

Roy P. Interview
8/20/2010



Roy P.: Back to the east coast as early as it did because he knew everybody. He knew Jimmy K. He knew the guy who started Gambler's Anonymous. I don't remember his name, but I met him that same weekend I met Jimmy K. I met the guy—all I remember, he was a professional musician, a drummer, and his story was working in Vegas, and all that stuff. He was always pawning his way to make a living just so he could stay at the tables. But Bob, he had such a good, kind heart. Everybody liked him, man. Everybody liked him.

Boyd P.: Those are the guys right there.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: It's wonderful too because NA is full of the kind souls that helped us out in the beginning through the NA Fellowship, like Bob.

Roy: Yep.

Boyd: Danny, you've got everything.

Roy: Did you see the picture with my name?

Boyd: Yeah, that was marked out.

Roy: They I put "junkie" after my name.

Danny M.: You can go out front if you want and close the door, man.

Boyd: Yeah, I'm going to step outside here.

Danny: You're going to talk then?

Boyd: No, I'm just going to speak with Roy.

Danny: Take this with you.

Boyd: Oh, ok. I wasn't going to let him stay outside smoking by himself. Well, it's good, man. It's really good to meet you. I'm going to sit here and record this right now.

Danny: It's already recording.

Boyd: Oh, is it already? Are you sure? Yeah, ok it is. Excuse me. Sorry.

Danny: Today is August 20, 2010. We're here interviewing Roy P. It's Boyd Pickard and Danny Martino.

Boyd: That's right.

Danny: It's a Friday afternoon.

Boyd: We're in Danny's carport right now. We're just stepping outside so Roy can smoke on the pipe for a little bit. I didn't want you to come out here and be all by yourself.

Roy P.: Good. Good.

Boyd: It's good to meet you. It really is. I've enjoyed talking with you on the phone. Danny's been telling me a lot about you. We've been having a whirlwind here this past week.

Roy: Well, you know, I was thinking. If you ever get back, it'd be really great to take you to that Eagleville meeting on Wednesday night. It's an H & I commitment, but we could all go. The people know me. We could go there and sit in the meeting, that "This is it. This is where it started." I love taking that commitment. I'll take it for months at a time when I can. Cuz it's like, "Wow, man, this is where it all started." The first meeting in the city of Philadelphia at [Broad and Duncannon?], it hasn't been continuous through the years, but at some point, they did start it back up at that church, and they still have it in the basement although they tell me they got toilet facilities down there now. Just to go to that meeting, it's like, "This is it."

Danny: What's the name of that? At Paul Saint's church?

Roy: It was Holy Child Church at Broad and Duncannon. See, we didn't go by all that back then. It was just the

Boyd: Thursday night meeting.

Roy: the Broad and Duncannon meeting, or the 13th and [Ruskin?] meeting or the 10th and the Boulevard meeting. We weren't that creative for all these fancy names, "Back to the Beginning", we didn't have that creativity with this. We're all a bunch of friggin' burnouts. It was just like

Boyd: let's just start a meeting.

Roy: Yeah, but if sometime you have that, and we could just hit those two places in a week just to really get that flavor of like, "Wow. This is it. This is where the thing kicked off."

Boyd: That'd be awesome. I would enjoy that. Now, Wednesday night, and then what night?

Roy: Wednesday night and the Broad and [Duncannon?] is on Monday nights.

Boyd: On Monday nights ok.

Danny: Been to Broad and Duncannon?

Roy: No, I haven't gotten down there. Every Monday night, some crap's been going on the last month.

Danny: How do you know it's Monday night?

Roy: Oh, it's in the book. Cuz I talked to somebody down there. That night I spoke at

Danny: Oxford Circle.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: That would be awesome. I would very much enjoy that. Believe me, Roy, when I was riding up here, I was just getting a big sense of awe and appreciation because I was coming up here to come where it all started at on the east coast. It really was. I mean, I was tearing up. I was really getting emotional.

Roy: I see it so clearly today how the Higher Power's hand worked through everything cuz He loves drug addicts. He loves us. Gave us this Narcotics Anonymous program. It's like, "Wow," you know? There's just no way around it.

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: His hand was working, and even though we were all crazy and broken and these really pathetic, poor people, all of us, and He worked through us and made something really good out of it. It's like, "wow."

Boyd: I know. I get chills thinking about it. I really do.

