

DON P ARCHIVE

Big Book Weekend

2003 | Part 4 | Reading edition

FORMAT	DURATION	RECORDING ID
Transcript PDF	01:19:50	DP-2003-CAMDEN_04

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

Hey, so I can show up. Yeah. Have you learned a whittle yet? Carving is wonderful. Whittling is even better because it has no meaning whatsoever. One of my teachers says you have finally learned how to live when you've gone through half a day and accomplished absolutely nothing. I like your work. Yeah, really do. What's on your mind? Yeah. Okay. My life is on the line. I made a list of the people I knew one day to find out what is my relationship with them. In most cases, it was drinking. That was the relationship. Those just had to go because we don't really have any income because I don't drink anymore.

There were some others where there were other things, but I hadn't limit that. For new people, we will tell you the shift is very simple. You just go to a lot of meetings, hang around with us for a while. It doesn't mean you're going to reject them, but hang around with us for a while. Until the strength that you need is there, then you can make a choice. If you have something else going on. If they're really friends, they will understand that.

Most of my old buddies, the few I've run into on the street, it all said essentially the same thing. We're really glad you quit drinking. I love some of them to this day, but we have nothing in common. One of my dearest friends is a pot smoker to this day. We can stay friends. I can't go to his house. I've asked him. When I come in here, you're forcing me to smoke too. I can't come here. We'll have to go somewhere else. I won't stop him. That's his business. If we're going to meet, we'll have to meet somewhere else. I haven't seen him for years. That was unacceptable. But my life's on the line. I'm not going to risk it.

If you'll stick around long enough, we can help you walk through that. Because it is tough. Well, that's what you picked. I'm going to make some new things. Guess who's in this room? Same bunch. Yeah. Yeah. Same guys. If you get the right sponsor, you'll be at least a visit. You won't have a chance to even think about it. I don't know if that helps, but that's the only answer I know. Just January. Yes, sir. I like that. Me too.

Yeah, I've been thinking a lot about what you said yesterday about not needing to relapse tonight, clearly. Thanks. My history's been, I came to AA about 10 years ago and had some different time. I also like to make the distinction between, I can't quote you exactly, but being in recovery and just being sober. And I've only just been sober until I got sober this time. And I feel like I'm finally getting some recovery.

But I also feel like I needed to get to the place where I was seven months ago in order to finally have willingness. And I'm scared because this is the longest I've been sober. I've been without alcohol longer than this before, but this is a lot of stuff going on in my life that I don't want to drink again. And I see relapse around me and it frustrates me because I've done it before myself many times. And I'm working on a four step and I feel some freedom from that, but it's also hard a lot of the stuff that I have to look at.

And it's frustrating too because I see myself doing the same thing over and over and over and over again. And I guess that's it. It's just that lately I've been feeling a lot of fear around where I'm at. And it's not like I've been craving a drink because I have it. I feel like that compulsion for now at least has been lifted from me. And I feel like if I keep doing what I'm doing, that that'll continue to be that way.

But maybe it's that I've set myself up to fail or I don't know what it is. I'm not going to try to understand it, but I just thought I would throw that out there. Our founders make clear two really important things. One is that we have alcoholics and animals. Our over a hundred men and women have recovered. And then later on they tell us who won't recover. People who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program.

And you're right in the middle of it, so you're safe and protected. It's only when we stop. And don't give ourselves completely. This is a complete process. You don't stop at the third step. You don't stop at the sixth step. As long as you're involved in it, you're accessing spiritual power and you're going to be okay. There it is, Gary. The only history I have is that I'm going to screw this up. On my own, I will. You're not on your own anymore.

Completely give yourselves to this simple process. Rarely does anybody fail at that. And thank you for bringing it up. Talking about it means you're free of it. I don't know. You get scared when it's afternoon. But we're here. The day does come when I know I'm not going to sabotage this. It's all part of slowly awakening. We just stick close. Because we'll laugh at you. And once you start laughing at yourself, you'll be okay.

If you're going to laugh at yourself, you're okay. I was about five years sober. This wasn't a thought of a drink, but I was terribly disappointed because I didn't get to go do something I wanted to do. And the depression hit. This was one of those killer depressions that come along. Fear, terror. This whole A, thing's been a lie. Because I still have that little piece of, I've been a good boy. God, how come I don't get to go to the movies?

Steps wouldn't work. Talking to people didn't work. It just made it feel worse. And intuitively, I went home and literally pulled the covers over my head and went to sleep. But I was fine in the morning. Sometimes that's all it takes. Total surrender. Oh, and this was important. My whole wife was ruined because I didn't get to go to Denver going to movies. It's like my five-year-old granddaughter. One's a year of thirsty.

She's planning with the boys in the backyard. Her little brother and some neighborhood kids and they're playing ball. And she wanted a green ball and the kids wouldn't give her the green ball. She came up on a porch and sat by me and she said, they ruined my wife. They're just ruined my wife. They won't give me the green ball. Well, let's take a break down. Everything topped with each other. We'll see you after lunch.

There will be pies and we'll be wide awake for a while. And those who ate them are going to go. One of the things I liked about the Alcoholics Anonymous presentation, if you will. I've been on a spiritual search since I was little. I have always known my answer would be spiritual. But I was a spiritual thief because I'm lazy. So I've had a lot of exposure to a lot of different things and almost without exception To get to the truth, you have to go through several degrees.

