned to get into the rhythms. I learned about the rhythms of anything. There is a rhythm to life. Wherever you are, it's more about being on time. What's the time? The music we time is what's the rhythm. You begin to develop feelings for that. As you become aware of the world and study yourself, you begin to get in touch with some rhythm.

So I began to get into that. As I kept growing a little spiritually and involving myself with these guys, I got to have a little bit of fun with it. The next thing I know they want to make me a calm boss and I don't want the job. The assistant head man left. There were two guys whose job it was to make sure the other guys got the job done. And I really didn't want to do any of that. My sponsor says it doesn't make any difference what you want.

You just do what you ask because you need to learn that too. So I learned that one. And then the head man left and I was asked to be the lead man. And I really didn't want that. He says, well guess what? And so I took that one too. And I made a deal with the captain because there were some reluctant people. But I would not be a boss first of all. But then I would oversee getting the dishes. Donut that man, I had to do it myself.

There's one of the keys that you all taught me. If I have to do it myself, I will do it myself. I will not ask you to do anything I won't do. So if I'm sponsoring you and you're going through inventory, count on it. So am I. We're working this deal together. All the way through anyway. I learned about this spirit within that environment. Two brothers came in. Their dad was on death row. Joseph Garra, one of the last people in Colorado that, the weak hero, he was on death row and his two sons came in.

And they were not friendly folk. They were both, one of them was doing 20 and one was doing a life sentence. They didn't give it down for anything. And I asked young Joe to do something. And instead of doing it, he picked up on those big wooden soup. Stirring things they used for those 500 gallon pots. And he took the stance. He's going to cave my head in. That's what's going to happen next. And I went inside. When agitated it down for we pause.

And I found it in here and I did not do any of this consciously. I've just been practicing this deal. And so I just went inside. And when I came back, he had put the spoon down. Now I didn't know at the time that this spirit within me had done that. What had happened is that Joe took the stance. His next move was based on what I did next. And I disappeared. I went inside. I didn't exist. There was no response from me.

He couldn't react because he had nothing to react to. Hey, there's no way I could think fast enough to do that. I am totally powerless in my thinking to do that. I must rely upon a power graver myself to protect me when I

can't protect myself. And that was one of my first examples of this really does work. I hadn't practiced retreating. What I'd been practicing was just a conversation with the spirit. When agitated and doubtful we pause.

Well, don't wait until you get agitated before you pause. Anytime there's one or more choices, I'm doubtful. I can pause a hundred, two hundred times a day just making basic decisions. It doesn't take that long. Just go in. And early the prayer is always self-centered and simple. Go in. What should I do? And the answer is always whichever one you want. Unless it's a dangerous thing. Then you should sit down and wait a minute.

Don't move. Freeze. Hang on. Now, the practice is clear up in the 11th step. It starts way back at the beginning in my understanding that I can't think my way out of any situation. The more better I start developing this inner resource that I can count off. Then and only then can I begin to develop this consciousness of the presence of God. I need that because when I'm conscious of the presence of God sometimes, you don't be driving your car.

You think it's hard. People can't pay attention when they're talking on their cell phones. Catch somebody who's having a conversation with God. They really ought to be part. Anyway, what I saw in the people, the three that were working with me primarily, was not what I would say was sobriety. I did not know I needed sobriety. Didn't know I was alcoholic. Wouldn't tell I was taught what that was and that was necessary.

And that would not be enough. Sobriety by itself is not enough. I submit to you from my own knowledge that the main reason I drank is because I can't stand being sober. Just that simple. I have to have meaningful sobriety. Even in a fit spiritual condition, I have an ego that is so big that it has to be doing something meaningful most of the time. There's one to think about two in the morning when you can't sleep. Can't just let it go and go have some fun.

Right? Well, what I saw with these three guys, the killer and the bank robber and the terribly, terribly violent man, was that the people telling me their stories could not have committed the acts they said they committed. That's what I saw. I watched them. I was cynical and I watched. The man telling me about killing people in a shootout could not commit that act. And I knew it. And I asked him about it and he said, that's right.