Roy: Yeah. Yeah.

Danny: I'll go to that Monday meeting with you whenever you want.

Roy: Yeah, that'd be great. That'd be great.

Danny: Absolutely, man.

Roy: I want to see how this [inaudible] going to sound like a horror story, cuz I have this idea in my mind, "I'm not going to get sick at all." Now, whether that's true or not with this [Nexavar], we'll see. I start tomorrow.

Danny: On a Saturday?

Roy: It's oral. See, they can't do that. They got no solution for liver cancer.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: Oh, I didn't tell you. The first good news in a long time...I had tests on Wednesday. Yesterday, they told me the cancer has not spread to any other organs. I still got a shot, a long shot, but I still got a shot at getting a replacement liver.

Boyd: Oh really?

Roy: That's the only solution for liver cancer. The medical establishment has no other solution. This Nexavar, they give it to you, the idea of my taking it is to stabilize it. If they can stabilize it, keep any more big growths from growing and get four or five more months of stability, then I get back on the transplant list.

Boyd: Awesome. That's excellent news.

Roy: The news that came yesterday, Maureen and I are in the car. It was the first good news in a long time cuz I was told...I've been told everything from, "You have 6 months to live," to "We don't know. You could go anytime." The last month has been like getting bombed just constantly. It was good news. So, I got a shot.

Boyd: Congratulations.

Roy: I got a shot. Cuz my dream, it may sound corny and jive, but my dream is to be alive in 2013, so I can go to that big convention down there.

Boyd: I hear you.

Roy: That's my dream.

Boyd: Well, I'm going to be praying for you and rooting for you, man. I really am. I understand. I really do. I want you to be there too.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Cuz I'll be watching you up on stage.

Roy: It'll be cool being there. It'll be really cool.

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: So, I got some good news. I'll take that medicine, and I'm going to persevere cuz the doctor did say how long you can take it is going to depend on your body. I'm just going to do it. The program has given me these last couple years. In my head, in my spirit, I'm going to get through it. No matter how it turns out, it's going to be good. It's going to be good. That doesn't mean...I may not get the transplant or any of that. It's going to be good no matter what. I really mean that. I really got a sense for that, and that was given to me.

Boyd: I understand. I've got Hep C, and I found out that I had it maybe 5 to 7 years ago. I wasn't expecting it or anything. When I found out the news, it just rocked my little world. What came out of it, Roy, was something that you're talking about. Through a bit of a process and praying, all of a sudden, after awhile, through weeks, maybe it was a month, whatever, I got this deep sense that everything was going to be ok. That didn't necessarily mean that I was still going to be here, that Hep C might get me, but what I felt was a deep peace that even if that happened, I was still going to be ok. It's undescrivable. I don't know what it is. It wasn't me. NA. It was something greater than me, that's for sure.

Roy: The program really works. A spiritual program, man, and it really, really works. It gives us everything we need.

Boyd: I know.

Roy: It's cool.

Boyd: It really does. It's way cool. Like you said, God loves us drug addicts. It's a fact. I was listening to a couple of your tapes on the way up here, and you definitely said that in Florida, and you also said it, I guess it's New York...I'm not sure if it was there. There was another place, and it's got a bunch of letters in front of it. My history partner, Chris, actually had the tape.

Danny: Where'd you speak at recently besides New York and Florida?

Roy: Might have been, they had this thing down in Delaware. They were celebrating in the Wilmington area.

Boyd: That might have been it. You spoke there?

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: That might have been where it was. It's recent.

Danny: Did it say SWANA?

Boyd: It did.

Danny: Small Wonder Area Narcotics Anonymous. That's Delaware.

Boyd: That's exactly it. It had just the SW on there.

Danny: SWANA. It stands for Small Wonder Area Narcotics Anonymous.

Boyd: Ok. I gotcha.

Danny: I would've went to that. I didn't even know you spoke down there.

Roy: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know how that developed. People just ask and I say, "Yeah. Sure!"

Danny: What are you doing tomorrow morning?

Roy: I'm going to start the medicine.

Danny: In the morning?

Roy: Yeah, so, I don't know how I'm going to be.

Boyd: You're going to be at home and hanging out.

Danny: What are doing, taking a [inaudible]. Is that what you're taking.

Roy: No, it's called Nexavara. It's a oral chemotherapy drug that they use for liver cancer.

