

DON P ARCHIVE

A Design for Living: Traditions and Concepts

2002 | Part 2 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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I think the most important thing that will happen here is when you're talking to each other. So, as long as you're doing that, I will not interrupt. I know it's my turn when you're quiet. Okay? We're ready. A couple things that are of concern to me in relation to this third tradition in today's AA. Any two or more alcoholics gathered for sobriety may call themselves in an AA group. As long as it is a group, they have no other affiliation. They do not have to be registered with G.S.O. They do not have to participate in any way whatsoever with anybody else in AA. As long as it's two or more alcoholics gathered for sobriety, that's a legitimate AA group. By not participating, they miss out on some of the spiritual heritage. Okay? These are not rules or laws, nor do they have to be complied with.

Except that our AA experience has taught all of us that if they don't comply with these, we'll probably fade from the scene. There are no AA police. I know. I have a friend. That's what this says. A membership should never depend on money or conformity. You don't have to conform to anything. It's just that you miss out if you don't. But you may want to miss out. I see things going on here. That I just soon miss out on. I have a friend out in Missouri who's taken the little kids hand-cuffed police kit. I made an AA police kit out of it with the Miranda right. You have a right to call your sponsor. It's kind of cute. I am also concerned at the specialization of certain AA groups.

If I can't attend your meeting, that's not an AA group. Call whatever you want, but don't call that AA. And there is a need for special... Men need to get together men now and men. Women need to get together with women now and men. People who have common lifestyle need to get together once in a while. But AA, we only have one common problem. I do a lot of the work and corrections. I never go to a correction facility to talk to inmates. I go to talk to alcoholics.

And that's why I'm successful at it. Don't ever go try to talk to inmates if you aren't one. They will eat you for lunch. No, we good. So I have some concern in that we're not talking about these things enough. I believe the good health of alcoholics Anonymous always rests on group conscience, which means communication. Which means at the beginning a little tension. We are not people who naturally like tension and confrontation, if you will.

But without tension, everything is static and it just goes... It's the tension between opposing ideas that allows the creative process to occur. I have a piece of an idea and you have a piece of an idea and in trying to get the tolerance between them to be adequate. That's what lets things create. We both come up with a whole idea that way. It's going to be best for all of us. So we need to talk more. I don't want to place this thing anymore than you do. I don't have time nor the energy nor the wisdom to place this deal.

My groups, well, the groups I belong to, the people I hang with, will go along with all this. Whether we like it or not, just because we like it. In relating these back to the first tradition is how I understand whether I understand it enough. I can see how that applies to the welfare of the group as a whole, but I've got a grasp of it. So we're forming up a group. Now we know who can belong. The moose have requirements, the elks have

requirements, the masons have requirements.

Well, AA has a requirement also, because you have a problem with alcohol. And it's even better if you can't seem to do anything about it. I was just thinking of my new guy, 15 years sober he drank. Well, his sponsor died and he had made his sponsor his God. When he died he had nothing to go. And he's a holistic chiropractor and began taking his own herbal remedies all of which are alcohol based and the next thing you always drug. Don't understand why. Love him.

It's three weeks over now. We quit taking herbs. With respect to its own affairs, each AA group ought to be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. Now what are the affairs of your group? What is your group's business? Where we're going to meet, what we're going to talk about, how long that's going to be, who gets to come as an opener closed. That's group business. What do we do with the excess money, which is really small in most groups, because we are cheap.

Group business. Our own affairs. My group's format is step tradition concept, GSR, step tradition concept, GSR. I also go to a group that's a speaker meeting. Although I quit going because I disagree with them on certain principles. It's strong enough that I can't support the group, but I'll tell you where it is, I'll send you down. Hell of a good meeting. I just don't like the group practice. Their format is only one topic. It's a call up meeting.

What you were like, what happened, what you're like now. That's the only topic you can talk about. You have five to seven minutes, and at five minutes the chairperson goes like this to tell you you have two minutes to go, and at seven he gets up and thanks you. And if you're not through, that's just too bad. That's their group conscience. It's a really good meeting because people have learned how to really carry a solid message in seven minutes.

Try that one sometime. I can give you six hours. Don't ask me to do ten minutes. That puts the pressure on. It's wonderful. What did you get? She laughs at everything. This isn't even funny. Let's talk about conscience for a minute. It has to do with how I relate with others. One of the things that drove me totally insane was that I was committing unconscionable acts with a very lively conscience at work, which caused continuing guilt and shame.

That I couldn't deal with so I drank and commit some more of those unconscionable acts, meaning I had no regard for your welfare while I was busy at it. So conscience has to do with relating to one another. How are we going to do that? The first tradition says the welfare of the whole is going to come first. I've got to tell you a funny story. When we took the Russians around this country, in early in May of 98, a group of Russians came here to see how we dealt with alcoholism.