I have been changed and God changed me. I didn't give a damn who changed it. I don't care. He'd been changed. That's all I came here for was to be changed. All three of them gave me essentially the same answer. I have been changed. We ritualized a bunch of promises in this book. Put them up on the wall and spew them at meetings like they had some meaning of their own. The real promise here is that you can change. You can be changed.

You can become a different person. And I must have that. I must not be able to go do the things that I used to do that caused the kind of harm I caused. I can't live with it. And I won't be able to die of it. I've tried that and I didn't work either. I need to be a different person. And I'm sitting here not telling you I am. And one of the ways that I know that is that I'm sitting here tonight. Right that one down. That was a good one.

Pardon me. When I get that serious we've got to get out of there. Now because I could see that demonstrated and manifested in these people, and I'm talking about over a period of several weeks watching, I could then trust what they said to me. They were saying, here's what I was like. I woke up one morning feeling nobody cared

while I lived or died. And the pain was so bad I started drinking to kill the pain and it didn't work.

It intensified the pain. And I drank some more and ended up in a rage. And in that rage I thought to hell with it I'd go get my own. When down I robbed a jewelry store and the stick up. The cops came in and the shoot out I killed some people on the street. That's what I was like. And what happened and he talked to me about a God that came to him very gently. I complained when I took my first third step nothing happened.

Well I thought I was going to get boom. Nothing happened. Absolutely nothing. And I went back and complained to him about it. He said, now may be grateful you didn't have a flash of light didn't it? They killed you all your life and you talked about them. And he told me about how this God as he called him had come gently and slowly. He said, God knows you can't stand one more big shock in the shape you're in anyway. And he'd probably come to you easy because that's what I found.

He said, here's what happened. I found mercy. And he began to describe mercy to me. How the one that says that God won't give you more than you can handle. It doesn't mean bad stuff. This is our problems of our own making. God never gives us bad stuff. But I don't know how to handle the good stuff. So he's going to ease it to me. So I'm going to get used to it. So I don't screw it up because I have a tendency when the good stuff happens to go screw it up.

It can't be mine anyway, trash it. Phil was the most profound influence on my emotional life. Phil was the man that when he was 17 they sent him, he was on Guam and he had done some terribly violent things. And they sent him to the United States to family over here. And a number of years later he had committed a crime. He threw some people out of a three story window when he was drinking. And Guam didn't want him back.

So he'd been in that penitentiary for seven years when I got there. And I heard his story too. And of course what Bruce was saying about what he was like now, it was clear of what he was like now. He gave his whole life to us. He had set up this school. He edited the magazine. When the politicians tried to mess with R.A. 12 step study school he stomped over to the wardens office and set that straight. He didn't do that for himself.

He was doing this for us. That's what he was like now. Phil was fun. Phil looked bad. He looked just exactly like the kind of person that would throw you out of a three story window. Drunk or sober. He came from Guam. He had that wonderful oriental face that they make pirates out of. I don't know why that face does it but it does. And when he smiled it was really menacing. He came to me one day. I lived in cell B49 right meaning fourth tier on right hand side.

Fourth cell down. Block B. Four stories up. Phil says you know it just occurred to me. I've been here seven years and you're the first personalized sponsor. You will stay sober. And I had it and then of course he laughed at me. This was the kindest, most gentle human being I have ever met. He taught me how to touch physically. In a penitentiary where that's really risky. Phil knew something about us and touching me. I hope to get off into it this weekend because I've explored that.

The one thing the new people cannot deny is a handshake, a touch. You cannot be alone if someone's touching you whether you like it or not. You can't be alone. We break the barrier by touching him. Take an elbow or shake a hand or whatever. He taught me to touch. He said and he loved his family. Oh God Phil loved

his family. He said much as I love them I don't do this for them. I do this for me. Because if I don't do this for me then they have nothing.

I learned about the strange contradictions of selflessness and self. My Nichols taught me about being spiritually fit and still getting pissed. I thought if you were spiritually fit it was a lot of you to offer now. Roy was wonderful. He'd come into the school and he'd get things going. We had a group of about 100 people. Maybe 10 or 15 meant business and the rest of them were all power seeking. Which is fine. You got to understand so are we.

That's why we're here this weekend. Make no mistake about it. We are all power seeking. We are seeking power to overcome what's wrong with us. Nothing wrong with that. But in the prison groups there's some other benefits you get if you're running the group. And Roy would just every now and then just get totally exasperated with him. And just... And so he'd disappear for three or four weeks. And I watched this. I wonder what's going on here early on.

