

Big Book Weekend, location undetermined

2003 | Steps 8-9 | Reading edition

FORMAT	DURATION	RECORDING ID
Transcript PDF	01:06:20	DP-2003-WORKSHOP_07

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Transcript

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Production like that. I don't even need to talk. It's obvious I'm wonderful. And that's the first time I've ever been introduced as a commodity. My name is Don. And I am an alcoholic. I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous in Good Standing today. My home group is a Denver Thursday night group. You may not have noticed it, but institution people just get all emotional. So just put up with it. We are day by day, almost every day faced with a life and death issue.

Alcoholics Anonymous. By the grace of God and because I have done everything you have suggested I do, the way you suggested I do it, it has not been necessary for me to have a drink or a pill or a fix since December 26th of 1967. And for that I'm very grateful. And I don't say that to impress you. It impresses the hell out of me. But how many of you here are fairly new to our little old fellowship here under a year? Okay?

I want you to know something before you hear something different. You don't ever have to drink again. Relapse is not part of recovery. It will happen, but you don't have to do it. I'm extremely glad to be here for a number of reasons. Again, for you new folks, before we get lost in what I'm here to do, let me tell you some of the real reasons I'm here. The truth I've learned, this is about the people in this room. I have been living with a conscious consciousness of the presence of God, where I am He is, for 27 years. And I'm still learning from that, but it's about the people in this room.

About a year ago, 14 months, as a matter of fact, when I wake up, since you introduced me to God, God's error. That's the first thing I talked to. 14 months ago, at 6 o'clock in the morning, I woke up and it wasn't there. I was not aware. And I don't know why, but it didn't frighten me. I just quickly began to pray, which you'll understand if there's nothing there who I'm praying to. But, and the prayer was very simple. I need to know you're here. I need to know you better, and I need to be closer to you in my phone rang. The phone named Billy said, look.

I was seven years sober last week, and I drank. My friend Alan was 12 years sober last week, and he drank. And I come from an old tradition that came from Mac Cheater. What we do is sit down with you if we sponsor you, and we read the big book to you, because we know your main problem is you can't read. And we go through that entire process together. We do it with you. Everything just the way it says. And as a result of that, Mac found and I found people on drink again. And Billy said, I understand you do these, where you'll sit down with a big wip with people, particularly slippers. I said, yeah, that's true, Billy.

He said, well, you do that for us. That doesn't make me a guru. I just, I'm one of those people that's a big book fanatic. You just have to live with that. And I started to get dressed in my phone rang. That was another call, and I started to get dressed again in my phone rang. And before I got to work, I got to message loud and clear. If you would know me better, know my kids better. If you would get closer to me, get closer to my children.

So I want to thank the committee and everybody who brought me down here, but I really want to thank you

for coming. See, if you weren't here, I've got the kind of ego. I'd make this talk anyway. Oh, hell yeah. So CD, we know it. But because you're here, my life has meaning. I have to tell you know, I'm particularly delighted with some of the folks. You know, I have never been anywhere in Alcoholics Anonymous, anywhere. And I've been around the world.

But I haven't encountered someone that I've met before. When my wife and I were in Osaka, Japan, for goodness sakes, two fellows came up to us and threw an interpreter, reminded me, we had met on Oahu four years before that. And I get here and my friend Leo's here, and all kinds of people. You see, when I started this journey, nobody wanted to talk to me or have anything to do with me, and they were absolutely correct.

Absolutely correct. I'm an alcoholic who literally destroyed everything worthwhile in my life. And I couldn't even find you. I didn't even come looking for you. And I have to tell you the truth. Alcoholics Anonymous did not get me sober. God got me sober December 26, 1967, and five months later, brought me to Alcoholics Anonymous. That means I belong to you. You showed me how to live sober. I don't think drinking's my problem. I think trying to find a way to live without drinking has been my problem.

I never could figure that out. I still haven't figured that out, by the way. If you come to me and want to know how to do that, all I can tell you is what old Bob White said one time. There's two ways guaranteed to stay sober, to not get drunk. Don't swallow or hit a cop. Both of us are little drastic. I started drinking because that's what you do. If you were born in Denver, and I was, and you raised on East Colfax, and I was, at a certain point in time, there's a rite of passage.

We got a guy from an hour Air Force base to buy us a quarter whiskey, bonded bourbon, went out east of Denver to drink it and get drunk and have fun. The big guy says, if you drink it, you get drunk, you have fun. And I'm always up for that. I found a description of what happened to me in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. It was written by Carl Young, one of the finest psychiatrists in the world. He's describing a spiritual awakening. He says essentially, ideas and conceptions that used to rule the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side.

An entire new set of conceptions begins to dominate them. That's exactly what alcohol did to me. It has left me with a conclusion. I suffer from soul sickness. I've always known the answer would be spiritual for me, but I was a spiritual thief. I thought being spiritual meant you felt good all the time. You knew people. If you want a measure of insanity, that's it. The belief that I'm supposed to feel good all the time. I pursued that word while.