We'll teach you this much, but there are secrets and mysteries. And then once you get prepared for this, we will move you on to the next one. And it's just not true. I rebel at that. I'll comply. It's like school. I'm a reasonably intelligent person, but I didn't want to do all that work. And I thought it was silly and I didn't want to be noticed. I was an awfully good C student. Now and then you have to throw a B in there.

And if she's cute enough and you're in that class, she'll get an A. But I'm a C student because I don't have to work at that. I can do that without doing any work at all. And that's the way I would approach. I want an instant answer. Now the other side of that is that in God's world and the relationship we're going to develop here is on

easy and understandable terms. All I have to do is be willing. And I look at this and sure enough, there's not a secret in here.

The entire deal was laid out. Before you enter into the activities of recovery, it lays out what they're going to be and tells you what an order. I can't go through with it. So what a lot of us said, this is a tough path, but there's no secret to it. If you want what we have, here's how we got it. And if you don't, that's fine. We really don't mind, but there's no secrets. And I like that. I like that very much. In my working with people, I've discovered something.

And I want to say discovered over a period of years and making some mistakes in the doing of this, I finally come to understand my effectiveness comes from the fact that I do not talk to the sickness anymore. I know who you are. You're one of God's kids and that's who I'm talking to. I can't help you with your sickness. All I can do is help awaken your spirit and your spirit will take care of your own healing. So as a sponsor, I'm really kind of a poor sponsor if you need a crisis counselor because I'm not.

And I'll tell you that. I'm not. If that's what you need, they get \$100 an hour and I have a list of them. That doesn't mean that in a real crisis I won't be there. But God forbid you call me at 2.30 in the morning, time after time because you're in a crisis, your lack of good planning does not constitute a crisis for me. In fact, there have been funny things happen because of that. This sounds harsh but it's really not.

The truth is it's the spirit of God within you waking up and forming a relationship with God that solves the problem. I can't. I'm really bad at relationship problems. I've never ever been able to figure out how to have a successful, sick relationship. So I can't be of any help to you. I'm sorry. I can show you how to develop a relationship with God. And once that one's all right, the rest of them will be too. You might as well understand right now not everybody's going to like you.

In fact, sometimes the only way I can measure my effectiveness is by the quality of my enemies. I guess I'm really high quality enemies. Oh yeah. Now their enemies only in the sense that they oppose me. I do not fight back. I'm sorry. I'm out of fight. I've fought in the last battle. I'm done. I have no more rights. I used them all up. I discovered that if I demand my rights, what that means is that you've got to give up some of yours.

I still have any. I don't even have a right to be here. In terms of a right, right's a man-made thing. God says it's for everybody. You're all equal. Have a ball. I think we're funny. We live on God's amusement park planet and we take it seriously. Oh yeah. If you can't have fun on this planet, there's something really wrong with you. This place is filled with amazing, interesting, funny creatures. Human beings being among the best at being funny and weird and strange.

The endless variations on the theme is just amazing to me. I told Jackie one time, I'm thinking seriously, you're coming back one more time, but I think I'll come back rich so I can travel and see more of this planet. You're doing that now on other people's money. What do you mean? We discovered the difference between rich and wealthy. I'm an extremely wealthy man. I'm wealthy beyond money. It's a good thing because I don't know what to do with money except spend it.

I've lived long enough that the government sends me \$817 a month as long as I promise not to work. You got

it. No problem at all. Work interferes with real life anyway. You had a fellow call me one night. I really do enjoy the 2.30 in the morning calls because you really don't have to wake up. People who call that time of the morning do not want answers. They just want to talk. So you get just enough away to go. Really?

It would be unconscionable, but I have thought about just getting a little loop tape. But this guy called me. I get the psychopaths. Well, I know who they are. They're frightened children. So I know who they are. God bless this guy. And you can't think of things like this. This is a 2.30 in the morning. I just trust in God. Whatever you want me to say to this one, he talked to everybody and couldn't get an answer. So one of them finally said to call me and it was 2.30 in the morning, but he did. He followed instructions.

He was drunk. He had a serious problem. The next day he had 5 DUIs. He had to go a quarter on. And his problem was, what do I do? Well, you go to court. That's what you do. We talked a little bit and I just automatically started asking questions like I was taught. And one of them was, would you like to stop drinking? No. He says, I don't think so. I'd like to drink to him about 55 and then quit. And I heard this come out of my mouth. It delights me.

I said, oh, I'm sorry. You've called the wrong person. Obviously you don't have a drinking problem. You have a driving problem. And I still drive. I don't know how to quit. So I can't help you. But if you'd ever like to stop drinking, keep my number handy. And I'm thinking, wow, did I say that? If I'd have been all the way awake, I'd have missed that one. Those are the kind of truths that are there. I couldn't be of any help to him.

Not at all. Because I've made a commitment that my life is no longer my business. Only the conduct of my life is my business. And it is entirely my business. But my life itself is one of my business. I will go and try to do what I think God would have me do. The directions in this book say that that means I'm to work with other alcoholics and children precisely how I've recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. It's all I have to do.

And that is so serious a task that is beyond me. People come to me and they put their lives in my hands literally. I don't know what to do. That's a serious deal. So I have to stay spiritually fit so that the voice of God can come through me. So that I can be responsive instead of reactive. So that I can tell the truth even though it may hurt somebody's feelings, the truth must be the truth. And I got an image on that the other day.

