

Steps and Service Workshop

2002 | Part 5 | Reading edition

FORMAT	DURATION	RECORDING ID
Transcript PDF	01:07:06	DP-2002-RICHMOND_05

Automated draft. Timestamps have been removed for readability. Names, specialized terms, and unclear passages require human review.

[Listen to the original audio source](#)

Transcript

Timestamp-free reading edition | Automated draft; human review required

My little hooting any down here real quick, I'm sure glad you got here. We'll never be able to do that. I'll just sort of get us opened up. What we'll do this morning is Don, since he's going to fly away to the Golden West, he'll pretty much do the first half of the work and then we'll take a break. So that's going to be somewhere around 10. I know there's no point in telling this group what time it's going to do something.

It'll be roughly around or even telling them why we're going to do something. But somewhere in the neighborhood or 10 or 15, as dictated by the airline, we'll take a break and it will shoot for a 50 minute break. If we can stay fairly close to that, then we'll shoot to finish up around 11.30. So I can take a little bit of a break and then we're going to go over and do a correction workshop and somewhere in Richmond at 1.30.

So, let's hope it was through the break. God grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. It is good to hear by welcome our buddies, the back row gang from North Carolina. I guess everybody knows. They're the Honesty Committee from North Carolina. Steve, if you haven't met them, Steve, on our left, you're right. The pretty page and then Jerry.

Pretty good. Well, you notice he must have gotten married. He sure pressed. That's a very discerning eye. It's great to have a whole folk here who happens to get out of town. We've had a good weekend. I had the chance to work with my buddy and just a neat experience. He said we ought to keep on dancing like this, so a good chance with Mike. So, Donald, what we're going to basically do is we're going to start out with the immense stuff, sort of look at how that gets us back into the community.

And then in the latter half, we're going to try to pick up that notion of effectiveness and how those last three steps kind of put us into some effective things with some recognition that our world has to get a little bigger than just me and mine. And so, it's generally, that's the kind of direction we're going to try to go for it. So, Donald, we're putting your hands. There are three people who can get away with that.

No. What did I call you? Donald? Donald? Oh, no. That's what you said. Jesus. That was Freudian. I did. The one that bothers me is Donnie. I still have an aunt that calls me Donnie, and she's the only one left. God, now there we are. No. So, through the nature of alcoholism and my own strenuous effort, I managed to become completely alone. Worked my way down to where I even gave away my name and became a number. In a single cell, maximum security penitentiary.

There is no more alone than that one. But all that is is a reflection of the alone I had become out here, alone in the crowd. Who the hell am I relying on you to tell me that? And then having to learn not to get in crowds, because if you tell me who you want me to be, I can be that very quickly. And then you tell me and I can be that, but if there's two or three of you, I get confused. So, I have to be alone. The ego sense that I'm the only one on the planet is what I'm talking about.

And one of the reasons I didn't get along with folks is you didn't really exist for me. There was me and who I

needed you to be, so I could get what I wanted. And then when I was through with that, you disappeared. Either I moved or you threw me out. And one way or the other, you disappeared. And there really wasn't a whole lot of regret about that. It's just a lot of confusion. On the other side of that is this spirit that is within each one of us, I think, that knows the truth.

I am you and you are me. We are truly kin. In any way you can imagine it, we all come from the same place. We all want the same things. I need a little appreciation, a little warmth, a little food, a little sex, a little applause, a little comfort, a little recognition. We all need a little of that. Bill was very clear about that in the 12 and 12. I don't use the 12 and 12 much, but his understanding and ability to communicate that these are our basic instincts.

These are our basic character traits. My character defects are just natural traits that I have that are defective. I want a little applause. I want the entire world to give me a standing ovation regularly. I want that to happen before I have done anything. This is when I come on stage. My genes tell me, as a young male, that my main job on this planet is to repopulate it. That's a genetic imperative. It's not a joke.

There's a process of selection. I don't want to get all clear about that, but I didn't meet the criteria. I just had the urges. By the way, one of the blessings of getting older is I know that's no longer my job. It's his job. No, but. One of the needs of a human being, a person in a human condition, is for continuity and regularity. The sense of belonging that comes from knowing that we get it here because we have an 8 o'clock meeting.

We know that's fun. We're going to be able to gather with people of our own kind. There will be a comfort period here. We establish that. That's good, natural and normal. As an alcoholic, I tend to either over-establish it or ignore it completely. Everything is done on my time. So anyway, I end up alone. Through the process we've been talking about, I wake up. I'm not alone. Someone comes and talk to me, and they were telling me their story and all of a sudden that's me.

How do you know that? I had a wonderful experience with a kid at a meeting one time. I'm sitting next to him and he's calm, cool and collected. And in the course of the life conversation, he's also just three days sober. I got a chance to look in his eyes. And I need to make contact because he's way too calm, cool. All of his energy is being devoted to staying in that chair. He's not going to hear a thing. So I leaned over and said, you know, I bet inside you feel like you got ten million needles all pointed out in any second.

