

DON P ARCHIVE

Big Book Weekend

2003 | Part 2 | Reading edition

FORMAT	DURATION	RECORDING ID
Transcript PDF	01:19:50	DP-2003-CAMDEN_02

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

Did y'all sleep at all? Let me see the hands of the snorers. Did y'all get enough to eat? These guys are something, aren't they? If my experience has taught me anything at all, the experience of life is different. For everybody. It's a matter of perception, a matter of attitude, a matter of viewpoint. Truth is truth, but we all come at it in different ways at different times. So there is no right or wrong. There's only what it is. Last night we had an interesting event. The bat showed up. Now, that meant different things to different people. For some people, there's the fear of the bat.

So, getting into the hair, for some people there's not knowing what the bat's going to do. For others it has a very specific significance. And would you share your perception with us? Give her a microphone over here. Would you mind using that? Don't mean to embarrass her, but identify with her experience. Well, I wasn't afraid of it. It was like, I knew it was a good sign. It was kind of like some people might see a dove or something. And so I went home and I read my book back while home last night was attended.

And one of the ironic things was when I went to open it up, I keep a feather in it from the last place I was at. And a month ago I read my cards because I like Indian things. And it was on the bat. And so it is rebirth. And he, Don had talked about psychic healing last night. And what in the reading what it told me was it is about a shamanistic death and the death of old ideas in the south and beliefs. And the re-emergence of new ideas and beliefs and that you must heal yourself before you can help anybody else and go out and help heal other people. So the back kind of came from here. I just thought that was cool.

It's a nice omen. I just got back from Calgary. I'm still talking like a Canadian. So I came to understand that I have a body that's different than the non-alcoholic body. Dr. Silkworth, medical doctor, likened it to an allergy. Bill Manson is whether we agree with that or not. It's a good analogy. My body responds differently to this particular substance than does a non-alcoholic. Which means it will have describable symptoms. And they are described here.

There are several of them. One is the craving that I develop after I take one drink of alcohol. I develop a craving for more alcohol. And this is physical. And it also becomes mental. My mind changes. It goes on to share with us that that would be academic if we never took a drink. That would never happen. So when I say I recovered from that symptom because I don't drink alcohol, I don't exhibit that symptom. I don't get a craving for alcohol that comes after the first drink because I don't take the first drink.

This means that I'm cured of that. In fact, the longer I'm around, the more certain I am that that's gotten worse, not better. And the alcoholic that seems to continue on. The reason for saying that is I'm watching people with 25, 30, 35 years of sobriety drink again. Now young relapses keep coming back. People who start drinking after a long period of time don't get back. They're dead within weeks. Then there's another group of AA members that I'm watching sadly with long term sobriety who truly drinking is no longer an option. That's gone.

But they're blowing their brains out because the pain has become too much. And I'm concerned about that.

And I watch and I talk and I listen. And it seems to me the main reason that that occurs is that they stop doing the things that are necessary to remain in fit spiritual condition, which means remain in tune with other people. Yeah, there's a lot of that. Some of them stop going to meetings. Some don't. Some go to meetings until they shoot themselves.

And I understand that. I've been to some meetings where I left wondering. The main thing I notice that they stop doing is stop working with other people and stop giving it away freely. And that's consistent with my bullshit sifter. From the very beginning, the second sentence in the beginning of this book is that we show others precisely how we recover. Working with others is what this is about. And from the very beginning, we're taught in this book how to do that.

I still get live 12 step calls. I presume you do too. Fresh meat is always available. And I like to take some fairly new people because quite often a new person will not identify with me. I'm 35 years sober. That's not even possible. I must either be lying or it's I wasn't really an alcoholic or whatever. But somebody knew who still got a little bit of shakes. How'd you stay sober today? So in my continuing to try to grow in understanding of effectiveness, how can I stay today so that I can be heard by the new person?

And that will be part of our challenge this weekend to grow in effectiveness and understanding. But the main problem of the alcoholic center is in the mind. When it comes to alcohol and several other things, I do not learn from experience. I just don't. It's a very poor teacher in some areas because I don't learn. I have a forgetter that is on duty full time. It will come time. One of the ways our kind of insanity is described is that I will sometimes not be able to bring into my consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the last time that this occurred.

It just won't show up. One of my old mentors put it this way. You can't solve the problem with the problem. You've got to solve the problem with the answer. Well, if my problem centers in my mind, I probably ought not try to use that too much, but it must be a part of things. If things don't make sense to me, I'm not going for it. The human condition is one of a need to understand. I want to know why. If my thinking is lifted to a little different plane, understanding why it has not become, it isn't done because if I don't understand, it's a threat to me.

Most of the time, when I'm growing up, I'm trying to learn things so I can protect myself against what I think is a hostile world. And that's what my character defects are, mainly. My defense is against what I think is a hostile world. This isn't a hostile world. I hear funny things and I might as well get them out of the way so that you can either challenge me or accept it or go home, whatever. I do not understand living life on life's terms. Life doesn't make any terms. Only people make terms. In my experience, I make the terms.

That's either a danger or a good sign. People who wear white hats are either okay or they shouldn't be allowed in polite company. Our prejudices are ridiculous. They come down to stuff like that when it gets right down to it. It's a pre-judgment. That's what prejudice is. We'll cover some of that. So I was brought to understand that my problem is so severe that there is no human power that can solve this. My sponsors were very clear. You cannot have my God. I cannot even share my God with you all.

I can share our stories about how I see it play out. I can't define God. Probably not even use the word except it seems to be the right word. It means so much. It means nothing. Because of the way everybody looks at it. On the other side of that, because it means nothing, it means everything. That's Buddhist as hell, isn't it? I like doing

stuff because when you run out of smart things to say you can throw one of those out in your office.