We split them into three teams. It was done under the auspices of a governmental group that was formed, and Dan Anderson from Hazleton put together the team because Dan's the best at what he does. Set up the schedule and got the team. He told them if you don't have some AA people on this trip, we're all wasting our time because he's the best friend AA has outside the fellowship. So three of us, simply because we were on the International Committee, were to be the AA hosts for these three teams. One went up the East Coast, went up the middle of the country, and went up from Disneyland up.

Well, they took them to Disneyland. Not a bad place to take an alcoholic. They fit their home. A couple of

funny things. We got to Chicago on May Day, and we're trying to impress these Russians. They celebrate May Day also. In the United States, the cops won, so we had parades of police. In Russia, the workers won. And we're trying to impress them when we take them into town, and here's the police parading. Took us a day to get over that one.

But after all the other show until we got back to New York, and it was our turn at General Service. That's one of the services that's provided by your General Service office. Put together a presentation on what AA is. And one of the presentations was on the traditions. At the end of the presentation, this Russian sitting next to me nudged me with his elbow and said, you know, what you have here is communism in his purest form. And if you look at it, it is. You want to remember, the Russians were not communists.

They were socialist republics on the way to communism. But anyway, I thought that was funny. We got that. This Russian tank commander and I had difficulty at the beginning. Part of our process is to find common ground. It's the identification. Gotta find some common ground. Language wasn't it. We had to have an interpreter. Anyway, in Chicago, one of the van drivers was an old jazz musician, and I come from a family of jazz musicians.

My brother was riding with Stan Kent when he was 19. And he and I, I got tired of even pretending that I was part of the team with the Russians. Anytime anybody asked a question about AA, somebody else answered it. I was just a luggage carrier. So he and I started just wrapping and having some fun with each other. The tank commander and I, he kind of joined in. Turns out he liked the music, too. Before we were through, he and I had begun talking about family, because there's a common tie.

But we made our breakthrough in our previous occupations. During World War II, he drove a tank that smuggled food and arms into Leningrad through the German blockade. Well, I was a smuggler, too, in 1966. Our products were different, but our jobs were the same. And as a result of finding common ground, we eventually got to where we could talk with each other. Back in New York, I showed him a picture of my wife who, by the way, is gorgeous. Some of you know her.

He said, oh, you should go home. Very dangerous to leave such a lovely woman alone for so long. But our final discussions had to do with, he didn't want his grandchildren killing mine, and I didn't want mine killing his either. So whatever we do, it's life and death. Well, that's common ground for us. We're talking life and death here. And I can't help my kids. You probably can't help yours either. I can help yours if you'll help mine.

So we need to have that commonality, that unifying sense that no matter what the style or the personality, we have common purpose. So group business is to just take care of the group's business, not the group next door's business. We hear a lot of that. Wow, that damn people over there in the east part of Washington for God. You know how... When his plans concerns the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted.

If your group is going to do a radio show using A.A.'s name, I think you ought to let us know you're going to do that so we can discuss that. Because whatever you do is going to, whether you like or not, represent alcoholics anonymous. That includes my group. So if you're going to do something like that, at least let's talk about it before it gets done. And of course, the general service, there's radio and TV spots all the time.

But by group conscience, by discussion, they don't show in your area unless your delegate has said it's okay to show them here. General service produces them, your delegate has the final say so, needs to come to you to be able to decide whether you all want that or not. And some of them are really very good. They don't promote A.A., they just notify people that we're not a secret society. No group, regional committee or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the general service board.

On such issues, our common welfare is paramount. Well that applies my house too. With respect to the affairs of my home, nobody tells us what goes on behind closed doors. That's up to us. We get to play the kind of music we like. We dress the way we like, or not. Finally got all the kids out of the house. I can run around my underwear now. Sometimes. Isn't that an awful image? I'm sorry. There's going to be nightmares all night long now.

If we're going to get animals, because in my house we like animals, we need to consider what kind of animals we're going to get. My neighbor is not all that keen about rattlesnakes. Good example because I've had to learn how to live in a neighborhood. So when we moved in, I've been in the same house by the way, married to the same woman for 26 years now. We haven't even had a fight yet. It's wonderful. We don't always agree, but we don't fight either.

Anyway, when we moved in, I'm from out west. I was brought up with an old idea. Good neighbors or good fences make good neighbors. I like private hedges. I just really do. I grew up with private hedges. And they make a good fence. So I'm going to plant these things. They've got my wife's approval. Down between my neighbor and I and across the front, and then between this neighbor and I. Following this, I went to my neighbor. I said, I plan to put in a private hedge.

When it grows up, how would you like your side trimmed? Because on his side, while it's my hedge, he has to look at it. I need to consult with him about what he'd like that to look like. I'll deal with the front. What's this going to look like? He said, I don't care as long as it's kept neat, but do me a favor. Between the end of your house and the beginning of your hedge, leave enough space where both you and I, when we get to be old, fat men can get through.