He came up out of the chair. How do you know that? Well, I know that because I have had that. And I recognize the look in his eyes. Now he and I have made contact. Scared the hell out of him. But all of a sudden he's not alone. The great master used to walk the world. And the stories they tell of him, one of the things that he would do. He'd come upon some guy who was sitting by the, leaned up against the wall, all crippled and covered the stores and blind.

And the master did some interesting things. Very simple stuff. But I watch happen in A.A. and that's why I know him in the right place. The very first thing he did was this. Didn't say a word. I don't care if you want to be alone. You can't be when that happens. You can hate it. You can rebel against it, but you can't deny. Whoops. So he established contacts. Then he knew something the guy on the wall didn't know. The guy on the wall thought he was alone because he was crippled and had stores and was blind.

And so people don't want to be around him. The master knew he was crippled and blind and had stores because he thought he was alone. So he touched it. Then he would say something like, is there anybody there? You don't have to do this anymore. You don't have to. Whatever's wrong with you. You want to walk? Well, yeah. Well, I'm going to give you the magic. Get up. Walk. And he was able to say that with such total conviction that the person on the other end heard it.

And that's what they did for me. I stopped being alone in a fist step. My first fist step was a lie. Well, they usually are. I had gotten so desperate to become part of something that I was willing to risk even being a little bit honest. Even though I was being guided by big, big, big people, I jumped ahead naturally. And went back to my cell and spent two hours writing down the worst things I'd ever done. I thought, that'll get me some status here.

I will be accepted. Took it back to my sponsor and he said, that's garbage. He wrote that to impress me. Get out of here. And crushed me. But I'm resilient and I haven't will. And by God, I'd work two hours on this thing. Somebody's going to listen to it. So I went and found me a guy. A guy named Leroy, who was a member of the A group, but wasn't really a member of the A group. He showed up for meetings. And I would tell Leroy one of these things I'd done.

And Leroy would say, well, that wasn't that bad. And I'd tell him another one and say, well, that wasn't that bad. And I awoke. Because some of it was that bad. And what I awoke to was the fact that once again I had picked somebody who'd tell me what I wanted to hear, so I don't have to do anything. And if I didn't stop that instantly, I would die a very ugly death. And I'm not afraid of death. I haven't been afraid of death for a long time.

I've done it three times. It just doesn't do anything. You get reborn again right away and shit. What a waste of time. Anyway, what I was afraid of is that to die an ugly death means that for some period of time, just prior to that, I'm going to have to live a very ugly life. And that's the one I can't stand. This gives a nice foundation to get away from the guilt of making a man, and gives a real purpose. If I'm going to live a useful life, and I'm stuck here, my genes indicate that I will probably be in the late 80s or mid 90s before I cash out.

That's the way my family is. The youngest member in the family cemetery that I saw was 65, and he died in a train wreck, so I don't think that counts. The rest of them were 80, 90, and I was 102. My mother's 91, and she hadn't even slowed down yet. So I need to find a way to live with some peace. I've already identified that I'm no longer alone. I've been touched by someone. Now we've identified the stuff that's been separating me from you.

See, the whole idea of God is too big for me to grasp. I can grasp what there probably is one. Can't grasp much else. So the mercy of this deal is that I get to work it out through you, the children of God. And anything that separates me from the children of God separates me from God, and my life depends on not being separated. It depends on it. Now my death, my life, depends on it. My life will be in accordance with that relationship.

It will be reflected in everything I do. So anyway, we got through all that, and now I've got a list of people that I have harmed. If I harm you, I separate us. Anything that separates us is not a good thing. I need to repair that. It's a very ancient principle. They didn't know it invented. And I really have come to dislike the word of man because what it seems to me is I'm sorry, which is crap. I'm sorry, it doesn't get it.

My response is very clear. This is you never get to say, I'm sorry again. You've been sorry your whole life. What you get to say is I was wrong. I have harmed you. I truly believe that this whole thing is based on willingness. I think willingness is the most demonstrable, observable, most powerful sign of the presence of God. It is so powerful that the instant I'm willing to be changed, I've already been changed. The making of a man does not set me free.

The willingness to make a man is what set me free. Locked up for the night in a single cell penitentiary, my sponsor said, we know what you did to these people, but you're so insensitive you have no idea what it did to them. So you're going to go out there and make a man's screw it all up again. I want you to go back to yourself with this list. Go over the list, close your eyes, picture everybody in your mind. And see if you can have a willingness to say to each one of them, I have been wrong and I've harmed you.

Would you please tell me what I have to do so we can get the book? And in the process of doing that that evening, I was literally lifted. The sensation was I was lifted from that chair and said free. Now they didn't know I was free. They kept me locked up. But not often. Remember I told you how Bruce used to come by. And how astounded I was that he was walking the tears talking to us. Shortly after that occurred they started letting me out of the cell and we talked to people.