I drank alcoholically from the time I started drinking. Which simply means I was out of control from the beginning. I had never had any control over the amount I drank. And I quite honestly never tried to stop drinking. I did try to control the drinking. When I came out of the Navy, when I was 19, within three months I had also drunk myself out of a good job. I was a mainframe man for what was in Mountain Bell, a telephone company.

I really love the work. I have one of those meticulous little minds, and here's these thousands of connections up here. And I get to make them. And this was fun. It was particularly fun to make a connection which was illegal and we can't listen in on what's going on, the party mind. Nothing serious going on. I just have one of those inquisitive natures. If I came to your house the first place I go is your bathroom so I can look in your medicine cabinet.

And it isn't that I want your stuff. I want to know what you're taking. It tells me a whole lot about who you are. I'm just curious. One of my favorite phrases came from a kid that I sponsored. As we went through the big book he would say, why would I want to do that? And I got it. That's my life question. Why would I want to do that? And I'm not being bludgeon. I'd like to know why. I'm willing to try it. That's the other side of my nature.

Whatever it is, let's give it a shot. But I kind of like to know why I'd want to do that. Are you one of those out front guys? The cliff's only 40 feet high. Let's see how many of us can survive this one. Me first. We go. The human condition is one of duality. I don't want to get all philosophic, but it is about duality. It is about the human condition. Little human animals compete naturally. They're in training. There's upsides and there's downsides.

There's rights and there's wrongs. There's this whole duality. The spiritual life is one of unity. So those have to be coupled here. If we're going to want to live this way, it becomes a very interesting thing. Because I am in the human condition, but I'm a spiritual being. How do I learn to live with that? And one of the things this book shows me is how I learn to live with that. What I'm reading up to is this. This book talks about the destruction of self-centered as being absolutely required. My main problem is self-centeredness.

That's the root of my trouble. It does not say the death of self. It says death to self. In essence, I've taken the keys to the car away from the five-year-old. Didn't get to drive anymore. But you always want a five-year-old on the trip with you. I mean, have you ever... I've ridden with some adults. What a pain in the neck. They just want to get there, wherever the hell there is. I come from the West, where we have miles and miles and nothing but miles and miles.

And we would take trips across this great expanse. My dad would pull us out of school and take us to Carlsbad or out onto the desert. I can remember we'd drive along. One time in particular, this one was fresh, but still, we were headed for Los Angeles because he had business to do in Los Angeles. And I couldn't have been maybe 10 or 11 somewhere in there. And if we're driving across the desert, suddenly there's this big hand-painted sign.

Ten miles. See the two-headed calf. Yeah! A two-headed calf. Yeah! And a mile down is another sign. Nine miles to go, crippled monkey. Ain't that even slow down? Now, this trip's getting interesting. At eight miles. Eight miles. Baby rattlers. Ooh! See the eagle at five miles. Are we there yet, Dad? Slow down, Dad. And then

you come to this god-awful sign. Huge, big red arrow with yellow borders. Desert Museum. Two-headed calf. Half-mile down this way.

Turn, Dad, turn! You got to talk him into it. He wants to get to L.A. I want to see the two-headed calf. We got down to the end of the road and, sure enough, there it was. Old desert Scotty, who is a con man, by the way. All good people are con men. Yeah, the most spiritual of all are con men. Did you ever see a picture of his hole in us at Dalai Lama? That's a shit-eaten grin. He said, little like Logsane, says, you want to get serious?

Read my book if you want to get serious. You want to have some fun, come talk with me. Anyway, sure enough, there is a two-headed calf. It's stuffed. Probably the extra head was sewn on somewhere. I don't know, but it may have been real at one time. And there were baby rattlers. In a little box, there were some baby rattlers. This guy is slick. Out back, he had a real rouse and I could pin. Old decrepit. The eagle was molting.

There was a crippled monkey. I'll never forget the crippled monkey because I identified with the crippled monkey. But the thing I knew for sure, absolutely without doubt, is that I needed to stay here and help Scotty with this museum. That was my destiny. Just leave me. I'll be fine. Me and Scotty will do fine. Without that youngster, the trip would have just been a trip. The youngster makes a journey. The curious one, the one that is no hurry to accomplish anything.

But if you don't have an adult, you end up staying out on the desert with a two-headed calf. You've got to have an adult to say, this was fun. We've got to get back on the road now. We do have some things to do. And that's the balance that I see living the spiritual life in the human condition. Never, ever pass up an opportunity to see the two-headed calf. But remember, we do have things to do. And the journey must continue.

And we can all go home now. That's all I've got. I love that story. Yeah, I'm going to tell that again someday. So there's this sensitivity that I brought to alcohol. The other side was the terrible fear. And the sense that I can remember laying in bed 13 years old crying. The cupboard's over my head. Wondering when my people were going to get back from outer space and pick me up. Because it had become obvious to me by the time I was 13 that I'd been dropped off on the wrong planet.

I've been listening to human beings talk. I didn't think like they did. I didn't feel like they did. My responses to life were not... I tend to laugh at funerals and cry out hockey games. I'm inappropriate. What actually happened? I got in real trouble into Cottie, Mexico one time. We were visiting down there and a funeral went by. I don't know how to respond appropriately. I started laughing. Many people do in those circumstances.

And boy, did I catch y'all for that. Which proved once again, I really am a misfit, inappropriate. I've learned since then that a lot of people lie about what they think and feel. Because they're in the same boat I am. They don't know what's appropriate. At a certain time in our lives, we must be appropriate. I love watching adolescence. I don't want to ever raise another one. I just don't have what it takes anymore.