Because he keeps the kind of an eye on my place and I keep kind of an eye on his. And if there's something wrong, he needs to be able to have access. That's the application of this in a very practical way. I love my hedges. They're gone now. We had a terrible murder committed in our area. The whole family was killed and nobody knows yet who did it. There's been some other activity. And my wife and my neighbor both got a little nervous that that would be a good place for people to hide just behind those hedges.

Okay? That's substantial unanimity. That's two out of three. The hedges are gone. Except for the one on this side, between me and this other neighbor, because it's rental property and I want something between me and the clampits. But I trim both sides. It's my hedge. Neither myself, my wife, nor any of the children, because we live by this, make any major decisions without consulting the rest of the family. Kids don't go do something that will reflect on the family without checking first and seeing if it's okay.

When we need a car, we make the decision the adults do. We consult with the kids over what kind, because

we tend to get vans, many vans. When you got a bunch of kids and grandkids, it's better to have a minivan than to have a sports car. Kelly would love to have a Ferrari. That's a nice input. It was agreed on at the very beginning of the marriage. The adults each have two votes, and the kids each have one vote. That way we always have a substantial unanimity.

It takes all three of them to outvote me. It takes at least three people to get something going on anything major. Little stuff, how do you want your room to look? Well, Lisa was a neat freak. Kelly was a pig. As long as the doors closed, I don't care. Unless there's things growing there or crawling there, I don't care. She just wants to be messy, that's cool. Lisa wants to be neat, okay. We talked about the music. I'd really love Mozart at any volume, but I particularly like Mozart when only I can hear it, and they have their own music.

So the deal is you can play your music in your room as long as it doesn't get much past your door. That's the volume level we will all agree to if it doesn't get past your door. If you've got to have it louder than that, use earphones. This is not just about rules. This is about kindness, about not being rude. It's about my interaction, my conscience with people. How are my actions going to affect you? If I want to interact with you, I must ask that question.

If I don't give a damn, I don't ask. If I don't give a damn, I'll die. Your group got any great ideas they want to just do. Change AA, please let the board know. Just check with them in case somebody else has already done that and destroyed half a state. Because that has happened, you know. It was a period of time when Massachusetts AA almost went down the tubes because they decided they would not sign slips from Corps of Treatment Centers.

So meetings were formed whose only purpose was to sign slips. And the battle between them almost destroyed Massachusetts AA at one time. Because they didn't talk to each other ahead of time. My group won't sign slips. We just don't. That's our group conscious. We'll show you how to. It ain't that hard. Pick a name, any name. Put the pen to the paper and there you are. Is it cheating? Of course. But we won't sign them. Do you have a stamp?

I used to sign them at the beginning of the meeting at the other group. Give them back to you and have you want to stay? You can if you want to go. But the point is there was no communication. There was no discussion. And somebody got mad and somebody else got mad and it just about tore them apart. I finally got to settle. Each Alcoholics group, Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having one primary purpose. That of carrying its message to the Alcoholic who still suffers.

That's an easy one. What is our message? You're looking at it. A hopeless, helpless Alcoholic. I'm fully clothed and in my right mind tonight. That's my message to people who are suffering. And despite the condition, you can show up. You can laugh a little bit. You can have some fun. But mainly you can show up. And my message is in my life. We just had a really interesting several weeks of discussion because a fairly new girl brought up, how do I pick a sponsor?

Good question. And she came to the conclusion on her own because she's getting a lot of information. I think what I better do is look at their life. How are they living? Do they keep their commitments and they tell the truth? Are their kids okay? What's their life look like? If I'm having marital problems, I don't want to go to the guy

who's in the middle of his seventh divorce. I will. Unless somebody guides me the other way.

Rather picks somebody that has a successful marriage. If I want to salvage mine, if I want to stay sober, I go to somebody who's been sober for a while. I'm 34 years sober currently and my mentors are 48 and 50. They're going blind and they're getting old. So am I. I want to know how do you stay sober 50 years? The L says, we'll have a long time and don't drink. That's so simple. Now that kind of wisdom also one morning when we had breakfast decide we're going to have soft boiled eggs and you put them in the microwave and blew the door right off the microwave.

So my mentors are not gods of any kind. Do those relate back to the first one? Can you see how that promotes unity? Within the group first, then my group and your group and the next guy's group. And then a whole area. And that's why we begin to have these assemblies so we can get together for common purpose. The problems of money, property and authority may diverse my primary purpose. No kidding. Both in the group and at home.

Anytime we get more than \$10, we got to figure out what to do with it. So my group just stays broke. It's a whole lot easier. We have our money budgeted. The first amount of money goes to our GSR. The first hundred bucks goes to the GSR to pay expenses for the assembly. Then we budget \$10 a quarter to GSO, \$10 a quarter to our central office, \$10 a quarter to our district. Although we cut the district off for a while because they were sending excess money to GSO.