I want to share with you some of the joys of what goes on in here in my quiet time. I believe and I believe for years that our job with each other is to pierce each other deep in the heart with the sword of truth. My job is to keep that sword so sharp that it goes in and comes out without leaving a wound. That's a nice picture of what I believe. How do I do this in such a way that it's not cruel? And I'm taught here the way I do that is instead of talking about you, I talk about me.

And so when I make a fool of me, you get to see what a fool you are too. And then we can both laugh at it. Instead of me calling you a fool, look at this old fool. It doesn't always work. I've had them threaten to kill me in my own driveway. Sometimes it goes in and out so sharp they don't even feel it. But that's all right. Anyway, I love Bill's story. Let's spend a minute with that. Here's a man who has, by drinking alcohol, put himself in a position where he truly is of no value.

And in and out of this hospital where Dr. Silkwood was twice before, so you know he had all the information again. I know that. Whatever information Silkwood gave us here that saved my life, Bill had it, just didn't get through. And he's drinking quite a bit. According to what I read here, he had at least two corpse of gin at hand. And another one stashed off somewhere and was giving thought to maybe getting some more so he could get through the night.

What that tells me is he was drinking somewhere between one and three corpse of gin a day. That's a lot of juice. And he's sitting there drinking that on an old friend of his shows up, Abby Thatcher. We've done on some great drunks before. Abby wanted to come over and visit and Bill thought that's a good idea. We can drink together and relive the old times. When you got nothing going today, relive the old times. Sounds like some of the meetings I've been to lately.

Abby shows up and I ask myself what I'm thinking working with others. Would I fit this profile? If you were looking in and looking at me, would you see this? Here's what Abby looked like to Bill. And remember, Bill's drinking. He's not sober. He's drinking. The door opened and he stood there fresh, skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened? Even in a drinking state, partly drunk, Bill recognized there's something different about my old buddy here.

I don't know what it is, but there's something different going on here. Would you see that in me? I saw that in Bruce and Roland and Phil. I pushed a drink across the table. He refused it. Disappointed but curious, I wonder what had gotten into the fellow. He wasn't himself. What's this about? He inquired. He looked straight at me simply but smilingly. He said, I've got religion. The key is simply and smilingly. I was a gas, so that was it.

Last summer an alcoholic crackpot. Now as I suspected a little cracked about religion. He had that story, I'd look. Do you have that when you're going to talk to somebody? But bless his heart, let him rant. My gin would last longer than he's preaching. But he did no ranting. See, back on page 9 of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous were already being taught out of 12 step. He did no ranting. In a matter of fact way, he spoke just the facts.

This is not extraordinary, even Bill. He told how two men had appeared in the court for sweating the judge to suspend his commitment. That tells me something else. The two men who came and got heavy had such a presence and a power that they convinced a local judge to let them have certain bodies if they ask for them. We still do that, you know. I don't know if you all know it. We have three guys from their prisoners, their inmates, that the prison unit out here.

Would you guys just show him who you are? Here. These are guys that are doing time. Somebody went over there, probably Brian because he's such an articulate little fell, and convinced them that it would be alright to send three of their dangerous criminals to a four-age camp for the afternoon. That's funny, isn't it? That's heavy stuff. If you want to wonder what kind of spiritual power is about, you're looking at it.

Okay? They did certain things to prepare themselves, and somebody else did certain things, and they're here. I love that. And that's just a matter of fact, that's where they're from. They get to go back tonight to their hairy-legged boyfriends while we go home. Here we are today. I stole that from an old timer. Oh, God, that was funny. He came out of San Quentin. This was a tough, bad ass. Got sober, went, and he married a lovely, beautiful woman.

We ended up getting to take him into our maximum security penitentiary to give a talk one time, and that's how he finished it up. He said, I want you guys to know this is the message. And he introduced his wife. She stood up, a gorgeous lady. He said, I get to go home to that, and you get to go back to yourself with your hairy-legged boyfriends. Thank you. And he sat down. That's the sort of truth. We're really glad you guys are here.

I'm not making fun of you. There are demonstrations, if you're wondering about the power, there is. That's not supposed to happen. It's just not supposed to happen. And that's what happened clear back here. Roland Hazard and another fellow got the judge to turn every over to them, and Ebby was the lost cause. They were getting ready to lock him up forever. And what they had was a simple religious idea and a practical program of action.

That's what we inherited. There's a religious idea in the foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous. It came out of a fundamentalist Christian operation, a revival movement. And while we are not religiously tied, that spiritual idea isn't the foundation of what we do. Most spiritual ideas are. They're all about the same, but that's where we came from. But in addition to that, there was a practical program of action that went along with those deals.

He'd come along to pass his experience along to me if I cared to have it. Is that my attitude when I'm going out to work? Or am I evangelistic about this? And you, by God, will take what I have to offer. You will get sober. We'll talk ugly about you or whatever it is. If I cared to have it, we were invited into Alcoholics Anonymous, not forced. When I came into that group, we weren't even given credit for going. The guys who put together my prison AA group took all the incentives away.

We talked the administration out of making a list that would be looked at by the parole board. Nobody knew whether we went or not. Strictly voluntary. He talked for hours. I can do that. You can do that. One of the most fun times in a speaker meeting is when a new person is allowed to talk for the first time. And you'll hear this. I don't have much to say. Get comfortable. It's going to be a long night. Childhood memories raised before me.