And he'd stay in his cell for the school. He wouldn't come. He wouldn't do a thing. And then three or four weeks later he'd kind of slide back in. And he'd have that inventory all night and he'd take Bruce aside and he'd fist up. And I feel it was okay. He took himself out. He paused until he'd get thanked the right daughter. He'd take the right action. And he knew if he stayed up there he'd say something stupid. Getting a fight with one of these other guys.

And the minute there's a fight happens he'd shut us down. And he just knew. So he went away. And I watched that. We got some examples from that. Here's what I was like. Here's what happened to me. And here's what I'm like now. The example was so important to me. So they've been changed. I came to believe that I could be changed. And then I began to participate in the change. And that's what we're going to do the rest of the weekend.

I hope it's participating in the process of change. It's 9.30 and it's time to go to bed. I don't know about you but I'm more bad. It is my sincere hope that Jerry's feeling better. And if you'll all send good thoughts that way he can't help but feel better. It's also to my sincere hope that we've laid a little groundwork tonight. We're going to do what I would call an Ascot basket over the weekend. Somewhere will be a container.

If there's something you particularly want to address this weekend, concerning what's in this book or the process of living which is in this book, put it in that basket so we can kind of cover it. Most of the time we know what you're after anyway. But not all. Well, it's always the same damn thing. But if you want to do that we can. There's going to be a floor mic back here. Oh, I hope you're all beginning to get some idea what we're going to do this weekend.

There will be some places we'll get into some technical stuff if you want. But not too much. You're all technical experts anyway. If you're not there's lots of you here who are. Sea Rashid. So what time do you all want to gather in the morning? What'd you do? I just want to use some of my half-ass friends. I hear six. Do I hear sanity anywhere? Eight o'clock? Eight okay with everybody? Yeah. Okay. I'm going to suggest we do not shut anything down with a prayer because this whole weekend is a prayer.

So why shut it down? Somebody was saying something back here. Okay. See you coming. We'll see you all at eight. We'll see you at nine. How's everyone doing this morning? Good, he stays safe in New York. My name's Sherry. And I really am an alcoholic. And I'm reasonably well this morning. Not 100% well, but reasonably well. I have a dear friend up in Massachusetts that says any time he wants a quick answer that's right to the point, he catches me on days when I feel about like I do now.

So if you've got a pain in the ass question and you want a quick answer, give it to me today. I'll not beat around the bush and give you a response. It's difficult to share with you the gratitude that I get to experience being out here and being with this particular group. The reason for a lot of that gratitude will become clear as you hear me talk. But this particular bunch always does excite me so very, very much. I look at some of you and I know you're laughing.

It goes, we've shared so many times with one another. And there's been a lot of color in our lives, isn't there? I spent a number of years up here in Rhode Island in Massachusetts. And I only spent six years up there and it felt like about 20. And I couldn't understand why. And then it came to me one day. We had spent so much time doing fifth steps up there that I got to know so many people so well. I had a very rich and colorful life and it was a result of you all setting down and sharing your lives with me.

And I had a chance to share my life with you. And in that process what it worked out to be was I got to live or experience in a peculiar fashion many lifetimes. And it really did become a rich mosaic and my life is such a great deal as a result of that. So take a little of the mystery out of what I talk about. I think you're done. That's perfect. Take a little of the mystery out of what I talk about when we get together on a weekend like this.

I'll try to develop a sense of what it is you all are looking for. But I really truly am an alcoholic and I had to get clear on that. And the old time was used to use an expression. An expression that they used was, my name is so-and-so and I have found it unnecessary to take a drink since some date. And I couldn't understand the formality of making the comment that way. By the way, I have found it unnecessary to take a drink since January the 17th of 1977.

And that phrase unnecessary to take a drink finally got clear to me about three years ago. And the deal is that for many, many years I have found it absolutely necessary to take a drink. And so although we talk a great deal about not drinking here and that is a part of what we do, it's the necessity for the drink that spells a big difference. See, I'm an alcoholic who can live in a state of mind and did for many, many years, where some relief from that was absolutely critical to being able to go on just a little bit longer.