But I love watching them. Because I stayed in that state cause just about 42 before I finally finished it. This is where the drive for I am so different. I'm the only one on the planet. But I don't want you to know that. I want to look just like you do. So we all wear uniforms. It's not just Catholic schools. All schools wear uniforms. It's just the Catholic schools. The nuns decide what it's going to look like. In regular schools, the eighth graders decide.

What was your uniform in tenth grade? No, I'm looking back. I'm going to pick on him. He's got that look and he's like, well, was it a T-shirt? James and a T-shirt. Yeah, ours was a James and a T-shirt with a pack of cigarettes rolled up in the arm. Whether you smoked or not, that was the deal. Rat tails? Yeah, ours was a Mohawk haircut. If you are really cool. See, the Mohawk was a wonderful thing to have in junior high school and high school because it was this to the system.

And at the same time it was cool. I remember when I got mine, we had a little family bar next to the barbershop. My mother likes a little beer with her friends down there. It was no big deal. And I saw her go in. And I had my baseball cap. And when we were finished, Tom McGonigal and I both had really gorgeous Mohawks, about half inch tall and peaked. And I walked into the barn and she was sitting there talking with her friend and I took my head off.

She literally looked at me, looked at the beer, and pushed it across the table. As if this must be a hallucination. And she said, you get home right now. And I knew I had won me a battle. We couldn't go to school unless we wore caps. We didn't go to school unless we wore caps, which made it ultra cruel. And that's important at one time. If I carry that into adulthood, then I'm in trouble. And that's what I did because the minute I started drinking, I stopped going.

No matter what I looked like, no matter what I did from that point on, my emotional and mental response to the world is adolescent. I'm more concerned about looking good, but I'm accomplishing everything. I'll get into that horribly lazy state. I am by nature incredibly lazy. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and particularly spiritually. I was a spiritual thief. I've known since I was little, my answer would be spiritual in nature.

But I'm a spiritual thief. I'll steal it from you. Then it sounds good, but I don't have to pay the price that it takes. And this is some of the stuff my sponsors helped me understand. If you want what we have, the suggestion is that you might want to do what we do. You can't steal this one. And one of the dangers of those of us who've been around for a while is we tend these days to teach the new people our lingo without the substance behind it.

And the danger there is that when you say to them, how are you? They can give you the lingo and they sound pretty good. They're really dying inside. We've got to be careful with that. I do. So I bring all this crap to alcohol. An alien on a strange planet. Loved girls. Terrified girls. I'm a pretty fair athlete. But I only weighed around 135 pounds when I want it for football. And the average team weight was 180. And they hurt me the first day of practice.

So I quit. I was a Golden Gloves boxer, trained with Tommy Golden in Denver years ago. Got all the way to the finals. And I had this fight one in the second round where they were three round fights and I had it one. So I lightened up. And then the third round, he just beat me to death. He was motivated. He had two brothers up in the stands. He told me later in the locker room, he had two brothers up in the stands who'd said to him, if you lose this fight, you got another one as soon as you get home.

And he was motivated and I had quit early, which became a pattern. I was a sprinter in the game of life, not a long distance runner. Well, I quit boxing. I come from a musical family. I think I told you my brothers are a professor of music. Well, play instruments. I can play the trumpet and the trombone and the harmonica's. Right now I play a lap dulcimer because I don't want anybody else around when I'm making my music.

And very few people can stand the sound of a lap dulcimer. I had my friend Tom Olves. I was just said, if I ever play that in his presence, he'll break it over my head. But I played in the school band. And I was first chair. Because I have some talent. And then this kid came along and played better than I did right off the bat and got took my chair. So I quit. He had this ridiculous idea that she should practice two and three hours a day.

And I know that anybody with my natural talent only needs about a half hour a week. And I brought this to alcohol. This is that period of time when my image was who I was. And I got desperate one time and really needed to be somebody, mainly to attract the blonde girls in the school. That comes along with a certain time in every boy's life. His jeans jump up and say, oh, I know my life worked now. I have to repopulate the planet.

So many women, so little time. It doesn't have the slightest idea of what's going on. So I got my dad to buy me a 49 Mercury convertible. Maroon with leopard skin seat covers. Well, that was the thing back in the late 40s. Oh, it was gorgeous. It did what it was supposed to do. Put two belongings in the back seat, right up to the back. Second day, it had an automatic top and they pulled the top and they broke the top.

And I quit the car. My dad worry about disposing it. And I brought that to alcohol. Okay, this is kind of my ammo. Anybody identify with any of that? Oh, I hope so, because otherwise it's not in the wrong place. And along that way then we got a guy to buy some whiskey and we went out east to Denver to drink it. And my life changed forever. I was transformed. For a period of time that night, it was okay for me to be made just as I was.

And it was okay for you to be you, just as you were. And that felt so good, because that is a spiritual attitude. I was spiritually fit. Isn't it interesting that they've called alcohol spirits for years? Because that is what it produces. A sense of ease and comfort, a sense of rightness, a place. But for me, I didn't know that if one works you take ten, just the nature of the beast. Anything worth doing is worth overdoing.

Always. I still have not gotten over that one. I just put it in God's hands and oh, there we go. Now alcohol did not solve the problem. It made me in a state of being where there was no problem. I believe God uses whatever is at hand, and so when I got into this process, that's kind of the way we went. Forget everything you think you know about anything. We're not about solving your problem. There are problems. When the big book talks about finding a problem greater than myself, it will solve my problem.