Every brought out builds memories by talking about himself. Some of the stories I've told and some people here have raised memories. This is how we identify with each other. I didn't do that exact thing, but that sure sounds familiar. How many of you stole money from your kid's piggy bag? Yeah. See when I loaned? Why not? It's easier to get the robin of the bank. Ryan, if you'd have known that, you wouldn't have had to go to prison.

Can you see the robin of the bank? If I were to tell her, I'd say, oh, have a sucker and go sit down and wait for your mother. But he's a fine man. Gentlemen. Kind, yes. That's for that crack last night. There's more to come. I had always believed in a power of greater than myself. I had often pondered these things. I was not an atheist. Yeah, we're talking about me now. Few people really are, for that means the blind face and the strange proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and the aimlessly rushes nowhere.

A quick glance around to tell you there are great forces that work here. There is order in this universe. There are principles that work. Do this, this occurs. There must be some kind of intelligence here and it's beyond my grasp, but there must be. That's clear. Don't have anything to do with me, but there must be. Despite contrary indications, I had little doubt that I might have purpose and rhythm underlay at all.

I know about rhythm. I've sensed rhythm since I was little. I come from a musical family. Life is about music. Everyone is busy singing their song. If we do it right, it becomes a chorus. If we do it wrong, it's disharmony. I'm not a good singer of music, but I do find with somebody who is good, and I'm just adding harmonies to it, or in a chorus where you can't really hear me. I'm just blending in. But we're all singers of a song in one word.

There is a rhythm. The business of being on time, it's fun to me. I'm going to tell you, I'll spark something, I hope, and you can't learn how to do this. What I'm here now, I'm here now. I'm on time for everything. One of the things I learned from the Salvation Army is that people respond better if they're fed first. A lot of missions make you listen to the preaching first and then feed you. The salary always fed us first.

Dad preached at us. So one of the things I like to do is meet with my guys while we're eating. I meet with a small group every Tuesday morning. We go over to the peeps and have breakfast. Good meeting. Anyway, where I worked was about three blocks from a place that was built to serve people who had garlic deficiencies. It's a little Italian restaurant named Dario's. You can smell it from blocks. Oh yeah. I have a severe garlic deficiency.

As often as I can. I also, as a result of a mispent mute and a mispent middle mute, I have neuropathy in my feet. So there are times I can walk okay and there's times I can't walk too good. In this place, it's three blocks away and we usually just walk because there's no place to park. And so, you know, three blocks is as close as you're ever going to get to it. And I had this guy come down. We're going to go to lunch and it was a day I wasn't walking good.

So we walked over to my van and I told him to get in and he said, it's only three blocks. It's just walk. And I did sponsor talk. I said, just get in the van. If you're new, that's what it's not. Don't ask why. Just get in a damn car. You know. And we drove up there and as we pulled up in front of car pulled out and we pulled it apart. And I've come to expect that. I really have. He was amazed. Isn't this wonderful? God got us a place to park.

And I want to slap him. I don't have a parking spot, God. It's better than nothing but for me that's absurd. What happened is that we were on time. Had we gotten there 30 seconds sooner, we'd have passed it before the other car got out. Within 30 seconds later, the guy in front of us would have gotten the spot. We just happened to be on time. And there's a rhythm you get into when you get fully present that that really does occur.

Now, I'd rather you believe in a parking lot, God, than be nothing. But I will slap you in about six months from now. We got to New York. Oh, this is so funny. Jack and I had occasion to go to New York to do one of these deals with our friend Jerry Elkins. Some of you know Jerry. So Jack and I and Jerry and Gail and I were doing New York to do a thing for Tom Needham. And we go early because we love New York. We don't want to live there, but we just love New York.

I mean, we're country folks. This is a wild place up there in New York. And I sponsored a kid from Birmingham, Alabama who is a writer and a producer of films who moved to New York. And so he has an apartment, so we stay with him. It's way too expensive to go to New York and not stay with a friend. Anyway, we're going to stay in Brooklyn Heights. And Jerry and Gail have a friend down in the East Village and they're going to stay there.

And I was down at Myrtle Beach talking with David Russell who came out of New York. And I asked David if he knew anybody that could pick us up at LaGuardia and drop us off at Brooklyn Heights and down in the East Village. And John Cognetello was there and David Sposers and me looked at John and said, he will. Get in the car. John said, oh sure, I'd love to. Sure enough, John picks us up at LaGuardia and we head across the bridge for the East Village of Jerry and Gail off and it becomes apparent John has never driven in New York before.

He didn't have a clue. We're also headed into the East Village and there's no place to park there until you get up to about 47th Street. We pull up at the corner where Jerry and Gail are supposed to get off and a car pulls out and we pull right in. So I told John about being on time. And for the rest of the week it was wonderful. He was precise to the moment. Everything worked out just fine. We had dinner and we stayed overnight out at his folks' place.

This is in an Italian enclave and what is it? Oh, welcome, honey. Yonkers. I get the wrong time every time. Five and a half hour feeding frenzy. Everybody's busy competing with everybody else as to who can make the best and the most. And the food just keeps arriving. The hors d'oeuvres were three meals worth themselves. The times are running around screaming out, I love you, I love you, I love you. In every way that they can.