A wonderful thing happened. I went into that evening stupid and short. It was really ugly and weird and angry and frightened. Hell, I was only 15 for goodness' sake. I had a couple drinks of that bonded bourbon, and all of a sudden, I had plans. Oh, and they were good too. See, there was a guy in my high school class that hadn't been treating me very well. I was going to meet him back at the drive-in and whip him, and I could have done it.

Probably without even breathing hard. I was a little girl in my class but hadn't been treating me at all. She and I were going to have a visit, and I anticipated breathing a little hard. Now those aren't bad plans. That's not a bad thing. Something will bring a misfit like me into the harder life. It's not a bad deal at all. If that's all I did, I'd buy you a drink. But I didn't know that it's also in my nature that if one works, take ten.

That's visceral. I don't think that way. That's just who I am. If one works, anything worth doing is worth

abusing for goodness' sake. And by the time I got back to the drive-in, instead of what those people were going to see, what they saw was me being hauled around the drive-in by the elbows puking in the drive-way. And that's how I drank. It was minor variations. But that's how I drank. It was four years before I could even smell bond at Berlin without gagging.

And I have talked to non-alcoholic people who, having had an experience like that, don't drink anything at all again. They're weird, but I like them. They're nice. I found out what wouldn't make me so sick so quick. Now my keen alcoholic mind understood clearly what the problem had been, bonded bourbon. I've never had bonded bourbon since that day. I'm convinced today that if that's all there was, that's what I drank.

But liquor is too easy to get. And I entered into what I found in the big book, the description of alcoholism. See, the great gift you gave to me is that you took me in hand and told me what an alcoholic was, because I didn't know I was one. And then you helped me bring my own memories to that. So I could say, oh, I am one of those. Then I must have this thing. I drank for effect. Everybody drinks for effect. But I learned some things early on before liquor turned on me.

If we were going to fight tonight, I would drink vodka. Because when I drink vodka, I get me. And if you're going to fight, you might as well be a little bit me. I also get drunk and get whipped. If we were going to go to a dance, you know, it might be girls there. I like dark McCarty Rome. It makes me sensitive. And warm. I'm a good listener. Then I get drunk. I can remember early on, one of the horrors of alcoholism for me was when I couldn't feel anything.

And I could drink Cooler's beer and listen to Jim Reeves and Ferlin Husky singing things like four walls. And I could cry like a baby in his part of life again. I loved Morgan David Redwine. It makes me a poet. And I paint. I get artistic. And I play good trumpet behind Morgan David Redwine for ten minutes, and then I get sick. I really like Japanese Occadama wine. You can get so drunk on that that the next morning when you drink water, it starts all over again.

You've been there. I see the heads going. I was in my first federal penitentiary when I was 19 years old. Not because I was a big time gangster. But because of alcoholism. And I didn't know why that had happened until you told me. I found that in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. It's why I went. When I drink alcohol, I get lost. And I can't find my way home. And when you're in the Navy, that's a felony. Hey, I love the Navy.

I had, for the noblest reasons involved, to save America from the communist menace, I had left my beloved high school when I was 17 and joined the Navy to go to war. The truth was, I'd been kicked out of my beloved high school for missing classes because we had reached my friend Larry and I had discovered that it was much more fun to drive up and down East Colfax drinking beer looking for girls. And we figured the system is really stupid because we were hall monitors.

We kept attendance and they didn't miss us for 17 days. I had to get out of Denver to get too small. I desperately needed to be somebody's hero. I wanted to come back with badges. He said, I didn't know who I was and I needed somebody to tell me. I really wasn't liking what you all were telling me. And I needed to go somewhere and come back with medals on my chest. I can tell you what it sounded like. I'd walk down the street casually and I would hear it.

There he is. That's him. He lets me talk to him. He's my friend. What you like to meet you? And I'd stroll a little bit slower so they wouldn't have to run. Instead, I'm in a federal penitentiary in Tokyo, Japan. About the time he should have been saying that. And you taught me why. In the book Alcoholics Anonymous, Dr. Self Work describes clearly why I went to the penitentiary. I suffer from an allergy to alcohol and its symptom is if I drink alcohol, I break out with a craving for more alcohol.

And once I start, I cannot stop. I have lost the power of choice. It's over. And it doesn't have anything to do with whether I love my family or my work or my self or anything. It has to do with the fact that I've had a drink now and I've got to have another drink. And so I took a drink in Long Beach, California on a 24-hour liberty. And 23 days later, woke up in Pershing Square in Los Angeles. I'm not talking about not remembering that 23 days.

I remember it to this day with horror because I was a really decent human being. But during that 23 days, whatever I had to do to get a drink, I did. Or I thought about doing. And I woke up meaning that the craving on day 23 when I woke up was gone. And I woke up to the fact that I'm a decent human being and I need to get back to my family. And the fact that I'm a decent human being and I need to get back to my shift and I turn myself in with back.

And it was baffled. I love the word baffled. It's my favorite word. That's a lifestyle. I've just done everything I thought. I heard you say I should do so this would work. It didn't work. Part of the problem is my timing is terrible. And I have this ego. I wanted to be a Boy Scout. Failed tenor foot three times. I'm the kind of Boy Scout, however, that will help you across the street and not ask you if you want to go.