So, you know, I'm not a fellow who's here so that I'll feel better. I have been here for that reason. I have been here because I thought the girls were pretty. I have been here because I thought if I came here, God would give me a little more money. I have done much of what I have done for the wrong reasons and the outcome was perfect in spite of my poor reasons. And so the point I'm driving at is a great deal of what I see in this spiritual path of ours is a lot of humor.

I mean, we're just goofier in hell. I just love it. We're all trying to get spiritual. What in God's name does a bunch of old drunks know about being spiritual? You know, I'm married to a very beautiful little woman and I think many of you have seen her. A lot of you already know her and are well and so you know when I say this

that I'm absolutely correct. She knows more about spirituality naturally than I'll probably know at the end of the lifetime of working reasonably hard at it.

And I say that pretty carefully. I don't know that we're supposed to work real hard at this. I think this is a gift and if we do certain things we prepare ourselves to receive the gift and it comes. I'm always clear on one thing. The one thing I'm very clear on is that at a point in my life I said, listen, I have failed at everything I ever tried to do. Really, truly failed at everything I ever tried to do. And God, I'm going to give you something here and you can do anything you want with it.

And that's me. I wasn't giving him much, you understand, except that it was all ahead. And I still, to this day, and that was about ten years ago, well, well into sobriety before I find it necessary to do that. Many of us will go to the full extremes of trying to live a little bit doing this and a lot doing it on our own. Have you ever heard anybody say, well, my program's not working? And that's the craziest thing you've ever heard.

My program isn't working Christ Almighty, my program never did work. But that's all we do, we're the world champion whiners, you know, my little program isn't working. Well, I know it won't work. I'll come to never did. And so I had to get clear on something one day and I had to get clear on, which simply this, that I truly am absolutely nothing in and of myself. A total and complete failure at everything I've ever tried to do.

And so today, whatever I am is a result of our process, laid out in the book, spending time with you, and most importantly, what the spirit has made of me up to this particular point in time. So the result of that is that whatever I am, is I get to be content with it. I get to be at peace with what I am and where I am today. Is the growth over? No. Is the spiritual path? Is this the, is this it? Do we get to a certain place and graduate or stop and say, okay, this is it? No.

We're just on a little journey and right now I'm having a journey with some of the most wonderful people in New England. I know New York doesn't, does New York consider yourself part of New England? How about that, Belinda? No. God damn, we got clear on that quick, didn't we? New York and New England? Can I say it that way? Excuse me. I was suspect that last night, you all got a clear sense of the direction in which you wanted to go.

And it's a part of what I'll be doing with you here early on this morning is to listen to you and to watch you and share some stuff with you. And in that, in the course of that, a guidance that will come about from the spirit flowing out of you and into me and then back to you. And I'll get a little clearer sense of where we're going. But you must, you must, I need to share one thing with you first before we do a lot of talking.

And what I want to share with you is this, I believe with all my heart that we could sit here together as a group from when we started last night until when we break up on Sunday afternoon. And if we said nothing, we'd get just about as much out of it. I believe the healing spirit that flows among us will allow each one of us to get a little more well when we live here. Bob White used to say that. Bob said, you know, one reason why I hang around with you all so much, I'm a better person when I'm with you all.

And I've been watching that for years. You know, I used to think that was bad. I thought, you know, Christ, I sound differently and I look differently and I behave a whole heck of a lot better when I'm with you all. And I

thought, that's kind of funny. And then it came to me one day. No, it's just what I do when I'm with you all. I'm just a better person if I hang around here. So the trick is, how often can I hang around with you all?

And the answer to that is as often as I can. And for anybody in New York to bring an old heck out of Kansas and now in Colorado, all the way to New York and treat us with a great hospitality that you always do. I mean, you have no idea. Elizabeth opened up her home to us and Anne took us out to dinner and bar heads over to house the other night and fed us good and the hospitality. And I'll, I start to, sometimes I think about, I'll hold this off till later, but I'll go ahead and share again the hospitality and the graciousness that you all extend to us is just remarkable.