Just wonderful, animated. Oh, great time. We slept there and John was going to pick us up at 5.30 and get us to the airport in the morning and at 5.15 you won there. So his mother called. He hadn't gotten out of bed yet. We just barely made our airplane. And on the way John said, I got so intrigued with this being on time that I started to try to manage it and almost blew the whole thing. And that's what goes on here.

Don't try to manage this. If you try to be on time, you're going to be either too early or too late. Just be on time. What would he have me be here now? You've all read Bill's story, if you haven't I suggest you do. The wars which have been fought, the burnings and chicanery that religious dispute had facilitated made me sick. Yeah, me too. I am willing to go anywhere there's a spiritual person talking about spiritual things and have been from the beginning.

We were listening to one on one time a truly spiritual man and one of the guys was angry. He stopped the guy and said, look, tell me that. I said, God so almighty powerful. Why didn't he stop war? And the answer was simple. He didn't start it. Our troubles are our own making. More little clues as to what's going to happen inside of me. But my friend sat before me and he made the point black decoration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself.

Is that me? Yeah. I will tell you right in front of myself I am nothing but see what God has done with me. And that's where the power comes from, no other place. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Sounds familiar. The hospital said we can't help this one. Just lock him up. So I'm getting identification here. Are you? If you're not, I wonder what the hell you're doing here at the 4-H camp with a bunch of convicts.

A bunch. Well, there's only three of them. Don't worry. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had an effect been raised from the dead. Suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known. Had this power originated in him? Obviously not. There'd been no more power in him than there was in me at that minute and that was none at all. I saw that my friend was reorganized.

He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil. I suggest to you to remember that while this is going on, Bill's drunk. Seriously drunk. And yet he's seeing this go on. It's important in AA today to remember what we do with drunks. So when they show up at a meeting, that's what we're there for. Then the meetings are heard of meetings where they actually won't let you in if you're drunk. How are we about anyway?

If you're disrupt, if you're disrupt, you will try to hurt somebody. I'll help throw you out. But if you're drunk, come on in. One of my favorite people was an old Indian that used to come to our meeting drunk. And he would always, we had a long table, a chairperson here and then down the table and he'd always sit right next to the chair. And as soon as the meeting started, he'd go to sleep. And when the meeting was over, he'd jog himself awake and hold hands and say to the Lord's prayer and go back to the street.

And some of the members were kind of testy about that. But you know what I saw? For one hour each week, he had a safe place to go for one hour, where he didn't have to worry, and he could sleep. And twice each week, he got to pray and be among some people. Who knows what he heard while he was sleeping? I don't. The main thing is he had a safe place to go to sleep for an hour a week. We should have had a meeting every day.

If that's all I get out, that's all I get out of. I got a lot out of it. It's those damn cookies. Don't worry about it, Casey. They're making fun of you. There's the promise that I was looking for. I didn't come to get sober. It came to be changed. And here we begin to get it. He's on a different footing, inwardly reorganized. And Bruce was very helpful with that. He says, we can't fix you. There's too many parks missing.

And most of the ones that are still there are warped. I love warped. I was an am warped. There isn't a box made that I fit into. You got to put packing in around it. And even then I'll find a way out. The only funny people I know are warped. I'm not two adults in my life. I didn't want anything they had. Geez, they were serious about everything. Could I want it to be when I grow up? A kid. In fact, I don't ever want to grow up.

I think I'll try very hard to die before that happens. I'm making a good game on it, aren't I, honey? Getting younger and younger. I care less and less about what's going on in the world. And more and more on what's going on in the world. Bill went in for conceptions such as creative intelligence and all that. Mine was you. There is one. He built all this deal and he rested and he's still resting. All those conceptions are just dodges.

The ways for me not have to really get in and find out what's going on. Every city and why don't you choose your own conception of God? Bill said that statement suddenly melted the icy intellectual mountain and his shadow he had looked for years. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. Nothing more is required of me to make my beginning. And that's good because that's all I could do is bring a willingness to believe that there was something.

I could see it and I'm willing to believe there is something and I'm also willing to believe that it worked for me too. Whatever that is will change me. And Bill's drum call this is happening. Within two weeks he's had so much to drink they have to take him to the hospital again. He's getting ready to go into D.T.'s. So I'm not afraid to work with really wet drugs. I don't lay the big book out in front of them but they hear.

In fact sometimes the wet ones are the easiest ones because all their defenses are down. All that's left is the spirit. Just go for the spirit like finding him on the street. I've got to tell you the truth. I believe had you not

encountered us on the street in Camden on Thursday you'd be drunk right now. I really believe that. What do you think? Yeah. Perhaps. Maybe. Not for sure. But by the grace of God you're not. I came a long way to talk to you.

You pay attention you're here. I had to fly to Philadelphia just to get here. I don't know if you've ever been to Philadelphia or not but you better be worth the trip. I had to go through security twice. That's funny. Security's funny. The one they first started doing this thing. I used to wear a sport coat and look decent and I got searched every time. Since I started wearing my tennies and my leather jacket I haven't been searched since.

I must not fit to profile anymore. Do you know who's getting searched these days? Little old ladies. They're making them take their shoes off and their clothes off and I don't know what's going on. But anyway I came a long way to talk to you. But I'm going to give you the bride. Did he wear not a good, I was going to swap him again. So they take Bill to the hospital. And I like to get into this. This is real simple. See if you can be billed for a minute as I go through this because the whole thing is laid out right here.