I've never heard the whole message. And all those feelings come up and I drink. I drank to stop feelings. I drank to have feelings. I drank to be tall to be short. I drank for all the reasons that you can think of. The horror of alcoholism, if you are one, is more often than not. I drank for no reason whatsoever. I just drank. And then I discovered amphetamines when I was 19. And found out they gave me a way to drink better and longer and with control.

I still fell down, but they were controlled falls. If you haven't been around one, it's a joy to be around a quick drunk. You need to know because I'm not going to spend much time on it. I'm also one of the freaks that came out of Berkeley in the 60s. Throwing Owsley's acid around screaming out where there's dope there's hope burned down city hall. We tried. But I am not a drug addict. And the only reason I say that is that if you are here today and you're an alcoholic, find out what you are all the way.

Some of you are alcoholic and drug addict and you really are. Some are alcoholics that have had a drug problem. Some are drug addicts who have an alcohol problem. Please find out. The 12 steps will work for anybody, but they have to have a foundation in truth. It must be found in untruth. And I spent the time to find out. I don't talk about it from here, but if anybody wants to talk about what I found out about me, I'd be glad to.

I'm sure enough an alcoholic. No question about that. But I didn't know that. Christmas week of 1967, I was on federal parole for a little mistake I had made in 1966. I was raising my two little boys. And her mother had a band and ship when, let's see, Terry was voices coming out of the air again. I thought I was over that. Come on, honey, I lost it. Where was I? Terry was two and a half and Sean was one. And their mother had gone and I was

into that time where I was raising two little boys.

Single parent homeless before it was even fashionable. And I was also into the tail end of my alcoholism. I had tried to be super straight, super freak and bounced a lot through the years. And I'd gotten past the point where it was ever even conceivable to me that I could ever be normal or right or straight. And we were just surviving now in the streets. For the last four and a half years of my alcoholism, we ran around the country.

I found in the book Alcoholics Anonymous, why I was restless, irritable and discontent. Looking for relief. But I was, I don't know to this day the Freudian reason why. All I can tell you is I was restless irritable and discontented. Today I'm a calm, I'm disgusting, I'm boring. No? I love this lady. She thinks I'm the cutest thing that ever happened. And I agree. What happened to me that week is simply that I ran out of lies.

The truth did not get me sober. I just ran out of lies. And I didn't have very many of them left. I'd long ago lost the ability to differentiate between the true and the false. But my conscience was killing me. I have always known the difference between right and wrong and that was killing me. Because I kept doing the wrong thing and could never get around to doing the right thing. It just was killing me. But I was down to just a few lies.

And one of those was, these kids and I are okay. We have a place to live. We have food. We're okay. Don't mess with us. And this week I looked around our house and I could see the lies. See, I was on federal parole. I don't know why they've given them back to me. We were on aid to dependent children because they couldn't work. It was 133 pounds and I hit that place where I couldn't get out of bed until I got a shot of speed so I could get up to go steal something to get some booze to get back to get calmed down and back to bed.

It was a terrible time. There was nothing else in life. And our welfare check hadn't gotten there so we didn't have a Christmas tree. I looked around. Our place was a pig pen. It was just a pig pen. Now Christmas tree was important. I come from a functional home. I apologize for that, but I do. There's times I don't feel I fit in A anymore. And all I mean by that is that my family is still intact. My folks are both still alive until three weeks ago when we had to put Dad in a home because he has to be in a home.

They live together. They still talk to each other. They still love one another. My little brother is probably one of the finest synthesizer musicians in the world. He just got back from the trip to Sweden and Russia because they wanted to find out what it is that he does. He's a professor of music at the University of Colorado, writes a symphony every year for the Colorado Symphony. Was riding with Stan Kenton when he was 19.

Was a booker from the Army Band when he was 21. He lived right down the hall from me. My little sister. A few years back retired from IBM as one of their top executives. She made big money and great babies. And her babies have been busy making babies. We're a prolific bunch. Her babies, because some of you guys are just lunatics, have not been able to find good husbands to go with the babies. But in my family, the whole attitude has always been.

Isn't that nice? There's another little puts baby. Let's raise it. And we do. So my family faced all the problems. As I grew up, there was a period of time when my grandfather was a grand quiggle of the Colorado Ku Klux Klan, and Dad was his second. So I had some funky ideas during that period. They both changed. It would never occur to them. So I grew up in a home where this was all going on. The one thing that nobody could deal with

was gone.

If you had asked me, or if you asked me today, to make a list of all the characteristics of the family I wish I had been brought up in, that's the one I got brought up in. And I landed 13 years old crying. One of my people going to get back from outer space and pick me up. That's what it felt like. I don't belong here. I've been listening to human beings talking. It wasn't me. I knew how I felt. I grew up on streets where they said you're not supposed to ever be afraid.