Because in December of 1976, my options were to try a or be locked up in a nut house for the rest of my life. And I, my response was, I'm not going to any mental institutions. And I'm not going to do a, but I had reached those hard-nosed Kansas farmers at a point in their lives where they were not going to tolerate me anymore. They weren't concerned about whether I had been abused in any way, which I hadn't, but they weren't concerned with any of my little sad, sad stories.

They didn't care if I was misunderstood. They didn't like me driving fast cars with guns in the back seat. And they said, we'll just lock this kid away for the rest of his natural born life. That's the best thing we can do with this guy. And so, like I say, the other option was go to AA and I just told them very clearly. I said, I'm not doing any of those damn AA meetings. Now, faced with those two choices, go to an AA meeting or be locked away in a mental institution for the rest of your natural born life, are not real, real pretty alternatives.

But that's where I started from. And so, when I get to be here, I get to get on an airplane. I get to fly from Denver, Colorado to here with dear friends down in Jackie and a beautiful wife. That's the contrast that I see. I see women. How did you ever go from there to here? I mean, there's no way to go from there to here. And I am still amazed at that. And I need to see that contrast from time to time because, first of all, it allows me to experience gratitude.

Second of all, God, I had a good point there. I don't know what the second of all was. Damn, that was good too. I don't know where it went. Maybe it'll come back. Boy, it's not. That's it. You saying to get this thing started off? Yeah, I do. Briefly, mine is not. I love it. Since you weren't here last night, we are in a room full of big book experts and technicians. There is nothing we can teach anybody in this room. So we're safe. We won't have to do that.

But I think it would be wise, since you went to all the trouble of bringing us out here to get our viewpoints and our experience, to give you a little of the structure as to how we go about this philosophically, not technically. The whole thing gets laid out at the very beginning of the book in such a way that I could grasp it. See, if all you're going to offer me is a way to learn how to cope with alcohol, isn't it? Goodbye.

My coper's broken. To cope means to fight the good fight, and I'm just pulling out a fight. So I'm not interested in learning to cope. To this day, I can't cope with what's going on around me. Don't even try. Just lock myself in my room until it passes, or something to that effect. You're asking me to become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I need to know what is that, because I'm through being a member of anything.

I've joined all kinds of stuff, from the moose to the elk, to the payload of people. We weren't really beatin' it, but they were our heroes, and we were in between them. What'd they call them? Hippies? Hippies. Strange folk. We were serious artists. So I need to know an awful lot of things real quick. Because my life is on the line, but that I do not mean I'm going to die. It means I know I'm going to live. And this is not a pleasant prospect at the time you found me.

As I told you last night, my first surrender was two months' supply of methamphetamine, hydrochloride up my arm, and all the booze in the house, and that was surrender. And that killed me. Now I'm alive. I'm gonna body that won't die, carrying with it a mind that won't work, which brought me to a state of mind that has brought me to where I'm sitting this morning. I was in an M today wanting to go anywhere anyone says.

Do anything anyone says, if it means I won't have to be that again. I can't live any longer that way. Period. And that's not the drama, that's not the squalor, that's not the desperation. I can't live in that mind ever again. So your message to me had to have depth and weight. Quit drinking? What do I need to quit drinking for? I'm not drinking now. My life wasn't unmanageable. It was being managed 24 hours a day, but I was a very confident people.

If I'm working out here, knew where I was every minute. Not lost anymore. Had a bed. Three meals. Meaningful job. What your message to me was, was transformation. It's what I'll use today. Change. Total, complete change. I get a new mind here. Dr. Soaker says without an entire psychic change that's very little hope of recovery. Entire psychic change simply means I get a new mind. A new way of thinking. I will be a new person.

That's the depth and weight. That's what I needed to hear. The last psychiatrist that the parole department sent me to was smoking marijuana three weeks after we started. Well, I can make it really sound interesting. And he was ready. And I had some extras, so what the hell? I just knew nothing is going to work. I don't want to join anything. But I've got to have a way to live. So here's what you gave me. We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than a hundred men and women who have recovered from assuming my hope for state of mind and body.

There's the promise. You get to recover from this. I am not in recovery. I've been recovered a long time. That doesn't mean I'm cured of anything. But without the promise of recovery, why bother? Just look around at being in recovery. That's a tough goal. People who are recovering from anything. That'll cost you one. Just got to stay square with the world, no games. I may still have the disease, and I do. But I no longer suffer from any of the symptoms of the disease. That's all recovered, man.