This is wonderful stuff. There I humbly offered myself to God as I then understood God to do with me as he would. I placed myself unreservedly under his care and directions. Whatever you have in mind for me is better than whatever I have in mind for me. I will take this direction. I had meant it for the first time that of myself that I was nothing. Without him I was lost. I'd live with the illusion that I must know something.

I can't be totally off base here. I finally admitted yes I am. My very best thinking puts me here. The best I can do. I have myself on nothing. For me that was poignant because I was 38, 984. That's as close to nothing as you can get. One of the nicest things my sponsor ever did to me was to give me a name. I had gone and complained to him that my third step didn't work. I didn't get a flash of light. Well, dummy. I got a name.

And to this day when God wants to catch my attention I'll hear Bruce's voice. Well, dummy. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became wanting to have my newfound friend take them away, root and branch. I've not had a drink since. So I had some prejudice against the word sin until I remembered a catechism I took chasing an Apache girl to Cincinnati one time. She'd become Catholic and I figured, well, okay, if that's what it takes.

I wanted to go to any legs. The priest giving me catechism I know now was a member of Alcoholics and all of them. See, admitted he was a recovered alcoholic. But I can remember the lingo and he must have been an AA. And he gave us a definition of sin that even then made sense to me. Anything that separates me from God is a sin. It's not a moral balance sheet deal. It's about separation. Anything that separates me from God is a sin.

And I've learned through other people that anything that separates me from you separates me from God. So the rest of the program takes care of what's separating me from you. I can't deal with God. It's too big. If I clean up what's happening between us and somehow the spirit begins to come alive and it gets real. My school made visit to me and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt and toward whom I felt resentment.

I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals admitting my wrong. When I came to making amends I was told that I was to never say I'm sorry. He said you've been sorry your whole life. What you get to say is I was wrong and I harmed you. Never was that to be critical of them. Never. There's a thing going on on AA today and we'll talk about it again later where inventory is done where people look for their part.

And I'm sorry that doesn't make sense to me. I'm only looking for my part that assumes you still have a part. And this is about me being the one that's wrong. You never am I to be critical of you. I'm to look to where I was wrong. What's my mistake? Standing aside the wrongs others have done entirely it says. And it's a little thing I know but I watched the results of how people do this and you will get certain results.

I've seen people who did thorough inventories, went and made amends, but all they'd looked at was their part. And when they were finished they waited for the other person to make amends also. And when it didn't happen they got pissed all over again. It's a subtle thing but we are subtle people. We will any chance at all to say to you we'll take it. You laugh like I told you the truth. I was to write all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

All such matters. There is no slack in sitting right the wrongs of the past. There's one proviso. If I will cause more harm by so doing I've got to live with it. But otherwise everything gets taken care of. We'll cover that. I'm going to spend a couple hours I hope talking about amends because it's the most exciting part of my whole life is straightening out to goofy stuff that I cause to happen. I was to test my thinking by the new God consciousness within.

That's very important. That means I have become conscious of the presence of God. If he were here now with me, how would I behave? I'm going to give you another standard. I've raised the bar for me. I'll give you another standard and then we'll get on. This is just the beginning. Here's the question. One of the ways we learned to do this was from an old assembly of God minister who was a genuinely spiritual man. The doctor and I couldn't completely buy but I bought him entirely.

When I had the illusion that spiritual people were perfect and didn't make mistakes and were sweet and nice, never had any doubts and he kind of set it straight on that. He was definitely a spiritual man. He said he has doubts from time to time. He gets tempted from time to time. We asked him, what do you do? He said, well, when I'm tempted I take the master by the hand and I say to him, if I go do this will you go with me?

And if it's yes, I go do it no matter what. If it's no, I don't do it no matter what. And I do get answers. The thing where I have to be careful is where I don't get a solid answer, I don't go until I'm certain I don't do it. Good God. I live in a matriarchy and you young guys let me tell you as soon as possible, find one and let them take you in. There's nothing finer than living surrounded by women. Truly. Oh man, it's good.

You must be sure that you let them understand from the very beginning that you are totally incompetent and that you know that and then just do whatever they say. It's a good life. I've exaggerated a little bit, but it is a good life. So part of my measure of my behavior, if you will, my human experience is governed by the fact that I live in a house and have been living in a house where my wife, two daughters, granddaughter, my sisters, mostly girls, Austin and I and Nick are grossly outnumbered and we like it that way.

We all have roles that are properly assigned, but the fact is we are privileged to live in her house. I am. I belong in a cage. So I started. My bathroom is bigger than my cell used to be. And I sit there sometimes, I must tell you. Ask myself, could I live in this room for the next ten years? And I begin in my head to design how that could be. And the answer is yeah, I could. And then I open the door and I've got a whole house here.

Even sober. When I met Jackie, my boys and I were living at the base of a thousand foot mountain in a

double wide trailer on an acre of ground, which is bad for bachelor types. Fairly satisfied. I worked six hours a day at the reformatory. The Arkansas River was only a half a mile away. I mean, we were civilized barbarians. But that's what we picked. On my own, I'm a tent dweller. I really enjoy chicken coops. What the hell?