Because following his footsteps I began working with the next group. And it was my job to go around not just in the school, but afterwards and be available to them. Because they were sitting against the wall still, crippled. And they needed somebody to come by and say, look at me, I'm out here. I mean that's the message. I'm walking free. Follow me. Get up off your ass. Walk. But I had some direct demands to make. I'm free already.

I'm being free now I'm willing to truly make amends, which means to change. A man means to change, to set right. The wrongs have done. And they wouldn't let me out to do it. So my experience is a little different than yours. Because I was ready. There's a great danger at this point in sponsoring people. They enter into their evangelistic stage. Start running them up. The danger is that I'm inclined to rein them in. Let them go.

Keep guiding them, let them go, let them run them up. This thing needs a few evangelists. And the fellowship itself will cool them out. I don't have to cool them out. They'll run into somebody else's meeting. No, they'll be the band. They'll be taken care of. How can I change what I have done? My mother, for instance, on Christmas Day, the last day of my sickness. My little boys and I went to my folk's house for Christmas.

It would never occur to me not to go home. My dad met us at the door and said, Don, I'm sorry. But your mother says, you can't come in here anymore because she can't stand watching you die. Now, how do I straighten that one up? To this day, I can't come up with any way to do that. I must set that straight. Well, one of the things that I learned in that eight-step experience reviewing the list was that once I asked the question, what do I have to do?

I'm supposed to shut up and listen while they tell me. I know roughly what I did. I know roughly what I can do to straighten it out. But my job now is to shut up. What do you tell me what I need to do? Months after I got out, I was allowed to go see my mother. She was frankly quite reluctant. Chuck Chamberlain helped me through this. He said there is nothing, I single-handedly, through my own efforts, destroyed everything worthwhile in my life.

And I have no right to ever expect anyone to even talk to me again. And with that attitude, I'm free. Whatever happens now is appropriate. You want to throw me out? You should. You want to forgive me? Good. But it doesn't matter. I'm just here to say the story. So that's the attitude I approach life with. I don't have any rights. Just one that you can think about at 2.30 in the morning when you kill yourself. But I don't give them all up.

Burn them out. So I got to my mother's house and we just had a little light chat. My dad, fortunately, was a very wise man. He helped guide me as to the timing of this visit. And in the talk, I found a way to ask the question. You don't ask that bluntly, always. What do I have to do, set this straight? But I found a way to ask the question. And her response was, honey, all I have ever wondered for you is that you'll be happy.

So 32 years now, I've been going by my mother's house on a regular basis. Happy. And it worked. She said it was six years before she believed I was going to mount to anything. But that isn't why I was going. I dragged my happiness with me. My wife, my grandchildren, two dollar bills, the fun stuff I get to do. My mother's a trapper, but it's getting a little harder on her. So I tell her about all the places I've been, and I tell her about you.

And what I'm doing. She thinks I'm the president of AA. You know. And I thought one time I really needed to straighten her out on her. I'd heard her say that to one of her friends on the phone. I thought I better straighten her out on her. And then I realized, no. After all the disappointments that she's had on me, I better thank it. As long as you and I understand I'm only the vice president. After I have initially addressed the harm I did to you, now it's about change to behavior.

I must be a different person, which means I will behave in a different way. And this is something I'm not powerful enough to do on my own. This is a spiritual deal. This comes out of the fact that I truly understand if I cause you pain, I cause me pain. And I can't stand any more pain. I think the spiritual life is one of enlightened self-interest. I still want mine. I just finally understand that the best way for me to get mine is to make sure you get yours.

And mine just comes right along with it. But it's still there. There's no nobility in spirituality. Mobility is one of the greatest dangers to spirituality than I know of. And yet we get busy doing things that are perceived as really quite noble. Just don't you believe it? Let somebody else believe it because he'll open some doors for you, but don't you believe it? The change with my dad is very simple. I went to him with my list.

I'm among list makers so I have to let some lists. And he looked at it and I can see in his eyes he didn't want to hear this shit. And I started out, we're supposed to be hard on ourselves and easy on others. That's a basic principle not only in making amends but in life itself. So I've been taught to prepare. I said, Dad, first of all, I need to straighten out some stuff I did in the past. Do you have some time? Yes.

I lied to you. I stole from you. I cheated you. My brother and I said, please stop. I know all that. All you can do by telling me again is hurt me all over again. So I get to live with the details of that. What he said was you and I will just have to start from here. Wonderful thing. We started from there. And for 27 years my dad and I built a relationship. It was both father and son, man to man, friend to friend. We built one day by day by day.

I owed him some money. And he says, the whole thing's written off. Don't worry about it. I said, no, this is one I got to take care of. He says, all right, here's what we'll do. Every now and then you can buy and give me a

little bit of money. And when you think it's done, it's done. But I don't want to be any part of your accounting system. I believe that God uses whatever is at hand. My dad and mom got along fine but she was always a little bit testy about the fact that he kind of controlled.