We give it to them to do district work with, not to give away. And that changed. We don't have any problem with money because we make sure we don't have a whole lot. There's no prestige at six o'clock in the morning in a hospital. You know, big deal. I mean, it sounds like a big deal getting up. It isn't. There's certainly no prestige there. In fact, we're so cheap. We used to go across the street and have breakfast at seven bucks.

We found out for two. We can get about the same thing in the cafeteria. So we're going to the cafeteria now. And we're 12 stepping a guy in the cafeteria. Street guy, obviously a street guy. Roy, how would the pink can be involved? The pink can. Do you all know what the pink can is? No. It's a separate little can with a cute little pink wrapper on it. Its whole purpose is to have money to buy literature for corrections.

It has no other purpose. It's four corrections and four literature. The idea is that this can is not passed, at least where we come from. It just sits there. And people are told that's what it's for. And you put anything you want to put in there, just whatever. And every now and then, that is sent to our area of corrections chair, who is in touch with the facilities and knows the needs and supplies them with primarily big books and other literature that they may request.

It's announced that the can isn't passed. An interesting thing, when we first started that in Colorado, the area budget at that time was around \$28,000. The first time we, first year we had the pink can out, it raised \$14,000, a good half of that. And I got to thinking about that. The pink can probably follows our tradition of self-support, better than anything else. It has a specific AA purpose. And that's why it draws the money.

People are reluctant to give something to the budget. They'll give at least half that much freely, because it has a specific AA purpose. Now, we've run into a problem. It raises too much money now. That pink can raises so

much money that there's enough in there to buy a big book for everybody in our prison system. And they're not all alcoholics. So we're having to once again take a look at what are we going to do? We don't know yet. It's still under discussion.

But it does fall in with this. There's no argument about it. It's four corrections. Specifically. One area tried it was for treatment, and it didn't work. The whole idea is that people in a correctional facility have neither the money nor the availability to get the literature. In treatment they do. They charge them for some pretty healthy amounts of money. So it didn't work. AA people are not stupid. Just dumb. So we think any property or any considerable property of genuine use should be separately incorporated.

And so set apart that if the groups need to just abandon it, they can. So clubs and activities of that nature should be separated. 1311 York Incorporated is a place at 1311 York Street in Denver. It's a separate corporation. It's a clubhouse. They have a kitchen, a sitting area, and they have some video poker games and stuff and things. But AA groups meet there. They pay rent. And they meet there. And they structure yourself.

They don't like what's going on. They can leave. If you want to be a club member, you have to pay \$10 a month dues. That gets you into the kitchen and the sitting area into the poker machines. If you're an AA member and want to go to a meeting a half hour before the meeting and a half hour afterwards, you can hang out. Otherwise you have to have a membership. New people get their first 30 days paid for. It's all clear.

But it's separated. It's clearly separated. We found early on, Bill found out you can't mix it all. You know, Bill is a great promoter and Dr. Bob. The great joy is that if Bill had been in charge, we'd be dead by now. And if Dr. Bob had been in charge, we've all had to go to Akron in order to get the message. It took both of them to come up with a balance. If Bill wanted a string of hospitals across the country, he had failed utterly in raising money.

And think about that. You won't think about how God works. They got an audience with John D. Rockefeller, a very philanthropic man and gave away more money than I'll ever make. He decided, I'll not give this thing money. It'll spoil him. Gave him five grand to pay off Dr. Bob's mortgage and a small drawing account that was managed by a church because we couldn't even be trusted to manage the account. Riverside's church doled the money out to him.

So Bill had access to all the Rockefeller's friends, and some of them believed that they should help raise money. And they went to all of John D's friends with the doors being flung open and couldn't raise a dime. And these are good con men. These are the best of the best. You know, here's a drunken stockbroker who can still sell stock when he's in DTs for God's sake, and he can't raise a dime. So we learned from that.

But he wanted a whole string of hospitals across the country. And you remember Rule 62 of the place they, I mean they built one. A on the ground floor, lawyers on the second, detox on the third, clothing on the fourth, and this was a going concern. And damn they're destroyed us. Rule 62 is don't take yourself so seriously. There were 61 rules, and they were getting in the way, and that came out of that rule. 62's don't take yourself too seriously.

There were numbers of them. I suggest you read A comes of age, more better read Dr. Bob and the good old timers. Our history is just filled with these little incidents that brought us to these. This is A experience. What do

we need money for? That's the question that my group has. What do we need money for, and how much do we need? Our needs are very simple in my group. We need to buy our agreement with a hospital, one case of big books, every six months.