And I was terrified every bleeding minute. I couldn't show up to anybody. Terrified. I knew every morning when I woke up, something is going to happen today. And what it does, you're going to blame me for it. Well, it didn't all that much different today. When I wake up in the morning, I know something is about to happen. And I want to be there. The feeling isn't all that different. It's just the attitude. Well, anyway, we didn't have a Christmas tree.

They didn't have any money. But being restless, we walked a lot. And on the 24th, on our little stroll, we found a dollar in the snow. And that went to the Christmas tree a lot and found out you can have the biggest tree on the lot for a dollar on the 24th. And I'm alcoholic. I bought the big one. And it didn't fit the room. You know, ceiling is about 7 foot. Trees about 9 foot. So it tilted over at the top. We dressed it with garbage.

And my heart was beginning to break. The hardness around it. Because that wasn't right. Had two little presents under it. I'd managed to talk to a place called the public merchandise, Martin Denver, out of a little pair of cowboy boots and little shirts. So each of the boys would have a present. My little boys had wrapped up. Everything that would fit in blue paper towel. And put it over the tree for me. I wanted to die.

Christmas day, we went down to my folks' place. Now, these are people who face everything. They spend the day with them. And my dad met us at the door. And he said, Don, I'm sorry. But your mother said, I can't let you in here anymore. She can't stand watching you die. And I woke up. I saw the lie. I would have told you that day and really believed it. Leave me the hell alone. I'm not hurting anybody but me. And suddenly I can see I'm hurting everybody.

The folks, the kids, the bums I run with, it was just clear that that was a lie. And then my dad destroyed my last lie because he snuck us into the basement. And I was still hanging on to the idea that nobody loves us. Nobody cares. And he made a lie out of it that day and I could see it. When there's no lies left, all that's left is self-pity. And I went home with a truckload of it. And I walked past the self-pity into the truth.

And the truth that day, I must tell you, was that there was no good reason for me to be here. There really wasn't. That's the truth. Everybody be better off, including my kids in a foster home rather than living with me. My God, the year before they had been part of the federal narcotics raid on my house, where they break down the front door on the back door on the side windows and pull guns and just do terrible things.

And my little boys are sitting there and one of them almost got shot. Anything would be better for my kids than me. And I knew that. I believe that the absolute rock bottom of all human pain is the moment you know you are useless. In that moment I was useless. And I had nothing left to surrender to. You must surrender at that point. If I sponsor you and you ain't there, don't pick me for a sponsor. I'm not a sponsor who will take away your

pain.

I'll push you to the edge because I have an answer for you when you get there. Otherwise I wouldn't do that. The truth without love is cruelty. I'm confrontation without a real answer is brutality. But we love you and we have a real answer and I love you enough to tell you the truth. Anyway, I got off the subject. I had nothing left to surrender to so I did the only thing I could do. I took a two month supply of the garbage I was using and I pushed it up my arm and I drank everything in the house and I laid down and died.

And I believe I died that day and I'm so glad. I haven't had a drink since. New guy got out of bed. Didn't want to get out of bed. When I woke up the next morning I didn't feel good. The police were at the door. I knew I wasn't dead. And there wasn't anything left. I'm now in a body that won't die. Carrying with it a mind that won't work. A complete failure at living and a complete failure at dying. God. And I was taken away.

They had nine charges. It was the first one called for three years to life. The DA promised me to bring the rest of them one at a time if I beat that one but I was through. And then I would the feds five years on top of that. And I really didn't care. I was just born weary tired. I was willing not to go anywhere anybody said and do anything anybody said. If a man I didn't have to be me anymore. And I laid in the Denver County jail in detox for about six weeks.

And I don't want to ever go through that again and I don't want to ever forget it. I don't believe it would keep me sober. I have had worse detoxes. They didn't keep me sober. But that one makes me a really good sponsor. Oh yeah. I laid in that cell and pounded on my legs and on my head and just went through whatever for six weeks. So if you come to me at five weeks and say, I'm going to die. I can look you right in the eye and say, not yet.

Hang on. We got a week to go kids. Thank God nobody's gone past six weeks so far. Let me tell you about power. This is all about power. Powerlessness is my problem. Finding the power is what it's about. And the power entered my life before I ever heard the name God. Before I ever heard about alcoholics anonymous. And I'm convinced of that because with what was going on, from the day I came to trial they took me in a room with my attorney and said, we've been talking to the federal people and we all think you're really sick.

And I agreed. They said we've struck a deal. If you plead guilty to a reduced charge so we don't have to have this messy trial, we'll give you a one and a half year sentence, suspend it and give you back to the feds and they'll take you to Fort Worth, Texas to that hospital and fix what's wrong with you. And I signed the paper. I'm dumped, not an idiot. And I went to court and they changed my age to 17 so I could qualify.

I don't know what's going to happen when Social Security comes. I'm much younger than I look. If you know about power, you know the one in the state of Colorado and the federal government says Don goes from Denver to Fort Worth, Texas. That's where Don goes. Five days later I was in the fish tank of the Colorado State Penitentiary because the guy who made the deal at the last minute changed his mind and I've talked with him.