And when her mother died, she inherited some money. And that tiny little chink in her arm were opened up. And she got him. She reported to the state that she inherited that money and they cut both their pensions off. Now he's totally dependent on her for the money. I saw the only main streak I've ever seen of a mom. Didn't last long but she got him. And every now and then I'd come by with a 20 dollar bill to repay my debt.

And that became his pocket money. It's more than me just saying I'm sorry. Now I'm to be of service all along the way. The big book's very clear. It says what we're trying to get our lives in order. This is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves. To be a maximum service to God and those about us. This is how I get fit. I do these exercises and they make me fit to be around. And my transgressions then become tools by which the spirit can work.

It's wonderful. This makes me fit to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have a hard time finding the worst to describe my experience with it. But that 12 step study school we started in was partly because we were not fit to go to the regular meeting where there were real people. We weren't fit. It didn't mean we were bad people. We weren't fit. We hadn't done anything to become fit. We were part of A, but we had to go through this orientation.

Now I don't subscribe to that out here. And yet I do. Okay. Old fellow named Bernie Rowdy one time. He was an old bank robber. He loved him. Drunk bank robber. Robbed a bank in downtown downtown. That \$35,000 went up and rented most of the Brown Palace until he had a hell of a party over the weekend. And the Brown Palace is only a couple blocks in the bank. He did a little time for that one. They just followed him to the party.

Bernie only had one leg. They'd been amputating him for a while. He had a nasty mouth and a nasty attitude. But he really loved people. He kind of took me under his wing. I'd been on the street maybe five months when he did when I was getting a car. It was my car because he couldn't drive but getting a car. We're going to Brighton, he says. It's a meeting on the Brighton. Dick and Mary Earpond's meeting. Fine. I got to this little church and we went down the stairs and these two older people just put themselves all over me.

And I got to experience a dimension of love I hadn't encountered before. They didn't love me for any reason other than the fact I was there. There was no other reason. I got my standing ovation before I'd ever done anything. He had waited five months. I found out later because we talked to make sure that I was fit to go among those lovely people. He wasn't dragging no bomb into that one. That's part of what I learned about this thing.

And I passed that on. I take the people I sponsored a lot of places. But there's some places they don't get to go with me until I'm sure they're not going to screw this deal up. They're not going to tamper with these people. My room is one of them. Anyway, I began to get involved. I got to tell a story on my coming down to see you because it fits here. See, this is a lifetime process. When I moved down North Carolina and went to work with Tom, I figured I'm fairly safe.

Now, I'm in the middle of my second or third month of interfering on treatment for hepatitis C and I don't feel good. And for whatever the reason I'm being told by my spirit, leave home, leave your support system, leave your doctor, leave everything, and go down to North Carolina where they don't even speak English. They speak seven. But I'm safe enough because I'm going to join Tom's group. But I am prone to spiritual arrogance from time to time.

And I know how it's supposed to be done. And they weren't doing it right. And this was a lovely group. I had a little meeting ahead of time where everybody got introduced and they had this thing called the chip system, which I'd never seen before. And then they broke up into four different meetings. There was a beginners meeting, step one through four, I think it was, and then step four through twelve and then a big book meeting.

I thought this is cool until the chipmunk got up and waved the silver token. And he said, this is how you join AA. If you don't want to come down and get it, I think, my god, I've fallen into a bunch of baptists real often. But I'm cool. I'm five years sober, so I'm cool. I don't say anything. Then I go off to the step meeting. And there's no big book. They're reading out of twelve and twelve. And that's fine. It's just that I don't have a lot of experience with that.

And so one more little piece of discomfort shows up here. The next week I go to the meeting on fourth or five through twelve. Same thing. Twelve and twelve. And I don't have any experience. I don't feel right. The way I translate when I don't feel right is they're not doing right. Got to the big book meeting. And they were in the family afterward, and it was actually a big book there in my area and then something. Ah, we're okay now.

And the chairperson read a little from the family afterwards. Somebody mentioned dysfunctional family in the meeting went to hell. Then that young girl can't remember 19 years old in an effort to make me feel part of the group. Ask me if I would be the chipmunk. Cindy. Cindy, yeah. And I lost it. They also, after the meeting, did a big book raffle. And I don't dig raffles. I don't think I ain't used to raise money. When I found out later as he set it up as a way to cheat and get books into the hands of new people.

But I go off on this portal of girl and her boyfriend. There are two things I will not do in this group. I will not hand out those damn chips. I will not participate in that damn book raffle. If you ever want to know why, I'll tell you. He said, I want to know why. So I told him. And on the way home, my heart is breaking. I know I've been a jerk. So I did what I had been taught to do and found out why their behavior threatened me and went through all that stuff.

And once again realized something I've known for years. Whether I feel like I belong here has nothing to do with whether you accept me or not. It has to do with whether I accept you or not. That's when I belong. So I was, I got it fished up. Was it, you got it fished up with Jerry? Yeah. He's the only one I could trust to see what a jerk I was. I had to go back to the group the next week and go to Cindy and say, can I please have the privilege?