That's our round. And we will supply them with any literature that they may wish, and we've given them a literature list. That's free. That's above and beyond. We will do any, we'll talk to their people in detox. That's part of the deal. We get the fresh drugs. We're going to get to do the end service. So what do we need money for? We need enough for a case of books. And I got to tell you the truth. We sandbagged them on the last one.

When the fourth edition came out, I don't know if you know it or not, but you could buy third editions at a bucket piece. So we bought six cases. Because first of all, we didn't want to use the fourth edition until they took that stupid statement out about electronic meetings, which is gone now, by the way. It's gone. They got their case of big books, and we just gave the rest of them away. I still have half a case left if you need a big book.

So under normal prices, what is that? About \$3.75 a book by the case. Three bucks a book by the case, roughly. If you buy it through your group, your group can buy directly at the deepest discount we have. You can buy fourth editions of their five dollars a piece, 20 in a case. So that's a hundred bucks. So we may need a hundred bucks. We need a hundred dollars for our GSRs expenses. We know from experience that a hundred dollars will cover them.

The way we do our assemblies, they're spread around the state, and that will cover them because we all work together. Two or three of them will ride together. They'll room together. This is not a vacation. So we need... There's 200 we need every six months. 300 every six months. Now we know we don't have anything else. We buy the coffee at the cafeteria. So that's all we need money for. Now we know how much is going to be too much.

We keep a prudent reserve. I think it's \$10 right now. As of our last... We don't want to get too rich. At 15 we start arguing about what we're going to do with us. We kind of found the managers of these clubs while the clubs structurally should be separated. It's better to have AA managers because they understand the clientele. And there are some new things coming up, and you'll probably enter into these discussions and you'll get to solve them by these principles.

CA and NA have become fairly strong. And we need to cooperate with them. While we can't affiliate, we need to cooperate because some people really are both alcoholic and cocaine addict. Some are and some aren't. We need to cooperate with each other so that if an alcoholic falls into cocaine anonymous, they can send them over to us. And if a cocaine addict falls into AA, we can send them on over there. Not just say go to CA.

In Denver, we solve the problem we think, our drug problem fairly well because we started sponsoring the CA people through the big book. They had spiritual awakenings of their own. They said they were coming to see us because we had a strength they didn't have. Now they have it. So CA is getting stronger and stronger in Denver, and there's cooperation in and out. They don't have a problem. We don't have a problem. And it's helpful.

But a lot of clubs now are beginning to hold in addition to AA meetings, Al-Anon meetings, CA meetings,

any meetings, OA meetings, and there's problems developing. And I'm not sure how to solve them except through the principle, but you're going to be faced with that. It's coming up the coast if it isn't already here. On Los Angeles, they even have a couple conventions that are structurally put on by a combination of all three organizations.

And they're failing. There's a principle here. We only do one thing well. We'll cooperate with our friends. We need to be careful. And I don't want to lose an alcoholic who may also have a cocaine problem, but I can only deal with the alcohol problem. I've never had cocaine. It just doesn't matter. I do know about alcoholism. Anyway, we'd like to have AA managers for these clubs because they know the clientele. And they can also be pushed around by the AA groups, if need be.

Okay. Oh, yeah. We have no problem telling them if we move, you're out of business, but... So two things a little different here. I don't want to get too far off into that. I'm trying to lead us to the concepts. We're going to spend most of tomorrow with the concepts. This foundation I find is necessary. The AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. That's really important.

The voluntary contributions of their own members. Here's a concern I have. I was sitting at a meeting watching a new guy, just ten years ago. And he's fiddling around, and I can hear the change in his pocket, and I figure that's probably all he's got. Let me get in his shoes for a minute. What's going to go on here? Because I know this group, right in the middle of somebody's talk, the last guy he was talking, they're going to pass the basket, which is rude to start with.

Okay, let him finish. But this basket's going to go around with no explanation of whatever about what it's for. And I'm going to see everybody putting a buck in the basket. And I got 57 cents, and I still have to eat tonight. And somebody told me that I'm supposed to make 90 meetings in 90 days, but there's no do's or fees. It's for free. It doesn't take a rocket sign as to know that if this is what's going on, it's going to cost me 90 bucks in the next 90 days, to belong to this thing.

And all it would take would be an explanation as to what the money's for. And in some of the groups I attend, we tell the new people, don't put anything in the basket, yeah? You're not a member yet. So they don't lose face over not having enough money. You just not a member yet. Give it a little time. And when you decide you want to be a member of the group, then you can put something in. I have another concern in that because there's shortage in funds at different levels of our service structure, there tends to be a need to coerce the membership into giving more money.

Since the dollar isn't worth what it was in 1940, that's all put in too. That's not a voluntary contribution. I may put in five. I may only put in one. What I know about AA is that we don't need a whole lot of money to do a whole lot of stuff. Sell the damn literature. If we were fully self-supporting, he could give those away. If we give big books away, you know the cost of that is to make up the deficit every year.