He has no idea what he changed his mind. He said this one's too sick. We can't help him. I was certified by one group as Associate of Path 2, Type 2, whatever that is. One said I was a psychopath and a psychiatrist said I was a manic depressive drug addict and I knew I just didn't feel good. He said we can't help him. He just put him

away so he didn't hurt himself or somebody else. And so I was in the fish tank and I'm forever grateful.

You came looking for me. I did not know I needed you. Didn't have a clue. Nobody had any idea that alcohol was my problem. I had disguised it with all these other behaviors. And I would tell you new people please, Dear God, understand that drama does not define alcoholism. Alcoholism is defined so simply if when you start to drink you find you cannot control the amount you drink or if when you wish to stop entirely you find you can't, you're probably on calling.

And all the drama is just excess baggage. We used to keep each other amused so that you don't get pissed at your \$20 registration. In our third week we were laying in ourselves and I can still hear the voice. The guard said you people will come down and you will listen. And I did the first sane thing in my life. I went down and I listened. And you all watch us this weekend. Those of us who are talking, you think this is a big deal?

I have to agree with Sean. This is no big deal. This is easy. Talking is easy. Listening is what's hard. And if you want to stay sober, learn to listen. God has made a listener of me. And I went down that day and I listened. What I heard was they had three guys with numbers on their chest. Smiling. I have to tell you, inmates in their natural habitat and their natural clothing are a little intimidating. Smiling inmates are absolutely terrifying.

And these three were smiling. It was that smile that says, I know something you don't know and you better learn it quick. Oh, you're dead. And I could just anyway, this guy got up and he said, my name is Doc and I'm an alcoholic. And that means that I'm powerless over alcohol and guards and drugs and all of the other circumstances in my life. And my life has become unmanageable. And if any of you smart bastards think you can still manage your lives, look at the reward the state just gave you for the nifty job you've been doing.

And the miracle was that I heard him. I heard him. They gave you some really important information. He said, your very best thinking got you to the penitentiary. You're not doing too good, are you? Well, that's where I was and I promise you I've been doing my very best. I understand clearly today standing before you my very best thinking on my own puts me in confinement. So I don't trust this thing. In fact, I unhooked it.

Oh, yeah. On its own, the only use it has is that I can drag it out and parade it in front of you and you can say, that looks surprising when you like mine. I thought I was the only one who thought that way. But once we get that done, it's really, really important to have a sponsor who knows when it's time to put it away. Okay. An unneeded alcoholic mind is a dangerous thing. We weren't allowed to go to meetings. My story is a little different because we weren't allowed to go to meetings.

I think meetings are really, really, really important. And I'm emphasizing that because what I'm about to tell you got fed back to me and somebody saying, Don says you don't have to go to meetings. Not so. I go to 25 or 30 meetings a week. Oh, yeah. Anytime two or more alcoholics are gathered together for the purpose of sobriety, that's a hey. And I have my home group and I don't hardly ever miss that. And I go to a couple of other meetings because I go trolling.

I come from the old school. Our job is to go find alcoholics that don't know if you're alcoholic. You don't have to drink. Most of them are in a meeting somewhere. So we go trolling. I sponsor four and five people at a time, which means four or five times a week. Somebody's at my house at six 30 in the morning and we're going

through the big book. That's a meeting. That's alcoholics anonymous. I've been to probably 15 meetings since I've been here.

We sat and talked about sobriety. Formal meetings are really important. But I do not believe in my heart that just going to meetings alone would keep me sober. I just don't believe it. I believe without meetings I will surely drink. But I'm fortunate. I got involved in the recovery process with the people, with the real spirit of this business from the very beginning. We weren't allowed to go to meetings. We had to spend five weekends in what was known as a 12-step study school before you were allowed to go to a meeting.

We had one meeting a week. You know that real people went from the outside. And I really wanted to go. I'm going to make a little pitch for institutions. Some of you are sitting here wondering, what do I have to offer in the prison? I've never been there. That's what you have to offer. I got a lot of information from my convex sponsors, but they didn't know how to stay out either. I really needed to talk to somebody who'd never been there.

You taught me some of the most important spiritual lessons I've ever learned, by the way. You regular folks? You want money? Oh, good job. Go to it. After you've got it, show up. While you're there, you might even want to consider working. At the end of the week, if you'll do your part, an automatic thing's happened. They'll give you some money. It won't be enough, but it'll be enough. Are you tired of being arrested?

Quit going where there's cops. You know where they are? They're in stores that are supposed to be closed. But they found open? Yeah. We could, you all know where they are. I had a wonderful experience a couple of weeks ago with the FBI. I'm going to tell you about it. It's wonderful. About three months ago, I got notified by my bank in Denver. I spent 11 years in a specially roofing business before I went to the Carolinas to work in corrections.

My bank notified me that the grand jury had subpoenaed all my bank renters. Now that doesn't frighten me. All any thorough examination of my bank records will show is that this man needed a keeper. Okay. That he doesn't belong in business for himself. That's what it'll show. And then my wife called me a few weeks after that and said, the FBI just called. And they'd like to talk to you. Well, that was kind of good news because I wanted to talk to them too.