I was wrong. I said completely wrong. And thanked her for her kindness. And they let me be the chipmunk the next week. I did not say this is how you join A.A. I said, this is a good marker of the night you decided to get sober. Be a good token to have to remind you. And if you like one of these, that night nobody got any chips. And I was never asked to do it again. I don't know if I did it wrong or not. The thing was I had to, that's the kind of stuff we have to straighten out.

The hydrometer stuff is over. I need to belong somewhere and I need to be part of it. That means I have to accept you, as you are. The book raffle got to be fun because I woke up the fact this happens after the meeting. Don't be such a millennial thinking, a cop. I still don't do raffles. So it got to be that I was the one that got to pick the number because he and I talked about it and I was the only honest one in the room.

I didn't have a ticket. And I began to understand what he was doing. He was making sure the books got into the hands of new people. In fact, there's times we cheated. There's no carny trick. When you use a hat, you put the winning number in the band and drop the others here. When you pick it up, you got the winner. We did that. It's a long way of saying what I just said. Whether I feel like I belong or not has nothing to do with whether you accept me.

It's whether I accept you. And once I've cleared away the garbage in my head that you're doing something to me and understand no one has ever done anything to me. And if they have, I set myself up for it. Then I can take you as you are. You took me as I was. So a man means to change. And there's some principles behind it that are critically important. One of them is being on time. But being here now. And what translates out onto the street is if we have an appointment at 8, from my viewpoint you need to know there's a 10 minute window on either side.

If you come 20 minutes early, I'm not ready. I'm doing something else. My life is really full. And I move from one thing to another. And if you're too early, I'm not there. A 10 minutes till if you're coming to my house for instance, I've got a chair out front. I have to be still sitting in it and watch to see. Because I want you to experience something that I experience. When you show up at my house, as you walk up toward the house, I open the door for you.

Important. You don't have to knock. We translate that in groups by putting people at the door to welcome you in. They shake your hand and you come in. Very important stuff. It's a terrible thing. I know Tom's run into it because we get around a lot. To go someplace through a meeting. And nobody ever talks to you. They don't know whether you've been there for a while or if you're brand new. The meeting goes on and nobody ever talks to you to go home.

There are other meetings where you can't even get to the coffee pucks. You've got to go through this gauntlet of people. I like them. I love having some noodle twelfth at me because he doesn't look better. I just let him do it. It's kind of fun to see how far they'll go before they ask you how long you've been sober. I like the enthusiasm. And I would do it pretty good. There was a period of time. Let's see. I must have been five or six years sober.

I went to work at the Colorado Reformatory. Getting jobs for the guys that came out jobs and housing. We did some preliminary work so they didn't hit the street cold. They had something to go to. This is 120 miles from Denver. I had to come over once a week on Monday to check into the office and to catch my home group. Because the group in Buena Vista was me, another guy, and a continually drunk Mexican kid who came and went.

I need a little bit more now. So I catch my home group and I go back. And I've got these two boys who've been with me the last four and a half years on the road. So their experience with me is sometimes he gets back and sometimes he doesn't. And sometimes when he comes back we move. There was a lack of continuity there. And the way I have to make amends to my children is to create an arena where they can heal. There has to be

continuity. We call it home.

I thought one time, you know, what's that going on with the boys? When I leave every Sunday night and I don't get back until Tuesday morning, I want to put that still into them. So I ask them, ask people. You want to know what's going on with them? Ask them. I tell you. I said, boys, there's a bother you that I go over to Denver once a week. They said, no, we don't mind if you go. But please make sure you tell us when you're going to get back.

See, the way I change that is from undependable to dependable. I stop being a surprise and start bringing surprises. But there's a need to know. I fly a lot and my wife's afraid of a stepladder. She's never comfortable knowing that I'm in the air. The new behavior, the old behavior was, well, I'll see you want to get back. If I get back, when I get back. No, she has my timetable. She knows exactly what I'm supposed to arrive.

I will call her from the Richmond airport after I check in and I said, we're ready. And when I hit the ground in Denver, I will call her and tell her we're on the ground. And it's just a little thing. It's subtle, but that's a necessary thing. For her comfort, not mine. I'm comfortable. She needs to know that. The people in my life need to know that. You need to know. And so I tell everybody. My home group is known as an AA group and we meet at St. Joseph's Hospital at six o'clock every Friday morning in the aspirin room next to the cafeteria.

Now, if you happen to be in Denver and you're looking for me and can't find me, I'll be there. Or if by chance I'm on the road, they will know when I will be back. My group knows when I'll be back. They're informed too, because I'm a member of that group. I'm a group that does things together. We don't just meet on Friday morning. We're still in our evangelistic stage. We just licked this hospital head nurse into accepting a box of big books from us.