Alcoholics Anonymous is not self-supporting. Your group may be, but Alcoholics Anonymous comes up from \$150,000 to \$200,000 short every year from contributions because only half the groups give anything to the general service conference. We did a survey in the 1986 or we ran some numbers. If every registered AA member gave just a buck and a quarter more a year, we'd be fully self-supporting if they'd sent it directly in.

So we have to take the money from the book revenues to make up the deficit for group services. If that were a zero thing, the books would be free if we were truly self-supporting. How's that working home? Well, everybody has to be self-supporting, but I can't put the three-year-old out on the street trying to bring in, well, I'd like to sometimes. So I have to take a look at this beyond just money. The contribution needs to be more than money.

In my group, do I contribute? Do I contribute my little piece of a message? Do I contribute some of my time to clean up, to set up? What's my contribution to the group? And is it voluntary? This saved Chuck's life one time. I sponsored a nasty little man. God, I'll talk more about him later, but nasty little man. He didn't like AA people either. Ever. But he and I started hanging out. He dared me one time to say anything meaningful.

He said, don't give me a big book crap. I've tried that and it didn't work. So we just hung out together. And I became his only friend. He would not call me sponsor. Didn't like the word and didn't like sponsors, period. But I was his friend. We could do that. I'd write it. He rode with me for about a year. Got to our meeting. Chuck and I began to set up. I know something about the healing process. It starts by you becoming useful in some way.

So he and I would set up and make the coffee. And eventually I could see he can handle the coffee now. This is about six months down the road. So he was doing a coffee and I did a set up. And at the meeting that night, a lady who was ten years sober came in really angry because her son had just died from an overdose of drugs. And she was pissed. And she started attacking AA in general. And then she started attacking me because I was the chairperson.

And she had known me for ten years. I knew she could beat me up and I wouldn't care. But I watched Chuck. I'm the only friend he's got. And she started attacking me and I see him coming up out of the chair. And this is not a man you want coming up out of the chair after me. He spun her knee, spun her knee, spun her knee. I finally said, oh screw you lady and out the door he goes. He's gone. I did not chase him. He and I had an agreement at the very beginning that if this didn't work this time, he reserved the right to drink one more time because he was going to go drink himself to death.

That's the deal. I will never chase him. A couple of other group members went out after him. And after the meeting was over, he came back in with him. And he was back there muttering. He cleaned up the coffee. Just, oh it was cute. On the way home, he was quiet for a good part of the ride. And then he said, you know I was going to go drink. I said, yeah I know. We made the deal. Remember, see I remember. He said, I got to thinking I'm going down to the satire and I'm just going to get drunk.

And I made that coffee and it's my job to clean it up. So I'll clean it up for then I'll go drink. Come on back in, cleaned up the coffee and he says, well he's muttering in his head. My job. This is my group, that's why it's my job. This is my group. I'm not letting that bitch run me off. That's a spiritual awakening. His contribution kept him alive when his ego would have killed him. So it's not just the money. The contribution is important.

So the kids have to make a contribution or they don't feel they're part of the house. Kids are just little people. They have the same need. So we have always tried, there are certain house chores that need done. You don't take the garbage out because it's a mean thing. That's a privilege. I'm willing, I've been doing it, but I'm willing to let you do it for a while. Because I think you can probably handle it better than I can even.

Or some con. You've got to con. You better be able to do that good to get somebody even into the second step for goodness sake. Here's the contribution you can make. It means on my part, once you've made a contribution, I do need to recognize you for it. Not to pump your ego up, but just to recognize, good job. Good job. We all need that. I don't ever think we, anyways, ever outgrow the need for that. The dollar that my groups, or the \$10 that my group sends to GSO makes us as much apart as the group that sends \$10,000.

It's just the carrier of our message to GSO. We're part of this deal. Do you know that the groups that don't send anything get exactly the same services as the groups that do? Because of this principle. Part of my contribution is to speak sometimes. Sometimes my contribution is to be quiet so you can. Everybody needs to be heard. So I run this one back through, sure enough. It tracks all the way back through the group conscience, the group participation, the self-support.

You do what you can. And what you can is good enough in this outfit. Just keep doing it. And you'll rise to it. I want to be like her. I want to be like him. Oh, okay. Well, here's what they did to get there. And I don't want to over talk that one. Make your contribution. Chuck made a great contribution. People all over the country wonder about Chuck. He, uh, I'll tell you a little bit about him. His contribution to me is that he softened me.

I was at a time in my life where I was a big book fanatic, a step Nazi, a tradition Nazi, and a concept Nazi. You didn't do it just exactly this way. You just weren't doing it right by God. You ever been there? Yeah. It's automatic. Chuck couldn't do any of that. Walked into my life because he was the psychopath nobody else could deal with. So they sent him to me. It's about this tall little guy. When he walked in the room, people backed up.