I mean better than, doesn't even mean that you're a nice person. You can be a recovered jerk. But I don't suffer from the symptoms of alcoholism. And at this point, I don't even know what they are. But I am promised that. Good. It's got to be all or nothing for me. That's the kind of first man. I died because I've been completely useless, and the very second thing you give me is life work. To show other Alcoholics precisely how we'll recover, that's the purpose of this book.

That's what we of Alcoholics and Animals do, to show other people precisely how we recover. I have life work now. Don't know what it is yet, but that's my approach to this deal. But I will be able to recover, and I will be given whatever is necessary to show you how to do the same, if you wish. Am I going to join you? You damn

right. You just hit on the two buttons of my life. I get to get over. What's wrong with me?

It doesn't mean I don't sometimes lay in bed at 2.30 in the morning thinking about stuff. And that's the human condition. It's sending back to me. It costs you money. Hey, when you got a mark, you work them until they drive, right? I want to send them in this time. Oh, he learns early. Just give him your checkbook. So I have a bit of a framework for my approach to this. I don't know what's wrong with me. But I know it has to be changed, and I'm seeing people who have been changed.

That's enough to draw me in. And to give me something worthwhile to do with my life is what it's really all about. I work with inmates all the time, have for years. And I never have any trouble with inmates. I have a lot of trouble with staff, but never any trouble with inmates. As long as there is something useful for them to do. If they don't have something useful to do, you better hire some more staff. As long as there is something useful.

And it doesn't have to be what I think is useful. I never did like that first experience with the Army prison and the Marine. They had us move the pilot dirt from here to there, and then move it back again. That's not useful. And I knew that it wasn't useful. But what we do here, this is useful. So anyway, there's kind of a little framework with which I can enter into this changing process. I've got examples in front of me of what we'll be when we're all through.

It's acceptable to me. We say things like if you want what we have. It's worth asking on a regular basis what the hell do we have that you might want. If I'm going to go out and make that offer, what is it that I have that you might want? It certainly isn't going to be my car because most of the people in this room wouldn't want my car. It's an invisible car. Yeah, I'm a very private person and I really like to be invisible.

So I drive one of those Dodge caravans with fake wood on the side. You don't want to. Shelby doesn't want to. He'd walk before I drive my car. So that isn't what I'm going to offer you. My house, you wouldn't want to live in my house. You wouldn't live in your house. I don't care how nice my house is. You wouldn't live in your house. So what do I have to offer you? I can offer you a way of thinking and a way of living that makes sense to you.

And what makes sense to me is to be able to give it back. That's always made sense since I was living. One of the pains that we have is that I can remember whining about it. Nobody will let me help them. Well, that's because when I'm in my self-centered state, I'm a kind of boy, Scott. It'll help you cross the street, but not bother to ask you if you want to go. Some of you too, huh? I mean, I want the merit badge, but I don't want to have to work for it.

I just want to look good. Precisely hell we've recovered. There's my guide. I'm not going to add a whole lot to anything that happened to me 32 years ago, except some dimension. If I work with you, we do it the same way I did it then. When I write inventory today, I write it just like I did when I didn't have the slightest idea of what I was doing. And today I know what I'm doing. I still don't have the slightest idea of what I'm doing.

There's something that occurs in it. The technique is the same. The one change that has come about from the first time though is that when I was first shown how to write inventory, I was shown there were five questions to answer in that fourth column. I found seven now. And I can make a case for eight, and before this day is over, I

will. Because it's part of the viewpoint that we have that has helped. More than a hundred men and women have recovered. Do you want to recover?

First of all, I'm to qualify the prospect. Do you want to recover? Do you want to quit drinking? I need to find out which it is you want to do. Because it will determine how much I'm going to give you, because I don't want to hurt you. And we can hurt people by giving them way too much too soon. Or by not listening and giving them what they don't want instead of what to do. If all you want to do is be sober, I can do that for you real quick. Don't drink.