There's no s on the end of that. There's only one problem. Me. Selfishness and self-centeredness. One of the guys, as you leave here, one of my guys, as to whether I'm beginning to get off base a little bit, is if I hear myself say, where's mine? Anytime I'm wondering where's mine, I'm off base because I'm always sitting right in the middle of it. One of my funniest inventories came home. What is my wife? I need her to know where she is somewhere back there.

I like to look in her eyes and check to make sure I'm telling the truth. I generally stay with the truth, but I do like to embellish. And I like to check the timelines because I honest to God don't have any sense of time. It's gone somewhere. When you are here now, time loses its meaning. I was about 12, yeah, 12, 13 years sober, sitting in the basement of my house. My car's up there in the garage. My family's playing and cooking and doing what families do.

And I'm sitting in the basement wondering where's mine? It was a wonderful little inventory because that's

where I discovered I'm always sitting right in the middle of it. These things happen to me long before I perceive them. I don't know what's happened until later. If I know what's happening at the time, I tend to take credit for it. So I usually, when I have an awakening of some kind and a behavior change, it's about six weeks later that I realize you did that differently than you've ever done it before.

And thank goodness for that. So if you're kind of new and you're looking for immediate results, you've already got them. Just wait long enough and you'll be aware that you've already got it. Where's mine? You're sitting in the middle of it. Right here, right now. You've got everything you're ever going to have. You're not a bitch. That's it. It won't get any better, but it'll always get better. The big book talks about men and women drinking for the effect produced by alcohol.

All men and women drink for the effect produced by alcohol. The effect from one another tastes good. She does not like the feeling that comes as the barriers go down. Me, I like to kick the barriers right on down. And early on, now, these are some of the things my sponsors made me bring to this deal. The effect produced by alcohol. I can remember early on, I couldn't even smell whiskey for about four years without gagging.

I'd gotten that sick from the whiskey. Just, oh, it was awful. But I very quickly found out what wouldn't make me gay. And then I began to find out different things did different things to me. Did you hear a little obsession here? I'm spending a lot of time becoming conscious of alcohol. Since I'm going to drink it, what's this going to do? Anyway, if we were going to go out and fight a little bit and young boys do that, mothers don't worry.

They're just practicing and posturing and posing and getting a black eye here and there. If we were going to go fight, I learned to drink vodka because vodka makes me mean. And if you're going to fight your mind, it'll be a little bit mean. If we're going to go to a party and there might be some girls there, I drank dark Bacardi rum. It makes me warm and sensitive. Great lover. Never did. I just stood there and looked cool.

And on my day, we weren't ever told what to do. I could remember running up and down East Colfax looking for girls. And one night we found some. Bad night. We didn't know what to do. And they didn't know what to do. It was terrible. We got drunk instead. It was awful. Early on in my drinking, I reached that place that is so devastating, where I couldn't feel anything. Which is just walking dead. Because by now things are such a tumble, I can't sort them, so I just shut them off.

But then I could drink Coors beer and listen to Ferlin Husky and Jim Reeves singing stuff like four walls and Ray Charles born to lose. I lived on that for months. And I could just cry like a baby and once again feel okay. I began to make that mistake in judging what my condition was by how I felt. Very bad measure to judge where I'm at and how I'm doing by how I feel. You can't get away from it, but it's not the best measure of the truth.

Then God can make me drunk. And the rub made me drunk. The beer made me drunk. Because once I start I go past the line. My friend Gary describes it as waking up at 82%. And so you have a drink and it takes you to 90. And then you have another year at 98. And then you have another, shit, I'm at 102. Missed the mark. First night out was wonderful. Never caught that edge again. So we bring all this to a substance that is, by its very nature, shuts down all your civilized coverings.

All the good manners that you've learned just go out to, wouldn't it? I've always loved drugs being one. The

inconsistency of two guys in a bar go out back and beat each other bloody. And then come back in, buddy, I just love you. You're my best thing that ever happened to me. Let me buy you a drink. And that's the way we are. And it gets confusing, doesn't it? Yeah. The upshot of all this is after 14 years of drinking, running.

They told you I'm one of the freaks that came out of Berkeley in the 60s throwing Owsley's acid around and screaming out where there's dope there's hope burned down city hall. I did a lot of speed along the way. I'm not a drug addict. I just did a lot of speed along the way, but I could always start to stop with that. I love to abuse it. If I had a drug of choice, it would be methamphetamine hydrochloride. That's what I'd choose.

The one I don't have any choice over is alcohol. That's what makes me alcoholic. I don't have any choice there. I bring this up only because we have a... This thing will work for anybody as long as the foundation is truth. Now you may be both alcoholic and drug addict. You may be primarily a drug addict who's also alcoholic. Whatever you are, find out so you can get the truth under you. And then it'll go to work. We can talk more about that later. If you want to, it's not a big deal.

It's just a big by God deal. Well, you gotta have the truth. You can be 700 different things. It won't matter. This fixes that. It takes care of it, but you gotta know what they are. The only thing this won't fix is goofiness. Stay as goofy as you can get because the most important role in life will be coming up. I'm finally in it. Grandfather. Grandfather's primary function on the planet is to be goofy. And entertain the little children.

Let me tell you the benefits of that, because I am. I'm just a sucker for babies. My five-year-old granddaughter came to me the other day. She says, Grandpa, you're just the best grandpa in the world. And I'm curious. I said, honey, John has her name. John, what do you think that? She said, oh, because you love us so much. That's the message. There's no doubt in her mind. And that is what makes me the best grandpa in the world, because I do.