We bought a case of third editions. So she will have them so she can pass them out when she runs across an alcoholic. And she will call us so we can go see her. She has agreed that it would be a good idea. We plan it to see that maybe we could do an incident for the entire hospital staff. We'll bring some couple alcoholics in an hour now with us and do an incident for the staff. Following that we will post a meeting notice in every unit.

And from time to time we'll just drift through and talk with the nurses. This is the activity, this real service. We're trolling for drunks. We know there's one in this hospital somewhere. But it's up to us to go find them. So I became a member of his group. I took it as it was, where it was. Because I didn't have a long experience with working out of the 12 and 12. I've read it. There's pieces of it I like but I don't work out of it.

I couldn't share from that. They would read a piece of the 12 and 12 and then everybody share their experience. I didn't have any. But it was on the steps and I do have experience with that so I share my experience with that. And then Jim came to me one day and said, where did you get that? I've learned to be courteous please. I said, do you really want to know? Yes, I really want to know. So I took my big book out and showed you.

And I said, would you like to hear some more about this? Well, yeah, I would. So the next thing you know, I got me somebody to sponsor it six in the morning. And then four along over five of them. And then pretty soon we were allowed to start a big book. We call it workshop. It's a long term group walk through the steps. Now in half early so it wouldn't take the regular membership. That got going. That's still going.

The group going through the steps together and then going through the regular meeting. See that activity of walking through the steps with the group is not a separate activity. It's an activity for those who would like to do that but you're still going to be part of the main group. Don't want to separate you. We learned that the hard way. We had a step group that did that and then tried to become a group of its own. Within three years it was in bread and died.

New people wouldn't come. We were so good at what we were doing. We just blew everybody off. Don't want to do that. I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I've got to be able to go anywhere in Alcoholics Anonymous and accept them for who they are as they are. So I can be accepted to bring my contribution. We each have a contribution to make the life. Nobody but me can make mine. Nobody but you can make yours. And it's up to me and that's what I mean by change behavior.

I'm not to stir up stuff. With one exception. If you ask me to sponsor you, now I'm compelled to stir up stuff. Tom mentioned it. I gave you information or you gave me information to come unannounced. One of the new ways of changing ways of making amends. I don't ever show up unannounced anywhere. It would never occur to me to stop by your house. Unannounced. How rude. I'll call first and see if you've got anything gone.

Do you mind? And I don't want you doing that in my house either. I do things in AA a certain way as does everybody. When I am asked to share your meeting, I follow your format. Whether I agree with it or not has nothing to do with anything. I'll follow your format. Now after we get into the main meeting, I may become an irritant to you. And maybe not. But I will comply with the conditions of this group. Same thing at home.

We learned to take group conscience by first admitting there is a group here. One of my most fond of amends, I don't think Tom knew about this one yet. Our memories come back slowly over a period of time. That first inventory is always shabby because I don't have enough memory in order of the discernment to know all the stuff that's going on. It comes slowly. Anyway, I've been on the street for about a year and a half.

Which means I was about close to three years sober. Still on federal parole. Working, beginning to be allowed to visit my kids again. Getting back into life. A house father at a place called the Hand of Hope. I told you about that. I had a little two bedroom house with an empty basement where we put drunks on mattresses. And that dignified it with a name. And my memory came back that I'm my last long run. The kids and I were running.

Cheyenne Wyoming. I wrote a check because that's what I did. I'm a paper bandit. It wasn't even real. We had gotten somebody that stole a sample book from a print company that was samples of checks. We were just using them. They were payroll checks. I wrote a bad check in order to get a prescription that I had also written. So then I could be awake enough to get the hell out of Cheyenne. And that memory came back. And I come from the school that says there's no slack.

If I harm you, oh yeah. I must even be wanting to go to prison because my spiritual condition is more important to me than anything. So I must do something about this. I also believe that when the book says if others will be involved, we should consult them. And I have guides. I went to Gary because he wasn't all too smart. But at least he now had a family and he was doing better than I was. And he was my sponsor. And I told him about it and he said, yeah, we got to do something.

But who will be most affected if you go to Wyoming and confess to two more felonies? My federal parole officer, that's him. So now I'm faced with a proposition that I need to consult him. I can't leave the state without his permission. Can you get the feeling? I've got to go tell a federal parole officer about two more felonies I've committed. My old behavior was maybe we can wait a while. No. In this life, everything is immediate.

So Gary and I went down the same. Taught it laid the whole thing out to him. He says, you're right. He's about it. Here's the deal. You have my permission to leave the state. And if they arrest you, I will not violate you. We'll get it taken care of. Because he'd been watching. He knew about it. And I'm the right home guy and I were talking. And he said, it also says in there, you're not to be a foolish martyr or stick your head in the lion's mouth because other people will be affected.

He says, you've got a job now. They're starting to let you see your kid. You're becoming a member of the community. It'll be foolish, you're always just to dash in there. Because you're facing probably seven years. He said, I come from Cheyenne. I know the guy at the Rexall. Let's do this. Let's write him a preliminary letter first and lay the whole thing out. Now, I've got to confess to these things on paper and cite it.