I was curious as to what they wanted with my bank records. So I called the guy back on distance in Denver and the agent said, I have never had such a fast response. It's only been five minutes. And we visited a bit. When you visit with the FBI, that means they ask you questions and you tell them the truth. And I did that for a while with him. And then he said, well, you know, everybody I've talked to you about this is telling me essentially the same story.

What had happened? I had done a major roof for a businessman who they're investigating because he put a couple banks out of business, I guess. Anyway, they wanted to make sure the money he paid me hadn't filled her back to him. They're just running the money trace. And this FBI man said to me, it was like a Christmas present. He said, well, everybody's telling me about the same thing. I guess I won't have to bother you anymore.

Isn't that nice? I was smart enough not to say back to him, you're not bothering me now. But he wasn't. That's one of the gifts I've been given. I'm truly not, I'm noting wrong. This is the end of side one. Please turn to side

two for the continuation of this program. Me too. Audio portion will begin in a few moments. What are they going to do to me? Lock me up. They described, they told me what my disease was and I began to identify as an alcoholic.

It was a little while. I was so caught up in the drug thing, I thought I was a drug addict. And it took a little time to work that out. But I began to find out I really was an alcoholic. And I'm an alcoholic of the kind that is described in the big book. If you think you can recover on less than spiritual means, it depends on how seriously the alcoholic you were. I am seriously alcoholic. There is no human means will ever be able to keep me sober.

I just know that. It's going to take more than that. And I hate was sponsored by three very spiritual men. He said it's all or nothing. And I watched them and that's how I came to believe in the power of God. I watched it walking around. My original sponsor was doing a natural life sentence for a double murder. He committed one morning when he was 17 years old in a shootout with a police. He killed a couple people on the street.

The man telling me that story could not do that. And I knew that he couldn't do that. And I asked him about it and he said that's right. I've been changed. God changed me. Hell, I didn't care who changed him. He'd been changed and all I came here for was to be changed. And I'm convinced to this day that this is all about change. If you're the same person two years from now as you are today sitting here, you'll probably drink again.

There has to be change here. Still didn't trust him entirely. Phil Gutierrez taught me some lessons. Phil was a marvel. Phil was a Guamanian from Guam. Looked like an old Chinese pirate. Bad looking dude. Phil was a bad dude. He was doing some time there for throwing some people out of a three-story window on his last drunk. But this man was the gentlest, kindest, most loving human being I've ever met. Phil was my hero.

Phil was what I wished I could be. He taught me to touch in a penitentiary where that's a little risky. But Phil's kind of touching was never ever questioned by anybody. See, Phil knew something about us. We're not hips, slick and cool. We're not smart. The gift that God has given us in Alcoholics Anonymous, and it's a pure gift and it's a real gift, is a gift of healing. We are healers. He sends us the sickest people on the planet and says they're yours.

Show them how to heal. Don't make them smart. Don't make them slip. Help them heal. And so I want to be a good healer. And so I started watching healers. What do healers do? My wife's a healer. She works with babies and I've watched her. She picks them up and she pats them. And she says things like, you're in the right place. You stay with us, you'll be alright. They don't know the words, but she rocks them and pats them and talks to them.

It sounds similar to me to what we do. I got to thinking about the great healer one time. He'd walk along the road and he'd come upon some guy who was down there blind and crippled and covered with sores and desperately alone. Now he knew something that we know. This guy thought he was alone because he was blind and crippled and covered with sores. The great healer knew that he was blind and crippled and covered with sores because he thought he was alone.

So what would he do? He'd reach out and touch him and say, hey, is anybody there? Once you touch someone, they can't be alone and they can hate you for touching them. But they can't be alone. And this is the

lonely disease. And what do we do when they come to us? First thing we stick out our hand and we touch them. We grab them by the elbow in some places we hug them. We hug them anyway. And then he would say to them, hey, you don't have to do this anymore.

What do we say? You don't have to drink anymore. And we get the same response out of the drunk and said, I'm sure he got, huh? I didn't know. I didn't know people have said for years to me, you better quit drinking. And I said, oh, I'd love to. How do you do that? And so on and so on. Yeah, he'd say, if you don't want to do this anymore, just tell me. Do you want to stop this? And if they said yes, he would say, okay, stop this.

Oh, would you like to get up? Oh, yeah. Okay, get up. And we don't do a whole lot more than that, do we? We really don't. We walk day by day with the new people and keep waking them up. Well, anyway, they did all this stuff for me. I only got a few minutes left and there's some really important things I want to share with you. I was hand carried through the steps. When I came to the third step, I had a sponsor who was an absolute joy.

He loved me more than he loved himself, I think, because he took me to the very edge. He did not give me a new concept of God. He destroyed all of my old ones. And they all had to do with Santa Claus. You know, what's he going to do for me? And I had none left, and I can remember screaming at him. He was asking me to turn my life over to the care of nothing. And he said, well, why not? Nothing can run it better than you've been doing it.