I get to live in a hole. So here's the marker. Let me raise the bar and then we'll get on because I could talk too long about this. The question for me when I'm about to do something where I'm unsure, would I be able to do this if my wife were watching? Or my daughters? Or my granddaughter? It really narrows the path. And the thing that will happen here is that you won't have to ask that question too often once I get spiritually fit.

That doesn't come up that often. When it does, it's really serious. Could I tell her about it? If I can't, don't do it. Or talk to her about ahead of time and let her laugh at me for being such a doofus. I wasn't not talking about six shit. Why, you are. Sometimes that comes up. We're in a human condition. You know, sometimes I get a terrible thing happens to me. I get to thinking I'm good. And, you know, I'm a good institution who's a boy scout.

And immediately I have an overwhelming urge to do something bad. And I was really, really sick one time. You may appreciate this. I decided, my thinking, that I really needed to just be evil for one day. Just to find out, this back and forth shit's got to stop. So I took some Owsley's acid and became evil. I had a dreadfully disappointing day because everything I could think of to do in my evil state was appropriate.

And if it's appropriate, it's an evil. And even though standing sane and sober, I could say that looks pretty evil inside it was, but that's appropriate to my nature. If I'm evil, this is what I would do. Set fire to this person, of course. And it was deadly dull. So I don't think in those realms anymore. I don't know if that makes any sense, but raise the bar. You want to, if I go do this, will you go with me? It'll change your whole conception of God.

The question is a wonderful, preliminary question because if there's any aspect of God that you wouldn't be able to have him with you, it's your conception of God, not God. Be with me anywhere. And I can say that because at my very, very worst, God was right there. That's where I got found, not at my best, at my worst. It was right there. Anyway, test my consciousness or my thinking about a new God consciousness. We even have a system for that.

It's an 11 step and that we get certain questions that we're supposed to ask. I mean, we're too dumb to even get it. So they wrote it out for us. Here's what you ask. Here's when you ask it. Here's how you ask it. Don't ask any more than this or anything less than this. Once you've asked it, go to sleep. Ask what correct his measure should be taken and then get out of the game because you're useless. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and to meet my problems as he would have me.

Boy, isn't that a sissy way to do it. My basic nature is, when I'm worried or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout. Create a diversion. Yeah, I love it when I watch them go. You want to do it a little bit. It's very hard to do if my mind is running because I know I've got problems to solve here and they just keep going. Someone asked more about one thought at a time. It's very hard to do this when you're thinking.

Now, later on he talks about when agitated or doubtful, we pause and ask for the right thought or action. I've also had to learn it just because I'm doubtful it doesn't mean I need to get agitated. Doubtful is any time I have a choice. Do I like white bread or dark bread today? I've been in the state of being where that would agitate me. So

I wouldn't eat at all. I can't make a choice of this profound direction and strength.

Once I get direction, now I need strength. What I really like is the strength to do the right thing. I know it's going to be difficult. Sacrifice is involved. And I need strength. Because I just a little kid. I am weak. An amazing thing happens. My strength comes from my weakness then. I associate with some pretty strong American Indians. I'm part of one of the circles. And power comes to me. Symbols of power come to me.

Those of you who have been in my room know that there's some powerful stuff there. And one of my Mohawk friends is a very strong leader of the Wellbriety movement and the white bison movement says the same thing. You really draw power to you. And that's true. And you know why? Because I know I don't have any. As long as I think I have power, I will not look for new power. Once I understand I don't have any, I just open up and God can't stand a vacuum so when it comes.

And all I have to do is ask. That's called prayer. And then shut up and listen. And that's called meditation. And I have to learn how to do that. I'm not in the old old scene. I've learned yoga techniques and meditation techniques. What this has taught me is that if you want to be in meditation it means you want to get quiet. Let me shut this thing off. Don't teach it any new. Just shut it off. And it's easy to do if you only have one thought to worry about.

It's hard to do if you've got 25 thoughts. And it's really hard to do no matter what. How many of you meditate? How do you do that? You don't. You sit out and shut up and get quiet. That's how you meditate. But there's another form called prayerful contemplation. It's also important. There's a number of practices. Oh, in order I can't go through with it. We'll get to all that. You'd rather go play basketball. Do you play basketball?

Yeah. Are you good? Couldn't say. What couldn't you say? What does that mean? No. No. You said we're not going there. What is your favorite sport? You're obviously good at athletics. What do you play? Soccer. You good at that? Yes. How come you're good at that? You play a lot? Yeah. You play a lot. Say you've got to do anything. You just play a lot. You play a lot of basketball. You'll get good. You may never be great, but you'll be good at your play a lot.

Well, the same thing goes about prayer and meditation. If you do it a lot, you get good at it. It gets to be a habit. It makes everybody listen to it. It did mine. Never was I to pray for myself. Never was I to pray for myself. Except as my request bore on my usefulness to others. That got me, boy. I didn't find a way around this. I found a way to comply with it. The schemer never goes away. Use it. I got to thinking, what do I need the most?

I need to have a sense of the Spirit of God here within. That's what I need the most. I need to just know it. And I can't ask for that for myself. But I will give you my prayer. You'll learn to pray here. Find your own. This is mine. You can have it. Dear God, please fill me with your loving spirit and let it flow through me and into the lives of others. Now I can get it. As long as I'm willing to let it continue to flow, in order to flow through me, I have to be full.