I love her so much. And then she said, how is it, Grandpa? Did you know everything? Because that's the second part of the grandpa role, and that's also a requirement if you're going to be a good sponsor. You've got to preserve that illusion. I said, honey, that's easy. I've lived a long time, and I pay attention. And that's the truth. See, little ones bring the truth out of you, if you like. You've got to get all the lives away. So the truth comes.

I've lived a long time. And I do pay attention. And that's why I seem to know everything. If you get to know me, you'll understand, you don't know nothing. What was that? My boss used to say, what do you mean by that? What do you really mean by that? That'll get your attention. You better be able to answer that. You're losing. Anyway, so the consequences of my drinking took me to some strange places. My first federal penitentiary when I was 19, because I missed an appointment.

I couldn't find my way home in time. My second federal penitentiary in 1966. I want to tell you about that. These are the things that lead us to this place. You're here today because somewhere along the way, something occurred, and you've got to look at your life and say, oh, shit, I can't do this anymore. This has to stop. Or you wouldn't be here today. In Christmas week of 1967, I was on federal parole for that little beef.

We're on ADC. I'm in real serious trouble. I can't get out of bed without a shot of speed to get up and go pull some kind of scam to get enough money to get to kids some food, and to get me some booze so we can come

home and I can bring myself back to sleep. This was kind of our life. And what occurred there, I had come to the place where I stopped trying to be a decent human being. Couldn't figure that one out. I'm still totally devoted to my children.

Part of the living pain in my heart. And make no mistake, there's something we get to live with. There's nothing we can do about it. It's done. And that's good because it keeps me in touch with you. If you come in great pain over something you've done, I really do understand. And I can feel it. What had happened in this case, we all have an ace in the hole. Have I gone over this one before? Okay, because this is the third talk I've given since Thursday.

Shh. Thank you. I'm glad you haven't heard it because I love to tell the story. It's a horror story. My two little boys mother split and they ended up with me at about the same time that I hit a bottom that I couldn't get up from. This was that bottom that you say, oh, to hell with it. This is how we're going to live. When the big book talked about, we recognized that our lives were not normal. We didn't live them like normal people.

What I realized was that for me, my life was normal. This kind of life. We were on the road. We went into the subculture. My boys grew up living in Hell's Angels hideouts in the North Woods. The North Woods was a great time. I understand about perception from that. My young one thinks it was a great adventure. My old one was still pissed about it. What are you going to do? But we all have an ace in the hole. That's the person that no matter what we've done, at the end of this particular round, at this bottom, there's a place to go.

They'll give you a place to stay and feed you and bitch at you for a little bit and then help you heal up so you can go out and do it all over again. My dad is my ace in the hole. I understand. I am desperately just trying because I really do love my children. I wanted so badly to be a good father. So we'd periodically try that. We're at home. Sorry, Jerry. I did that once when he had his earphones. Someone wants to jump.

Cleaning up a little bit. Fattening up a little bit. Getting kind of settled in. And Elbert, one of the guys, one of the snakes that I ran was called me from Albuquerque. I said, we got a problem. We got 30 kilos of good marijuana up to whereas, and our driver got arrested on a traffic charge and the stuff's sitting in a hotel and we need to get it across the border. We could take the job. Now I'm really trying to get straightened up.

I'm a father now. I'm trying to straighten up and my sane response would have been, you're out of your mind, Elbert. My response was, of course. Of course. And I didn't do it for money. I got two kilos. Sorry, young people. At that time, we got them for 200 bucks a key. You pay that much for a little bag these days. So was chump change. I did this for prestige. See, I was the only one they could think of in the United States to go into old Mexico and rescue this guy.

Subtle. You know what's funny about that? The president of Mexico is a man named Fox. That's a subtle. He finally made it to the top. But there I go. I'm going to go off and do this for the prestige. And I don't know that at the time, but now I'm useful again. See, the human pain reaches its absolute bottom when you become useless. Now I'm useful. And I knew how to do it. I wanted at the time when I was picked up this last time when I thought it was an associate path.

This will tell you why. I knew precisely how to do this job, clearly. I stopped drinking and stopped using. I

got straightened up and got a sport coat and became Joe Tourist. I had them run a Volkswagen bus and somebody else's name. I let them take care of all the arrangements. I am not stupid. I don't want any links to me whatsoever on this. Because I knew even then this is illegal. And I don't want to go back to prison.

I'd done that once. That was enough of that. Anyway, we got down there. And the place they got us the bus, and Frank had gotten us a motel to stay in. Actually, it was just a Mexican courthouse, which was fine on the surface. Not a bad place to hide out. There's a lot of action. Everybody's moving and nobody worries about lunch. I did not do the transfer out of the hotel because I'm not stupid. That's where they're going to be watching if they're watching.

I got my kids with me this whole time. A four-year-old and a six-year-old. They are the key to the whole damn operation. Soon as we got the stuff in the van and got to the hotel and Frank split, we moved up town to a different motel that was more for the tourist trade. That's who I look like. You want to become invisible on one of these kind of deals? In fact, the worst thing I ever did to my children was teach them how to be invisible.

I was supposed to teach children how to be the only one on the block. I did the math. I've got to mind the works. I did the volume of 30 kilos of marijuana the way it was wrapped in those days, and that volume fit perfectly in a single air mattress. I had an air mattress, and I cut the corner and stuffed it and then resealed it. That keeps the smell down. Then as we made the border crossing just before we got there, I put dirty diapers on top of the air mattress, and I put my two little boys on top of that.

Just before we hit the border, I turned around for no reason whatsoever. I don't know where, and screamed at them so that they would be crying. I wanted them frightened and crying because they won't fool with you if you got crying kids. My children weren't in any grave danger physically. Had we been caught, they'd have been better off than they were with me. They'd have gone to a foster home somewhere and eventually back to my folks.