It's one of those kind. After a phony inventory, if you're new, don't worry about can I do this right? You can't. You can't do it wrong either. We ended up back with him as he described, I've gone to myself and said the third step prayer with all the earnestness in my little heart. And then I sat back to wait for my flash of light, knowing that I would be transformed and my green clothes would turn white and they'd call me and say, okay, we'll go home now, we don't need to hear anymore.

And absolutely nothing happened, nothing. And I'm alcoholic and that's unbearable pain. If that wall falls that way, only the people sitting against it are going to even respond to it, the rest of us can handle it. It's just a crisis with the hell, but nothing happened. And so I went back and complained. I went to him with the alcoholic war cry on my lips. Where's mine? That can't be mine. It's not big enough. That can't be mine.

It's the wrong color. Where's mine? There's not enough of it. My sponsor said, you dummy, you ought to be grateful. You didn't have a flash of light. They nearly killed you all your life. And we began to discuss them. Southern comfort on a roof in Phoenix, Arizona in September will give you a flash of light. I had a vision, eating peyote with the Indians in Nevada. It was an Easter meeting one time. Great bird flying high with no head and understood.

That's me and my life, flying high and going nowhere. It kept me sober four months. We are promised a new mind. In fact, it's suggested by Dr. Silkworth if we don't have an entire psychic change. There's very little hope of recovery. I've got to have a new mind. My old one's too bad and he broke him. There's too many pieces missing. I've got to have a whole new way of thinking about things and looking at life. My sponsor carried me into mind because he loved me.

I had one final reservation. I was convinced that if I truly surrendered to God all the way, he'd put me on the

corner of Colfax and Broadway and Denver handing out watchtower magazines and asking strangers, have you been saved, brother? And I couldn't see me doing that. I had this plush apartment in cell B49, right? And the life was good. My sponsor said, oh, well, let's talk about that. And for you new people, that's sponsor talk.

It doesn't mean let us talk about that. You don't have any part of the discussion. He said to me, the greatest loved words I've ever heard. He said, Don, do you suppose that the guy down there at Colfax and Broadway today, handing out watchtower magazines, had breakfast where he wanted to? And I said, probably. And he said, you did. Do you suppose that that man is making a fool himself down there? He was wearing clothes.

He picked out to do it in. And I said, probably. And he said, you're not. Do you suppose when he's all through that he gets to go home? Of course I did. What he did was carry me into my new mind and laid the foundation. And the foundation is simple. Anything at all that God may have in mind for me is better than anything at all that I will ever have in mind for me. And that's the deal. And I've been living that way for 27 years now.

And I'm imperfect at it. But that is how I live. And the contrasts are incredible to me. When I ran my life, I lived in an 8x10 toilet. My children were in a foster home. My people wouldn't see me on Christmas day. Lower. Since I gave it up and just started saying yes to everything. As long as it comes from you, I've been all over the world. You have given me some treasured gifts. I've been all over the United States and Canada.

You sent me to Guatemala and to Puerto Rico. In 1988, you allowed me to go to Russia and Estonia on your behalf. It was West Palm Beach, Florida. Wonderful place. But if I had made a list of where I want to go in my life, you guys wouldn't have been on it. And that's not because it's a bad place. It would have never have occurred to me to come to the PGA resort in West Palm. It would never have occurred to me. And that's what I like about living with God as my director.

He thinks up stuff I would never think of. This lady over here is sane. There is no way I would have ever even looked for one sane. I almost didn't marry her. Being in love with her wasn't enough. It took more than that. We'll tell you something amazing. I'm going to talk just a minute or two about some gifts. Here's a gift I've been given. We have been married a little over 18 years without a fight. That's a gift. We don't always agree, but it is a greed that if I start yelling, I'm wrong.

That's not an agreement she made. Me and God talked about that one time. She has two darling daughters. My daughters. I had two teenage louts and she had this five-year-old and three-year-old and almost missed him. And I promised Kelly I'd tell you about a couple of things with her. Love is the gift from God. And it comes through his people. This little girl, bless her heart. She has been a thorn in my side. I have a mouthy one.

She's not afraid of me. What a gift in a family. My children are not afraid of me. That does not always make me comfortable, by the way. My children are definitely smarter than me. She had an occasion one time to write a little deal on her dad in school. And her real dad is a Denver detective. And she picked me instead. She wrote six or seven pages of some of the neatest stuff I've ever read. Ever read. But the last paragraph rocked me.

She said, if I'd have had a choice, I would have picked on from my dad. But I didn't have a choice. So God picked him and brought him to me. So that's how I feel about you. I didn't have a choice. So God brought you to me. One morning these girls gave me a marvelous experience. I had gotten meditation down to an art. And this

morning meditation was incredible. I wasn't walking. I was just kind of floating through the house.

And I don't know if you've been around little girls much, but when they get on the peck, their mouths are awful. And Lisa said something to Kelly that sounded like, wah, tah, tah, tah, tah, tah. And Kelly responded, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah. And I did a really stupid thing. I said, don't do that. And I didn't know at the time, but that's little girl talk for, oh, dad once in the game. So the volume went up. And I started touching the floor.