And there's a couple guaranteed ways to accomplish that. Don't swallow. Hit a cop. And that'll work for a lot. Would you like to recover from alcoholism? I can show you precisely how to do that. It'll take a little longer. It may take four or five weeks. If you're like most of people, I get to don't have jobs or anything else to do. If it takes over a year, there's some real problems involved in that. I don't know how you operate. But in general, precisely how we did it, how we recovered took place for me in a five week period.

So that's all I can show you. And you want to stretch that out over five months, there are some risks involved. Because there are distractions that will come in. Little things that will say, well, I don't really need to do that. Or why would I want to do that? Well, yes, when I first got here five months ago, I was willing to do anything. But my wife's back now. Anyway. And I'm given the most important piece of information that I've ever been given.

This is a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Later on, he gets even more direct. He calls it clearly that we get to recover from a hopeless state. The world knows that once you're alcoholic, you're cooked. History proves that. My God, this book was put together because Bill and Dr. Bob used to gather to kitchen table and count noses because they lost more than they got. Alcoholics tend to not get sober. Did y'all notice that?

The percentages are really low on those who actually get sober. So they count noses as they tested out the transferring of the principles from one organization to the street. We're all part of the Oxford moment. I'm like they realize, my God, there's 40 people that have been doing the same thing and they're all stancled. And there's 400 that aren't. But let's look at the 40 who are. What are we doing? Let's put together a book so that we can make sure that this stays intact because each person that tells the story changes that you know.

So let's put it down where we always have something we can fall back on no matter how brilliant my new interpretation is. Let's see if it really says that. The integrity of the message is part of this book. We also need to know that part of this book was an effort to raise money. There's always at least two of me at work. One's very noble and self-sacrificing and the other understands clearly I'm going to get something out of this.

You can't escape it. They needed money because Rockefeller had turned them down. But they had access to all of his friends, which is almost as good. But they needed some prospectuses and some of the early chapters of this book were used as the book was being put together as a prospectus to raise money. Now if you think there's power in the book alone, they didn't raise a dime. But when the alcoholics read it, they started getting sober and staying sober.

And some of them even recovered from alcoholism and began carrying a message out. The book was put together so that if it's just you in the book, if you're off there in the middle of the jersey flat somewhere where

there's no other people. We were over there the other day. They weren't a person around. They were some four-legged things that glowed nowhere there. That's what they are. There was just you in this book. You can still have the same result.

And then the hope is that you will take your experience in this book to someone else. So that God can develop around you a fellowship of people who's like shines in us so that those in the darkness can see it and will be attracted to it. That's a pretty fancy picture, but that's how I see this deal. He didn't pick the smart ones from PhDs or even the good writers. This is really rather poorly written book. I don't know if you've been to writing classes, but this isn't how it's done, mostly.

But it's so well written we haven't changed the word in all the years we've had it. Some of us have tried, but I know Tony's tried. He took chapter four where he worked and said, oh, they helped. So my approach, and I've gotten along with it, my approach has been this one. I try to show people precisely how I recover. Now, I did not recover entirely on steps. I become a member of the group. I began to participate in group activity.

Our group had two activities. We had a main meeting on Friday night where they let real people in from the outside to talk with us. And then we had our 12 step study school, which was the main activity. Every Saturday and every Sunday, new people were put in a group, and for five weeks they had nothing to say. I don't know how to use this method. And then some of the results that began to come from that. Early on, when I was locked down for the night and couldn't get out, my sponsor would want to buy and visit with me.

And one night I realized he's getting out of his cell whenever he wants to. I want what he has. I'm not a dummy. I had finished the 12 step study school and became one of the mentors of the group. They started letting me out of my cell at night to wander around and talk to the new guys. Not because I was particularly good at it, but someone before me had proven, had gone through whatever the price they had to pay to allow a prison administrator to let prisoners loose on the tears to run around and talk to people.

Somebody paid a big price for that, and I got to benefit for it. So I owe them something. What I owe them is to keep whatever they passed on to me simple, and clean, and clear, so that nobody else will have to pay that price again, and pay our own price. And that's what our book does for us. It gives us a clean, consistent, clear message. It doesn't even need interpreted, which is a shame because we're really good at interpreting.