What I did to my children is forever break their trusts. I damaged them severely by screaming at them for no reason whatsoever, deliberately frightening them. I can never repay that. To this day, even though we get along, that peace is missing, and I know it. When I came to that, looking at that Christmas week in 1967, that brought me to the place where I came here needing to be the kind of person who could never ever do that again.

I don't want just to stop drinking. I've got to become the kind of person that could not commit those kind of acts again because I can't live with that. There's no way to reconcile that with who I really am. And there were a number of incidents like that that I looked at Christmas week in 1967 that brought me to Absu Bob. Christmas day, we went down to my folks' place to spend the day with them. My mother, who's a lovely lady, had sent down to the door to say, your mother says, I can't let you in here anymore.

She can't stand once and you die. Now, I'm here because I ran out of lies. Truth didn't bring me here. Running out of lies is not a bad way. There are only a few left. Though I was, leave me alone. I'm not hurting anybody but me. And here's an awareness came to me. I'm hurting everybody, particularly the people I love the most. And I'm baffled. I don't know how to not do this. I don't know what's wrong with me. Dad snuck us in the house anyway.

Down in the basement. Tore up another lie. Nobody cares about us. Nobody loves us. He did. He jeopardized the happiness of his own home that day because if she had caught him doing that, she'd have had a fit. But he

loved us. We got the drama of this. I love the drama of this particular few days because I'm falling apart at the seams. I would have told you we're okay, had you asked me. I'm on federal parole by the way.

And I'm a little bit pissed. One of the lonely things is that nobody would come see us. Even my parole officer wouldn't come see us. He made me report into him. And I know today that that was an act of kindness because he and I became friends eventually and talked about things. He knew what he'd find in my house and he knew if he did that he would have to bust me. It was Christmas. He was a very kind man. See, I lived with a lie that said, you're all no damn good.

You don't care about us or anybody else. You're all liars and screw you. He was very kind. On the 24th, the kids and I took a walk. That's kind of what I did by then. Restless irritable discontent when I can't stand being where I am. I move on. And we took a walk and found a dollar laying in the snow. We didn't have any presents. We didn't have any tree. We didn't have anything because the welfare check hadn't gotten there yet.

I was not self-supporting on my own contributions. And my scams were running out. I didn't have the energy to pull some of them off. I had one set up that was a butte that would have gotten me at least ten years. Because I'd have gotten caught. I'd gotten careless by now. Anyway, we took the dollar to the Christmas tree place up on Colfax. And the guy gave us the biggest tree on the lot for a dollar. And I'm thinking, I've still got it.

I look back and I see another act of kindness. He saw this 133 pound survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp with two little boys. He had given us the tree. But he was kind enough to let me save face by paying for the dollar, giving him the dollar. It's about perception. It's about how you view the world. Anyway, we took the tree home and I keep the memory of that fresh. Because there's a little pinpoint stab in my heart.

We had a seven foot ceiling and a nine foot tree. So it didn't occur to me to cut the top off. And we decorated with crap. Roll up some little aluminum foil and cut the bottom off. One of these little milk cartons for bells and all that. No presents. The welfare check hadn't gotten any yet. And I'm not up to pulling off anything. So we took another walk. Walked on with the public merchandise, Martin Denver, out on these cool facts.

Cowboy store. Walked in when we walked out. I had a pair of cowboy boots and a little cowboy shirt. One gift for each of my kids. The man gave me credit. \$10.95 credit. And I thought I still got it. Another act of kindness. He saw the same thing. I knew these kids would have nothing. They saved face by putting it on credit. Knowing full well, he'll never be back ever. The kids, when we got home, rolled up everything that would fit into blue paper towel and put it on the tree for me.

And a wonderful time because it just broke my heart. It's breaking all my defenses and there weren't many left. I'm beginning to see you really something. When we got home, I finally walked into the truth. And the truth that day, Christmas Day of 1967, is that I had finally become completely useless. There was no reason for me to be here. Everybody, including my children and my parents and everybody else would be better off if I were gone.

And sad to say that was the truth. I know we've all fought that at moments. That was the truth for me. I couldn't find a reason to stay. I knew the boys would be okay. I know enough about the system to know that somebody would take care of them and get them to my folks when they found my body. Didn't think of what the trauma might be for the kids. You know, that's still pretty self-centered. So I did the only thing I knew how to do.

There's no choice at that point. Not out of choices. You either surrender or you die, which is the same thing. It's the same choice. I had nothing to surrender to. I've tried everything, man. I've always known there's something wrong with me. So I came out of the Navy and turned my own life over the care of a science fiction writer. And joined Dianetics. Well, I knew Harvard. Fine man. Did a good job with that stuff.

But when I think about how well I know what to do with my life, I turn my life over to a science fiction writer. And a good one. I wrote some good stuff. That's where I discovered amphetamines. One of the things they did in those days, we were part of the Denver Research Society, which was looking into the effects of different kinds of chemicals on people. I became a willing participant. And discovered a speed which made it possible for me to become uninhibited and talk freely.

It also made the drinking easier. So all of this was just part of the deal. And I can mention that I've had the privilege of sharing the Easter ceremony with a washa in Nevada, the peyote ceremony. Had a vision. Kept me going for four months. Living in the North Woods. What broke that was the simplest little thing. Frank and the kids and I were in the woods. We lived in the Masonite tree farm. They gave us ten acres up there just living for the summer.