Danny: Well, I heard you talking about those things in your throat. I gotta take a pill for them because I was on that medicine.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: I still take it.

Roy: Yeah, she was running down all the stuff that could happen. We'll see. See, I eat a goofy diet. I make the wheatgrass juice every day. It tastes horrible, but I drink it anyway. I've been doing that for years because my family did that: my mother, my grandmother. My grandmother lived to 105.

Boyd: Oh wow.

Roy: And my mother's 88.

Danny: Your mom's still alive?

Roy: Yeah. And I just patched things up to them just [three?] weeks ago. I hadn't spoken with them for seven years. They were pretty well pissed at me cuz there was a family trust, and I looted it. It really made things a little tough for them. They should have had a really comfortable—not that they're not comfortable—but they should have had

Boyd: more comfortability. Yeah, I understand. Addiction does it.

Roy: So, they were pretty pissed at me. I had paid back some of the money and had said I was sorry, but that just, still pissed. After not speaking with them between 7 or 8 years of seeing them, I called them up, and said, "Look, things are going down for me; I don't know what's going to happen. It's not good. I just want you to know, I don't want there to be any hard feelings. There's none on my part. I love you guys," and they just opened up, and we've been great. I think next weekend they're going to come up to the house and see me.

Boyd: Awesome.

Danny: Who's that?

Roy: My sister and my mom.

Boyd: Lots of healing going on there.

Roy: Yeah, a lot of good stuff. Bad thing is causing it, but a lot of good stuff.

Danny: Nothing like a healed heart, man.

Boyd: That's right. It really is, man.

Danny: That's why them Steps are there.

Roy: Yep. I thought like, let's say I do pass, and then they hear about it 6 months or a year later, "Oh, my son died." "Oh, my brother died." I thought, "I don't want it to go down that way. That's really unkind, and I don't want there to be any unkindness in me." That's why I called. I want everything to be cool.

Boyd: I understand completely. Ok.

Danny: We wrote up some questions here.

Boyd: Yeah, we did. I'm going to set this down here.

Roy: You know that young men's, to get your name up on the wall, they didn't care how much time you had. You could walk in there and have 10 years, and it was still, "You have to have 90 meetings in 90 days down in this club."

Boyd: 90 meetings in 90 days to get your name up there?

Roy: To get your name up on the wall. As far as they were concerned, everybody...all other AA was full of shit. There was no AA message other than the Young Men's Club. Every place else, they were full of shit, didn't know what was going, didn't know their ass from a hole in the ground. They were the only real AA.

Danny: I just want to interject for a second. It's August 20, 2010. I'm here with Boyd Pickard and Roy Porta. We are doing an interview with Roy on the history of Narcotics Anonymous. Of course, I'm here, Danny Martino. We're all recovering addicts.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: We will proceed. You wrote some stuff down?

Roy: Yeah. I wrote because when we went to the celebration up in New York last fall, Mike S., who was one of the brothers—the Sheehan brothers.

Boyd: Right. Right.

Roy: He came up and stayed with me for a week.

Boyd: Oh cool.

Roy: So, it was Mike; it was Maureen, the woman I live with, and she just celebrated 30 years on Monday.

Danny: Beautiful.

Boyd: Beautiful is right.

Roy: They were there at the very beginning. They were there. The Sheehan brothers, 1970, Maureen, '71, and they were involved in starting up all the early meetings at Philly and New Jersey. So, we sat down and talked, and then Mike talked with Ray T. Ray came around, like '72, with his brother Brian. So, there was some dialogue so we could get it down, "Where was the first meeting we started?" "Why did we move from this meeting to that meeting?" "Why did we close Springfield and move it to 10th?" So, we got a really good sense of...it wasn't just my memory anymore. It was the four of us.

Danny: You worked it out.

Roy: Yeah, and I thought that was really good, so I had taken...

Boyd: Are those notes from the meeting that you guys had?

Roy: Yeah, I had taken notes.

Danny: You know I want them right?