Well, it makes you a little nervous. I did it and sent it off. There's no high-drown man into this because the letter came back. The man had died and the business had shut down. So there wasn't anything I could do there. Then I got to take in a wait a minute. Don't I owe Wyoming something. I committed a crime in there. Jurisdiction. Went back to my parole officer. He said, don't do that. He says, here's what's going to happen.

You're going to go in there and confess to a couple of felonies that they can't prove. Because the records are all gone. You're going to have to deal with nervous policemen. I don't want you dealing with nervous policemen. He said, you just keep living life the way you are. And an opportunity Sunday may come along. Well, it did. The job I had for Thomas to establish and kind of supervise alcohol and drug treatment in 15 prison units.

So I learned how to do that. Took that back home and established the same basic program in a community correction center in Colorado where we took inmates and ran them through a 45-day intensive inpatient. Which is a fancy way for saying we created an arena where you could come and get them. Because we had five speakers a week. The only thing we didn't say. And so we got that going. And about four years ago, they sent me to Cheyenne to establish the same program in Cheyenne.

Got it up and running. Came back a moment. It was about six weeks later it hit me. It's paid. Which was weird. To the best of my knowledge. I'm straight with the world. If I leave today, I'll leave without regret. And I'm straight with the world. There is nobody left to impress. And what a change that was when I realized that. Because I got to see how much of my life is spent trying to impress people. So I'm in the middle of a whole new examination of me.

I don't even want to impress you with a message. Because then you'll attach it to me and it'll be diminished. I just want to carry it. What I'm trying to share with you is that while my life is none of my business. The conduct of my life is entirely my business. I am responsible for my conduct. And that really puts some pressure on. I've got to ask constantly, okay, give me the strength to do the right thing. Because I no longer can claim I don't know the right thing.

I've always known the difference between right and wrong. Today it's acute. And because I know the difference on Facebook the fact that I just were a kid. I don't have the strength to do that. I don't even have the will to go do that. So God uses my ego for his benefit. Oh yeah. Don't discount the wonderful use of human ego. Think about this. You know where I came from. You know I'm lazy. You know I just assumed sitting in my big comfortable chair and listening to Mozart and Reed James Lee Burke novels.

I really would. In 1988 somebody comes to me and says, we would like you to go to Russia and carry the A message to Russia. It was my response, aw shucks. Put me in the game coach, I'm ready. That's a very necessary part of what gives me to the airport. Now once I get there, that's gone. But that gets me to the airport. Don't discount it. I've changed. I'm not the person I used to be, but I'm still a person. I'm not a human being trying to have a spiritual experience.

I'm a spiritual being having a human experience, which makes me totally available to the human experience. Because I really am you. And you really are me. And there is, it's not just an empathy. It's a reality. Where can? What happens to you? One last little deal, because it's pertinent. With that sense of things, I was devastated September 11th. We lost people. Went through all the emotions of that. And you got to know, deep within me, there's our creature.

And there's a meanness in me because of this. I didn't want these people caught and tried. I wanted them caught, covered with pig fat, making me a ham sandwich, then turn them loose and see how they're fair with that. Because they can't get in heaven now. That's pretty mean. That's what's going on in my head. Don't try to wear mayonnaise. And I'm doing the battle that I know most of you have done with that deal. I really don't want to feel that way, but I do.

And one of my guys called and he's having the same problem. What am I going to do? I can't deal with this. He's got the other thing going on and he's trying to fight this whole business. Well, my guidebook says there's a simple deal for this. I'm to realize that people would harm me or perhaps spiritually sick. And I'm to ask God, because I'm too small to do so, please show me how to take a kindly and tolerant view. And I said to Jack, maybe if you and I both pray that together.

There's a promise that if two of us are praying, something really does happen. Let you and I both pray that the rest of the day. He called me the next morning, and he said, I don't know if this is right, and I could hear in his voice he was okay. He said, I had a thought. It occurred to me that a thought had been raised there by those people, with those standards. That had probably been flying when there it is. That's forgiveness.

The understanding that given the right circumstances, I'm capable of anything, sets me free, because now I will do my very best not to not do this, but to do something else that is so positive and so creative and so loving and so different, if this never comes up out of the pit. And I felt better. It made me at peace with that old deal, too. Still don't like it. I think it's awful the way we treat each other. So let's us not treat each other that way.

One of the reasons alcoholics and alcoholics become a worldwide phenomenon is that people observed the restoration of family. They saw families who'd been torn apart and put back together. They saw new families being born out of it. They saw the family of alcoholics and alcoholics. They don't go how far down you've sunk. You're welcome here. In fact, why don't you come sit in the front row? We're slick, too. The making of a man's is

a process by which I continually advance my becoming a part of the human race.