We lived in a tree. Wonderful thing. Great way to raise kids. What it was. It was summer vacation. Then we heard that lightning Hopkins was playing down in San Francisco. I love that old stuff. So we took a hunch of deer and put it in the backpack and hitchhiked down to San Francisco to get in and see lightning. We knew that the boys at the coffee house would take that hunch of deer and let us in. When you sit in the back room with lightning Hopkins and the boys, you're going to drink.

It was all over. They tried psychiatry with me one time. That was fun. I enjoyed that. It's a good game. That's when you can study up and it's better than chess. Oh yeah. I was on federal parole because Albert had turned us all in by the way. The guy that hired me to bring the marijuana back. He got arrested so he turned five of us in to take the heat. That's what happened on that one. I picked good companions. My choice of people has always been good too.

Somehow or another I ended up on a five day run. Heavy drunk with enough speed to warp my mind and make me dangerous. I came out of a blackout in Boulder with the kids in a parking lot looking for a car. I didn't have a car. Somebody loaned me a car. I couldn't remember where I parked it. I saw one that was red and little and got in and this lady screamed. She and her kids were in her. I was in the wrong car. I finally found ours.

It wasn't a parking place. It was just sitting in the aisle. We got out of there and into another blackout. We started up at the top of four mile canyon above Boulder of its sunset. The next thing I know is that the police are taking me out of a stream at the bottom. I can remember the horror of that. There's some people in a motel watching this scene go on. I'm saying to the police I can still remember. Won't to the people.

Won't someone please tell them who I am. They thought I was being arrogant of somebody. I was. I'm somebody telling who I am. I don't know. They took me over to the Boulder County Jail. We are tough. They put me in a holding cell because I had learned some tricks about the system. I told them that I was a federal parolee which meant I belonged to the government and they couldn't even search me. Not until my parole officer showed up.

I needed to buy some time because I didn't know what I had on me. I found a fresh brand new prescription of 15 milligrams of oxen tablets. That's a lot of speed. I knew I'm in trouble so I just swallowed them all. I got rid of that and everything else. By the time the doctor got there he said this man belonged in the hospital. Instead they took me over to the Boulder County Jail. I just went to sleep in a cell and I woke up in a padded cell.

Didn't know how I got there. That's something the experience you should try someday. Not being in a padded cell but waking up there and not knowing how you got there. They took me to the Denver jail for six days. Nobody could do anything. They couldn't find anything. The parole officer was a kind man. He didn't want to harm me again. That kept me sober six weeks. When they talk about my not having any choice and how devastating this illness I have is, I think anybody even a near psychotic having had that experience would stop or at least examine what the hell's going on here.

Six weeks it's all elastic. But this parole officer was pretty kind. He did not want to send me back to the penitentiary. He'd gotten to know my dad. My dad made friends of everybody including my parole officer. What a nice claim to make for the family. But what followed me home dad can I keep it? And he knew my kids and he knew that deep inside of me as in you is a really decent human being. Truly. Anyway he decided to have me evaluated by a psychiatrist to determine whether I should go into outpatient treatment or back to the penitentiary or back to a hospital or whatever.

And I knew that I needed to pass this evaluation. So I went to the librarian and I studied for the workshop because I knew they would give me that. And that would be one of the keys. I can handle the rest of them. I needed to be just sick enough that I needed some help. But on an outpatient basis. Don't tell me you haven't thought like that. And I passed. They assigned me a psychiatrist at Denver General Hospital. Lovely man.

Three weeks later he was smoking marijuana. Because I also believe that if you can't beat him get him to join you. I'm not saying I turned him on but he was ready. These are things that I get to examine as I look at what do you mean my life is unmanageable. If the best I can do is get a psychiatrist that I can talk into smoking marijuana. That's a pretty manageable life huh. Oh yeah. This is what I had in mind for my life.

I've gotten a white bible for Sunday school. I've been saved. I've done a number of things. And nothing was ever a permanent solution because in each of those cases if you've been listening I stole the experience. I didn't have one. I stole it. So I had nothing left to surrender to. I'm finished. I can't live. I can't stand being me one more second. That's all I can tell you. I just couldn't stand being me one more second.

So I took a two month supply of speed and shot it up my arm and drank everything in the house and I laid down and I died. And I really believe I died. I've not had a thought of a drink or a pill or a fix from that moment to this. I woke up in the morning. Didn't feel good. We have gone over that. The power of God went to work. One of my main messages is this. You don't have to have a conception of God for God to go to work.

This is all about mercy. Picking me at a time when I was nobody and had nothing to believe in. Didn't even want to be here and I'm stuck here. That's when the power of God went to work. Because what I did do was become willing and this was not intellectual. To go anywhere anybody said and do anything anybody said. If it meant I didn't have to be that person ever again. When I look at the things that I did with my life, I would rather die than be the kind of person that can do that.

I needed to be changed totally. And that's what was promised here. Dr. Silkworth says without an entire psychic change there is very little hope for recovery. My sponsor said those words are too big for you. What that means is you're going to have to get a new mind. And that we can do for you. We'll give you a new mind. See the promise I offer you new people particularly is that I am not the kind of person, I am not the person, that could even consider doing what I did before.

Putting children on top of dirty diapers on top of a load of marijuana and screaming at them to get it across the border. It's beyond my ability to think about. And yet I did that. So if you need that kind of a change, here we are. You want to stop drinking? Just go to a meeting. And for an hour you won't drink. And I'm not against meetings. Please don't mistake me. But I don't believe meetings would keep me sober. That's all I did.

There's got to be more to it than that. That's a necessary component. But there better be more than that. Because I've been going on meetings for 35 years now and I haven't heard much new for the last 20. This thing is so simple they had to put it on big paper to get anybody to buy it. We got 170-some odd pages of redundancy. The first 50-some odd pages are just built in the same thing. Over and over and over in different ways.