He didn't have to say anything. He just put out that kind of energy. Dared me to work with him. No big book stuff. For a year we could do nothing. I'd have him come by the house every day. We'd go home business and I'd just put him in the van and we'd go do what needed Chuck at spew hate and I'd just let him talk. Yeah, what are you going to do? We came by my house one day and my wife had made chocolate chip cookies.

That was her contribution for the day. And she gave us each one. You got to understand cookie makers. They test you first. See if you're worthy. I ate that cookie and I quivered. She makes pretty good cookies. And even Chuck says, that was good. So she gave him a whole bag. That's what cookie makers do. Once you pass the test, Chuck. We got in the car and he said to me, built my heart. He said, seriously, why would she give me a bag of cookies?

That's how he saw himself. And I was able to just say, well, Chuck, it's because she thinks you remember the family. And that's the day I actually watched him change. He had become part of something. And it was the only little thing. He had one friend and now he had a little family. And then he began to get into the group. Okay? And his contribution was to spew hate. People worried about him for a long time. Could not grasp with the God thing.

A long story. What I want to tell you is that after we finally got through the steps. Because we did. And some things changed in him. About the same time his father had died and left him a little bit of money. We got all of his amends paid off his financial amends. Chuck was a chronic unemployed. He'd had 247 or 48 jobs up at that point. He was currently unemployed again. And men were paid. He had a new truck and he had about \$2,000 left over.

And he came by and he said, there's one last thing I haven't told you. Because every time I tell anybody they've laughed at me. He said, all I've ever wanted to be was an actor. And I thought, my God, okay. I said, look, you got no job. You got a new truck. You got a couple grand. And you've also never played. And you said you wanted to go to Disneyland. Why don't you drive out to Disneyland and spend a couple of weeks.

And while you're there, I'll call some actors I know. And we'll let them tell you what the price you're going to have to pay is. Because they're priced for everything. And see if you really want to do that. So I hooked him up with one of the guys on Murphy Brown. And they're out at the studio on a little tour. And they run into the producer of the show. I understand he's only been there a week. And my friend introduced him to the producer and said, Chuck would like to be an actor.

The producer says, well, we can use him right now as an extra. Just have him show up tomorrow morning. So he's on the Murphy Brown show one week after he hits Los Angeles. Call me and said, what's going on here? So my contribution with Chuck was to get softer and to just listen. Because he was a wounded animal and needed nursing before we could give him a program. The essence of the program is the love one alcoholic has for another.

And these principles keep me pointed in that direction. Let him make his contribution. My God, the group worried about him for a year. They got out of themselves once a week wondering what's he going to do tonight. We also worry about a group accumulating too much money because then there's the feudal disputes over what are we going to do with it. Our principle is sufficient operating funds plus a prudent reserve. That's one of the concepts and that's part of what we want to do.

Keep enough so that if something should happen, how long does your group need to be in business? How much rent money are you going to have to have if nothing comes in for x amount of time? If nothing comes in for more than three months in my view, the group's dead and might as well just die. But for three months if something should happen, we can pay our rent. We can meet our expenses and continue to meet. If it gets to bed, we can't pay the rent.

Come to my house. I'll come to your house. We'll trade the meeting around. We can do things with it. We needn't worry about money. Well, you're putting the pressure on me. You just keep looking at me. No, everybody except you. You laugh. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fee or for hire. In the big book, it also mentions that our effectiveness would not be improved if I get into professionalism.

I had to face this one. In 1992, one of my heroes and spiritual guides asked me if I would come to North Carolina and go to work for the Department of Corrections, establishing an alcohol and drug treatment behind the walls of 15 penitentiary units. That's professional. Am I losing it? Okay. Better? It's tight in with a sabbatical. Along the way, there are spiritual things happen. And at the time he asked me, I was in my second month of interferon treatment for hepatitis C, and I didn't feel good.

I had to leave my home and my friends and my group and everything I knew to go into the south where they don't even speak English and try to do a job I knew nothing about. But when you follow God, you just follow. You just do what you got to do. Speak up. Oh, they don't. They speak Southern. It's close to English, but it's

Southern. So I'm walking this tightrope. I'm involved in establishing an operating alcohol and drug treatment.

But this is so clear, because I didn't do any counseling. I was in an administrative and sales position. I set it up, managed it, administrative, and hired people to do the work. As long as I don't get into the work itself, I'm okay. But from time to time, I was asked to do training on the steps for the peer counselors. Part of our program is based on AA was that the peer counselor and the professional counselor, the peer counselor did most of the work, because they could identify.

This was inmate counselors working with inmates. So I learned how to do a didactic lecture without getting into counseling alcoholics. My favorite was, well, they told me when I first got here I could learn to live a life that made sense to me. I did a little lecture where we'd get a board, and on one side is what makes sense, and on the other side, what doesn't make sense. And Roy would tell me one thing that didn't make any sense, and another thing that did make sense.