More and more, I fade into more and more places. And that's what it's all about for me is to belong here. I accept you as you are where you are. That means now we can talk. I don't have to agree with you. I don't even have to like you. And I don't like somebody. That's fact. Somebody don't like me either. I don't much give a damn, but that's fact, too. But I will make every effort to cause no more harm. I want to go off and get philosophical.

But it's a constant process. It's not I'm sorry. The addressing of the wrong when I was done is only the beginning of the activity. The thing with my mother was about regular. I go by on a regular basis. One time when I was there, my brother, it took 22 years before my brother and I could get back together. Because what I had done to him was not direct. When he was 19, he was writing music with Stan Kenton. When I was 19, I was in federal penitentiary in Tokyo, Japan.

I was his hero. And I betrayed our dreams. My dreams, his dreams, our dreams. He watched the harm I did to the family. My brother is a straight arrow. He would put together bands and I would sell them marijuana. That comes together. At least he was a trumpet player. Said it took a long time. And he's a very decent man. Very kind, man. So he never, but he was cold. It was clear. We got nothing going on. He watched me for 22 years.

That's how deeply he was heard. Took 22 years for him to even consider. And then he invited my wife and I over for dinner one night. And after dinner, he said, you know, I don't know if you and I are everyone would be friends, Don. But this was nice. We can do this again. Which was the beginning. On one of those trips home, because when I was in North Carolina, I still went home. You got to visit your folks on a regular basis.

My wife would come down here and then I would go back there for a weekend. And I was visiting mom and my brother came in and sat down. We were just chatting. I had my leg crossed like this and all of a sudden kicked me on the bottom of the shoe. He said, you know Don, I'm really glad to see you. And he was shocked because he really was. He said, look, next time you're in town, let you and I go up to the cabin and do a little fishing.

And I'm a listener. That is not what he said. He said, next time you're in town, you and I need to spend a whole day without telephones and eruptions and straighten this out. So we went to the cabin, we spent a whole day doing it. And as the discussion ended, he said to me, you know, there's one other thing I need to tell you, Don. He said, I'm 58 years old and I believe I've made a decent contribution to life. That's important stuff.

You don't just say that to anybody. We have put it back together. And in putting it back together, one of the things we realized, he said to me, we're doing the same thing. He's a very spiritual man. He said, I'm trying to reach people with my music, to touch them at depth, to stir them. They said, and I've watched you. You do the same thing. I use my music as my instrument. You use your mouth as your instrument. But we're doing the same thing.

We don't have much in common, my brother and I. We love each other. We like each other. They're very specific things we do together. But not much. He just got back from Russia and Scandinavia where they took him to teach music for a while. He's the head of the sound engineer's organization and is a very busy man. And

additionally, he writes a symphony every year for Colorado Symphony and just lightweight stuff. He's busy, but I'm busy.

So we get together from time to time. He and my mom came over the other night. Just sit down and have hamburgers. We do that pretty good. I love to go to his shows. He had a spiritual experience with a Navajo one time and was put together a show called Navajo Star War. They have these wonderful stories. And he was touched so much that he wanted to put them to music. And he put together a show that you wouldn't believe.

It starts with the sound of a quasar. Woot, woot, woot. Then he breaks out all the sounds that make up that one sound. If you have a little bit of chaos and that he's an improvisational jazz musician, he begins to pull them all together. And he and his son and girlfriend begin and he narrates the story and you can hear it. Stuff like that. I'm kind of proud of him. But we don't do much together. That's not what it's about.

They're members of my home group. We do a lot of things together. There's other members of my home group. That's about all we do together. They have their own lives to lead. I think I'm about done because I've got about a three hour talk bubbling up on me. Because I really, really wish you could see the world as I see it. And if you'll just keep doing this, you will. But only as much as you want to see. One of the most profound statements I've ever heard was in Nelson Mandela's inauguration speech.

And I can't quote it, but I can give you the essence. Most of us are not afraid of failure. But we're afraid of these, our own excellence. And our job on this planet is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God knows about us. This is from a guy somewhere else and the same thing I hear. My job is to make myself fit so that my magnificence can come out once in a while and touch you so you can go touch somebody else.

And it's a simple thing. It's a healing thing. I do it by changing, by allowing myself to be changed. I love actors because I am one. I watch Bravo's actor studio where they bring the best on and ask them how they do it. I like to listen to them. Chris Walker was on the other night. And whether you like him or not, he's one of the best. James Lipton asked him, Chris, why is it that you think you're a good actor? And he said, oh, I simply make myself available to the material.

That's the essence of my life. I make myself available to the material. In AA words, that means you don't say no to any request. You say yes. Just make yourself available. You all have done that. You're excellent. Oh, you are. Oh, yeah. You're goofy. It's your ex. Is that lay the ground work you want to lay? I think it gets to this right now. I'll tell you. I'll run dry. One thing now, the reason he wants to sit and listen to Mozart is because he doesn't know about cold training.

That's the...