So it doesn't miss anybody. And then comes this tiny little section on how you clean up your life and what you do with it then. And then a rather large section on how you live this way and then go do it again. Find somebody else to do it with. You'll have more fun. Solitary self appraisal is a bitch. It's pretty nice to have somebody else know what a scum I am when I'm left to myself. Isn't that funny? We're the only organization I know where the worse you are the better you're liked.

Oh, you've been in prison 17 times? Make him the GSR. That's why I have you close by. Yeah, I know. You didn't have to tell me. Yeah, that was my next thing. It was time for the break. But I'm glad you did tell me. Because now we'll wait an extra minute. It is time for a bit of a break. Now I know from experience here, if I ask you how much time you want, you'll say ten minutes. It's not possible. Fifteen isn't possible for the first break.

It's about a 20 minute break and then we'll come back here. It is now by my watch. It's quarter after. By that one, it's 20 after. Let's do that one. About 20 till let's get back here. Life runs on Indian time. Indian time is, let's say we have an appointment at seven. You got ten minutes on either side of that and you're still on time. There's Brian. You all know Brian? Very kind and thoughtful, man. Yeah, I know it.

Well, I'm glad you noticed that. That means that you're sharp. Hey, well, you taught me. What do I say? He's very perceptive. So they took me away. When I woke up, the police were at the door. My four-year-old let him in. And I knew I wasn't dead. Very disappointing. I am absolutely convinced that the key to everything here is simply willingness. The power of God is expressed best in willingness. And it is so powerful that the very instant that I become willing to be changed, I have already been changed.

It's that powerful. And all through our process here, that is emphasized that willingness is the key. Willingness is a requirement until I'm willing nothing happens. And once I'm willing it has already happened. And that's what I really brought here is willingness. Surrender is willingness expressed. I was wanting to go anywhere anyone said and do anything anyone said. And this was not an intellectual idea. This was a state of being.

I did not resist arrest. I did not resist anything that took place since then. They had nine charges on me this time. The first one called for three years to life in the penitentiary. The Denver District Attorney said he'd bring the other eight one at a time if I beat that one. But I was through. I didn't care because I really was through. I had died already. Went through detox in the Denver County Jail. Don't want to ever forget it.

It was wonderful. I had six weeks of cramps and pounding on my legs and my head. I was detoxing from alcohol, from speed, from terror, from self will. It was wonderful. I don't think it would keep me sober because I've been through worse. But it has made me a better sponsor. You can count to me at five weeks and say I'm going to die. I'm going to look you right now. I am saying not yet. You've got about a week to go from all experience.

Just hang on. I do remember what I know was a prayer. I didn't know that. The county jail was a rest camp for people like me. I feed you. There's no hassle. Everybody's in transition. You just do your little thing and wait and fatten up and walk the tears and light each other. You play an old P. knuckle. A little cribbage depends on what jail you're in. I'm a, you're a cribbage player, I can tell. You cheat too, don't you?

By the way, I will be totally honest with you in real life. You don't want to play games with me. Games need to be cheated at me. Openly, without any pretense, I'm terrible at monopoly because I'll tell you how I'm cheating you. And still cheat you. Anyway, he understands that. We went and I'll play cribbage together. I got, well, I got my, I snuckered my brother one time. I reminded him that it had been a long time.

And I had forgotten how to count and he'd probably have to teach me how to play again. What I did was get him to play both hands. You can't lose. I cleaned up. Then he realized when I'd done to him, I went to my niece who was a cribbage player. And she suffered me into a game and made me feel like a fool. She didn't, she, she just played. Well, anyway, I'm glad to meet you sir. Never trust a cribbage player. It's all about counting.

Yeah, where the hell was I? We would walk the tears and talk about what we're going to do as soon as we could get out of all this big-time gangsters. None of us could make a hundred-dollar bond. But we're all big-time gangsters. We have this bunch of compatriots out there, not one of whom is going to show up with a hundred dollars either. In fact, they won't even come out and visit or bring you cigarettes or nothing.

But what we're going to do when we get out is get a keg of coolers beer, a lit of grass. We'll go up into the hills of the Bergen part and get stoned. That's what we're going to do. And I can remember mouthing those words, and I still remember in my heart, I don't want to do that. It's kind of a strange sensation. And the only prayer that I can remember, and it wasn't really a prayer, it was just a sense of help. And it mentioned, I don't know what to do.

I don't want to do this anymore. I don't know what else to do. Part of my life today is working in the penitentiaries. I've worked for the Department of Corrections in North Carolina and Colorado and my A workers in the penitentiaries. That's Tuesday night I get to go back to prison again. Vaccine security down the basement with a long timer, some wifers and some other long timers. And a kid named Shyboy got me in the heart again last month because he was me.

This is a sharp kid. Let me give you a picture of him. These guys are in a maximum security pod unit

penitentiary. It means no more than 16 people in any one place at any one time. Single cells, tight security, count every hour, every camera, everything is being monitored. Well the ordinary is changing it over to a super max. You're going to bring all the bad guys in from around the system and put them in there and run some sort of stupid program.

I think we'll work that has already failed 20 times. That's his plan. So Shyboy and Freddie and the lifers who were permanent part of there needed to be moved around to make room for the bad guys. Shyboy didn't like himself. It was kind of dirty. He was no one who was kind of dirty and hadn't been kept up well. So he moved in with Freddie for the week and they got some paint and redecorated it. The mattresses weren't good so they got new mattresses each of them.

And in a maximum security 24 hour day surveillance.