Let it flow. Maybe, uh, Sunday morning, I'll tell you the story of the high country beaver and how I came to that. But doesn't that make sense? Just let it flow through me. It means you can't hang on to anything. And that gets harder as we get longer sober. Are you long-term sobriety folks? I bet you're facing that. I had nothing to

lose when I got here. I got a lot to lose now. What do you mean let go? My friend promised when these things were done, I would enter upon a new relationship with my creator.

There's a question implied in that. Before we go any further, this is one of the places you can get off this wagon. Do you want a new relationship with your creator? The whole idea of a relationship with God is different than believing in God or even having faith in God on a relationship. Am I willing to relate to, to have exchanges with, to participate in with, to co-operate with, something real going on? Do I want God in hand all the time?

Good question. Am I old state of mind? Hell no. I don't even know what's going on in here. Now Bruce and mine and he already knows, came to you anyway. But it's a question. This is about building a relationship with my creator. Do I want that? Well, if I do, then I'll have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. And here they are, belief in the power of God. This is about power. This is about action.

We go to the street. Monks get to live in a monastery. You and I get to carry it to the street. It takes power. Plus enough willingness, honesty, and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things with the essential requirements. I've heard that there are no must in A, but I think that qualifies. Requirement sounds like must to me if I want this way of life. Simple, but not easy. A price has to be paid. It meant the destruction of self-centeredness.

I must turn in all things to the Father, the light who presides over us all. What a lovely, lovely life it has been for me to practice this in all of my affairs, praying at the bread counter. If I've got an old image of this old man with a beard keeping score, that's just absolutely silly. We have a relationship. I fully understand he wants only the best for me, and I'm willing to cooperate in that but having him tell me what is best for me.

We could go on and on and on. And this is when Bill had his spiritual awakening. Now some people jumped on Bill one time and said, Bill, you had the advantage of that wampus experience of yours. And Bill said, you have all had it. I had mine in a moment, which you've all had the same experience. So let's take a look and see if you've had this experience. This book is also a book of mercy. As I change spiritually, my mind changes.

I begin to grow like any child. I encounter new things that are a little bit scary. And I wonder, particularly with the spiritual awakening, the first thing that comes is I think I've lost my mind. And that comes because I just have. Whatever I was using a few minutes ago, I'm not using anymore, but I don't know what to do with the new one. So throughout here, on page 14 as one of them, is a description of a spiritual event.

Carl Jung gave us one, the transforming thing about ideas and conceptions being cast aside. Here's another one. Let me ask you to ask yourself as I read this. Has this happened for me in any measure whatsoever? The moment I fully accepted these revolutionary and drastic proposals, he said, the effect was electric. Anybody felt a little charged somewhere along the way since you got here? Kind of like a little electric shock.

There was a sense of victory. The battle's over. Has that happened for you? Good. It doesn't matter what the measure is. You have experienced that, I know. You had a victory over yourself to get here. You were saying, I'm not sure I can do this. And your spirit was saying, you are going to do this. And you had a victory. I just want you to be aware of that. What a victory it was for you to be sitting here. I watched you fight the battle.

Your sword is rusty. Put it down. Followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. A peace and

serenity. These are not things that alcoholic minds and systems understand or even want. When it gets quiet inside, it's time for me to get up and stir something up. Peace and serenity seem like death when I'm sick, when I'm self-centered. I've got to be busy, busy, busy, busy, busy. There was utter confidence. That will scare you, particularly if you've been going to too many meetings.

Well, yeah, if you go to too many meetings, one of the basic messages in some activities is you've got to stay sick forever and if you feel well, you must be sick. That's garbage. I'm sorry, that's just garbage. Utter confidence. He's laying in bed probably with tube sticking out of him, all this is going on. I felt lifted up as though a great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. I've not had that one, but over the years, there are moments, and I know you've all had them, where there are moments of recognition of pure truth.

And they come along gently for me when I'm just musing, and all of a sudden it's like a banner. There it is, and a chill goes over me, just like a cold wind just blew. So I think that may be what he's talking about. Has that happened? Those are spiritual things. Those are not emotional things. If they've happened, welcome home. For a moment I was alarmed. You bet. Yeah, is this DTs or what? So I call my friend the doctor to ask if I were still sane.

He listened to the wonders I talked. Now, get a picture of Dr. Silkworth and why we love him so much. Here's this little non-alcoholic doctor. He's had Bill, this is his third time. At the end of the second time he told Lois, he might as well get him a keeper because at best he has a year, then he will be dead, or a stark raving man. Now he's got him back in, fighting off the DTs, and Bill tells him about this mountain top.

So he said, something has happened to you, I don't understand. But you better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were. And Bill had such audacity. He said, do you mind if I tell the rest of the guys about this? Now we put self-worth on the line. What does he really believe? He's got this bad drunk who's had this, what could well be DTs. He doesn't understand it, it's beyond his conception. And he wants to go around his drunk ward until all the other guys about it too, maybe.

One flew over to the cuckoo's nest. And he says, yeah. Yeah, why don't you go do that? Because here was Bill's revelation. And there's a new piece here for you and I, thank God. While I lay in the hospital, the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have been so freely given to me. There's some ego in that. But God uses our ego too. If God's everything, then ego is part of it.

That's not a new idea to awaken spiritually and then go to help others. Here's the new idea. Perhaps I could help some of them and they in turn might work with others. That's the new idea. I'm not only to help you personally.