And we do it anyway. Okay, there's a little framework of viewpoint. I believe that people can recover from the seemingly hopeless state of mind and body entirely. Later on, I'm also giving a clear, clear difference between recovery and cure, because I am not cured. Part of what's wrong with me is still wrong with me. I still have a body whose response to the chemical in alcohol is to have some more, without any choice, without any way of not having a second one after I've had a first one.

I've still got that, and I'm convinced it's worse than it was when it stopped. I truly believe it's progressive. I've been watching people of 30, 35, 40 years of sobriety drink again. They're not getting back here. They're dying within weeks. It's as if they had never stopped. They don't get to start over. I've got the same disease, and it'll do the same with me. I've got the thought of six weeks more of having to live that way.

It's just beyond what I can't grasp. I'm watching others at 30 and 35 and 40 years of sobriety who have

stopped maintaining their own spiritual fitness, but drinking is no longer an option. That's gone. God took that, so they're killing themselves with pistols, a variety of other things. And I look at them. What is it that they're not doing? Oh, it's right here. They're no longer showing others precisely how they recover.

That's all. That's all. I mean, they stopped going to meetings. They stopped working with people. When we get into Saturday and in Saturday, I look at Jim's story. Same thing. He'd been here six times working with the heads of the needle, the guys who made all this up. And believe me, they made some of this up. Back here in the stories, you'll catch it. He did everything he was supposed to do, obviously. If what I'm reading is right, they took him through the steps.

He got his home back. He got his job back. I mean, he was doing everything he was supposed to be doing except he failed to enlarge his spiritual life. That's what it says. And later on, I'm told how, in the same words, how I enlarge my spiritual life. We grow spiritually to work in self-sacrifice for others. He wasn't working with anybody. Wherever I go through this deal, what I got at the very beginning is my answer.

Bill talks about times when it got so tough in his depressions that nothing works. So I go down to town's hospital and work with somebody and he'd be okay. So from the very first page, second sentence of the forward to the first edition of our book, the answer is always the same. Show someone precisely how I recover. That's what I'm supposed to do. And I'll solve every problem. It won't give me the hundred dollars I need, but it'll make it okay for me not to have it.

And it might even open my mind just to get a job and then you will have it. That's kind of drastic. Got the framework where Jerry and I are coming from. We are believers in everything in this book. And what we do in terms of method is this, which there's a whole lot more to it than that. If all I am doing is the steps, all I'm doing is trying to manage my life one more time with another power source. A business that takes no regular inventory will soon go broke.

A business that stays in inventory all the time has got to also go broke. You got to be open for business once in a while. And what is my business to show others precisely how I recover. And part of my recovery is based on becoming a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. It started with a group, the New Life Group, and then it became that Wild Munch at York Street. And then it became the Denver Young People's Group, which is still the premier A group of AA from the beginning.

Well, it was. It always will be in my heart. That's the gang I grew up with. We understand each other. When I get ahold of Gary, we don't spend any time catching up. One minute on little details like who just had another baby and were caught up. There's no time or space between you and the gang. You never need to worry about catching up with Fatima. We're right on time, every time. But it's fun to look at what happened between now and the last time we're together.

But we don't have to do that in order to catch up and get current. So if you're spending a lot of time getting current with people, stop it. Be current with people. You do that by being here. I don't want to get off it and all that. So my first question to myself must be, do I want to recover from alcoholism or do I just want to quit drinking? And either one of those yes answers is a good enough reason to be here. This is about not drinking.

It's just that this isn't about not drinking. If you want it all. And I don't make that decision. The people I work with do. And there are cutouts and we'll kind of share some of those cutouts along the way as we go. There are places where the spirit says, you don't want any more. This is a good place to get off the train. You'll still be okay. But here's the place to get off. And then there are other checklists to say, if you've gone this far, it's too late.

And here's what it looks like. And if it looks like this, you might as well continue on because you can't get off this train. Not at this stop, anyway. You get off later. You got to hang off Jerry? Should we take a quick break? I don't know what time it is. I run on instinct. I don't know whether we're going to go 40 minutes or two hours. I promise Glenn wouldn't go one and one and one and a half. So we could pay five minutes.

What do you all? That's your little bit. Yeah. How are the smokers? I wish we could put them all in the same place because then I couldn't watch them. Ten minutes before and we'll pursue a take a break. Yeah. Well, Jerry's got about five, ten minutes now.