And pretty soon we had a list develop, and then I just sandbag them. How much time are you spending over on this side, and how much on this side? You say it makes sense to be with your family? Where are you today? And we then got into some dialogue to get them thinking that I got the hell out of there and let the counselors have. I cannot be a counselor. Some people can, I can't. It's just my makeup. It suggests that AA groups for sure don't counsel.

It gives me a tip on sponsorship. I'm a really hard-nosed sponsor. We will do it the way the big book says if I sponsor you. But I'm not a crisis counselor. In fact, I told one at the end of the day, after his sixth crisis call. Crisis counselors get \$100 an hour. And here's the list of them. I'll give you the list if that's what you want. If you want to work the program, come on over. I am interested in you. I'm not the slightest bit interested in your high drama.

It's going to change tomorrow anyway. And I've learned the hard way, if I get involved with it and give you any advice at all, as soon as it changes, I'm the bad guy. Which job should I take? The first one that'll pay you. She's getting ready to throw me out. She should, the way you're treating her. My car just broke down. What am I going to do? Get a tow truck. I don't know. But if you want to know how to deal with a disappointment and the frustration and the anger, come on over and we can go through this and deal with that.

And then every now and then, one of you slips by and I get involved in your high drama and sure as hell, I end up with the scars. Do you feel the beginnings of a surge, a kind of a passion coming out of this? Because it's going to lead you to where you have to do more than just go to meetings. And that's where the rest of the traditions and all of our concepts will take you. You've got to do more than just show up at meetings.

And I need principles to guide me there too. Before I took the job in North Carolina, I consulted with my wife. Any major decision that I make, I check with three people by the way. Because I know I'm going to pick one that'll tell me what I want to hear. It's just a given. I'm going to check with my wife because any major decision I make will have a profound effect on her life. And then I check with one of numerous spiritual advisors that I keep at hand.

And I pray about which one of them is going to be because the spiritual advisors I keep at hand have a

tendency never to give me answers. They give me the question that I would not have thought of. And once I get the right question, the answer is clear. So North Carolina, I consulted her and she said, well, you know, you can't not go. So that answers that. I talked to Yale about it. He's only 48 or 49 years over now.

He just laughed. He says, why are you even asking me? Well, there's the question. He's right. Well, I'm asking him. It's my life, not his. I don't need to ask him whether he would go or not. That's what I'm really trying to say. Would you go? He can't see. Of course he wouldn't. So we're about running this night to death. You getting close to running out of tape? Oh, I'm getting close to running out of steam. I finally have a bit of a vision of what we're going to do here.

I hope you've kind of gathered that we're moving toward something. This is not legalistic. This is passionate. This is spiritual. This is life and death stuff. Primarily life stuff. Now that I have recovered, the experience I had was a unifying experience. I'm now together with me and with you. And like any spiritual event, once it happens, I have to be careful not to believe that the event is the reality. It's just an event.

I must not preserve this. I must continue to do certain things so that we'll enhance it and it will grow. It's like a pond. A high mountain pond. If it doesn't have an inlet and an outlet, it will soon grow green scum on it. It can be the prettiest thing you ever saw. But after a while sitting stagnant, it gets stagnant. I love beaver dams because they have an inlet and an outlet. And those waters are always so clear you can see the bottom.

Because it moves in and out. And that's kind of how these principles are for me. My friends in Texas used to say this is for fun and for free. Can I do that at home? Can I do that on my job? I don't know why not. Got some stories to tell about that. But I learned here. I got out of the pay matrix years ago. I haven't looked for a job for it. The last one I looked for was 30 some odd years ago. I'll tell you about that one tomorrow.

I got a job because I was a drug smuggler. Yeah. Went to work for a company that didn't hire ex-cons. I'm not an ex-con. I'm a man who's been to prison. And eventually, after hiring me through a daily labor pool, they finally put me on their payroll. Which meant I had to write out an application. And they wanted to know my job history. Well, in 1966, I was a drug smuggler. So I put that in there. You know, it's a job.

And they never read them anyway, but you all taught me to be completely open. About six months later, I'd been working on the dock loading trucks and the dispatcher called me and had my application and he had a funny look on his face. Said, did you really do that? And I said, yeah, I did. He said, did you get it through? And I said, yeah, I did. He said, well, I've been thinking. We got this little delivery truck that delivers paper to the print shops in downtown Denver and then goes out on these coal facts with sacks.

And it's a tough little route. It seems to me you have the skills it takes to get stuff from here or there under harsh circumstances. You want the job? So I got my first truck driving my job. Anyway, thank you for this evening. I hope we get some more real stuff done tomorrow. I'm just a storyteller.