And I hollered. Knock it off out there. Which means in little girl talk, we've got him now. They went berserk. And I went berserk. In my home, because the spiritual life calls for solitude and privacy, doors are really important. If yours is closed, we won't mess with you. I said, get to your rooms. And they were laughing as they ran up the stairs to their rooms and went in and slammed the doors. And I leaped in one bound.

I was at the top of the stairs screaming out, when I slam them, we're not going to have them. And I'm taking the doors off the hinges. And they went on to school. I hauled these heavy doors with my righteous anger down to the basement. I got to the basement. And one of the things I've got to warn you about is if you start asking God for help way back here, you get it whether you want it or not. And the voice came to my mind.

You dummy. You've got to carry these doors all the way back up. Rehang them. And then when those little girls get home, you've got to apologize for being such a jerk. And I hadn't even done anything. So I did what I'd been taught. Whatever separated me from those children was separating me from God and it was some aspect of self involved here. It was brutally simple and ugly. They were making noise in my house. How dare they disrupt my sanctuary.

And that's all there was to that. They lived there too. And I cleared that away and started praying for an answer and I got one. When they start doing that now, I send myself to my room. It's just a lot easier. That was for you, Al. I'll tell you about my little brother and then we'll go do whatever we're going to do next. The making of a man has been the most important thing in my life. The end result of making a man is doubly important right now because as I said about three weeks ago, we had to put my dad in the home.

We're losing him. And he won't be with us much longer. I don't know how much long mom's going to stick around when he goes. But I know that's inevitable. One of the things I know because I'm a spiritual being and understand it is that folks come and folks go and some folks stay longer than others. And that's all I know for sure. And I mentioned I'm a spiritual being. I thought I was a human being trying to have a spiritual experience and I discovered I'm a spiritual being having a human experience, which means I'm really human.

I'm not afraid of the human experience. If I'm one of God's kids, I'm a spiritual being. It also means nothing else works for me. The making of a man is the setting straight, the crooked path. The getting square with the world has been the most important activity of my sobriety next to talking with new drunks. And it even falls in with that. I have an obligation to pass back when I was given. Some of those amends I got cleared quickly.

The stuff with my folks is really important. When we put Dad in the home, he broke my heart to walk off, parked the wheelchair and walk off. But it was just the normal heartbreak. See, I don't ever have to stand at my dad's grave and say, I wish I'd have said this, pop, or anybody else's. I'm clean. If I get nothing else out of this deal, I'm clean. I'll screw something up tomorrow. But you taught me I'm straightening it up tomorrow, too, right

away.

I want to stay clean. In staying clean, my little brother, Lussie's heart, was about 22 years before he could really feel comfortable with me. A long time before it even talked to me. I did him some grave harm. I hurt our name. We live in the same town. And there's only one Prince family in the town. And I damaged our name and that damaged him. And I harmed our parents and that hurt him because he loved him. And I made a shambles out of our life, our name.

And that bothered him. And there's nothing I could ever do to square that, except get my own life in order. So I never tried to impress him. I just got my own life in order. I was about 22 years sober and he invited my wife over for dinner for his birthday, first time ever. We went. He said at the end of that meeting, he said, Don, I don't know if you and I will ever be friends. But tonight was pleasant. We can do this again.

And we began opening that door. I'm going to tell you about a gift, the greatest gift I've been given. One of the ways I've made amends to my parents because I was disappeared for a long period of time. They didn't know where the kids and I were. On a regular basis I go by and let them see I'm okay. Mom said one time all she wanted was for me to be happy. So I go by and show her I'm happy regularly. I've been in the Carolinas for two years because one of my messengers came by and said, the score of the Carolinas.

Learn to listen for your messengers. Don't listen to mine. You may not want to go to the Carolinas. But the upside of that is that whenever I got home on a visit, I always went by to see the folks. And I was sitting visiting with them and Roy and I just had done a few things together, not much. And I was sitting there with my leg crossed over and he walked in and sat down and all of a sudden he reached out and kicked me on the bottom of the shoe.

And he said, I'm really glad to see you. And he really truly was. He said, look, next time you're in town, why don't you and I go up to the cabin. We've got a little cabin up above Bailey. We'll do a little fishing and fooling around. And of course the next time in town that's where we went. We didn't catch any fish. We stomped around and beat our ponds and got wet. Went back to the cabin and played cribbage. And I'm honest in every aspect of my life except games.

And I don't cheat. I'm just devious. I didn't remind him that cribbage is an institution game. What I told him was that, oh, it has been a long time since I played that, Roy. You will probably have to teach me how to count again and what the cards mean. I cleaned up on him. It was brutal. He has since learned how because he cleaned me last time. But in the midst of that, we started to visit. We talked with each other.

My little brother gave me the most precious gift. He gave me that deepest part of himself, what he thought about himself. He said, Don, I'm 58 years old now and I believe I made a decent contribution to life. You don't just tell that to anybody. I was his hero and I destroyed it. But I'm his hero again. So I told him that he gave me a gift beyond measure. I have prayed and searched and read and plotted in my mind for years to find a way to tell you all how I feel about you and how much I love you.

Well, I'm 61. And because of you, I've made a decent contribution. What I have raised.