Roy: Yeah. Yeah. You know, a lot of the meetings, there's no history of: Chester County Prison, everybody knows about that; Haverford State Hospital; St. Luke's Hospital, they had a locked detox heroin unit down there; the Joey Bishop Lounge; the VA Hospital out there in West Philly, there was a locked detox ward for the guys coming back from Vietnam; Walson Army Hospital out at Fort Dix, they had another locked ward for heroin detox, and they were tough meetings because those guys were getting dishonorably discharged. They were coming back from the debacle in Vietnam. Public opinion was treating them like they were pieces of crap, and here they were. Here we are, these NA guys coming in like, "Hey guys, there's a way." So, the hostility, you could cut it with a knife, and a lot of guys were afraid to go into these things, but we did it anyway. Bucks County Prison, Montgomery County Prison, Barbary State Hospital, [Friends?] Hospital, Today, Inc., but the VA hospital and the Walson army hospital, there really isn't any record that I've seen in anything you have.

Danny: No.

Roy: One of the things, there were always more meetings around than were on those meeting lists because there were one or two people who were in charge of the meeting

lists, and if they did not like the way a meeting was being run, or they didn't like the guy who was the main person at that meeting, they didn't make it on the list.

Boyd: Who made the lists?

Roy: I don't want to say. I don't want to say, man. I don't want to put anybody...I'm not going to say anything bad about anybody.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: But that's how it went down. There was a meeting in Trenton that went back to 1971 also, and it was there a long time, and it never made a meeting list because they said it violated the Traditions because it was being held in a state facility, and that the state facility was some office building that had something to do with substance abuse outreach and different things they were trying to do, but they provided us with a room, and we had a meeting there. Eventually, it went to two meetings a week there. It was a good, solid meeting. They got a lot of people from that area there: black guys, Puerto Rican guys. I used to really enjoy it, but there were other people...cuz this one hippie kind of guy, he was the main guy at the meeting, they didn't like him.

Danny: Tell us the story about trying to start that [Bryn Mawr?] meeting with the state trooper.

Roy: Ok. I had gotten leads, cuz when I came back from California, I got a lot of leads from people I knew in AA about potential meeting places. One of them was over in Riverside, New Jersey. There was a youth center. So, I went over there, and the guy who ran it was this old guy, and he was an ex-state trooper. I laid out to him; I had my White Books cuz a guy from the Young Men's club had printed up thousands of them for me.

Danny: What was his name?

Roy: Bill the printer. Bill Reed. Everybody at the young men's club had a moniker. In early NA, a lot of us had that, not me cuz Roy's not a real common name, but a lot of other guys had monikers after their names.

Danny: Sam the roofer.

Roy: Yeah. Everybody had some kind of...

Boyd: It still goes on in our area.

Roy: I like it. I think it's kind of cool.

Boyd: Quiet Tom and Johnny the plumber, all that sort of stuff.

Roy: Byberry Bob. Byberry was the state hospital. We called him Byberry Bob cuz he was pretty crazy. Yeah. I went over there, started laying out about NA to the guy, and the guy freaked. The guy started, "You can't do that over here. There's no way addicts are allowed to meet. It's against the law." He started quoting all kinds of legal this and that, all these rules and regulations that there was no way addicts were allowed to congregate for any reason. He told me that if I tried to do something like that, we tried to do something like that, he was going to get the state troopers involved and get us all locked up. I remember being blown away, like, "Yo, man, we're trying to do something here with our lives. We're not using anymore. We want to straighten our lives out and get better and all, and you're coming down on us like we're all prison material." I expected to get a pat on the back and instead got a kick in the pants. There were a lot of setbacks like that. People were really afraid of drug addicts congregating and just drug addicts coming together. It has to be put into the context of the times: '69, '70, '71. Nixon was going berserk with his anti-drug laws, and all American ills were because of this counterculture and the drugs and that was behind all ills that America was experiencing.

And here we were, these clean addicts who wanted to do something, and a lot of that fallout came down on us. “What are you talking about, you want to help yourself? You should all go out and jump off a building. That’s how you’d help us.” That’s how a lot of people thought, you know? I think the hard time we got was a product of the overall environment in the United States.

Danny: We also had the Charlie Manson thing going on, the Sharon Tate murders, all that stuff in California.

Roy: You had all that, and all that was associated in people’s mind with the madness and propaganda from the government that separated alcohol use from other drugs and demonized the other drugs. Tried to demonize alcohol, and that didn’t work. They kept up the demonization of alcohol and we became dope fiends and fiends. Any smackhead, what kind of fiend can that be? The guy’s laying there, nodding out with mucus coming out of his nose. Come on! That’s no fiend.

Boyd: He’s asleep.

Roy: Right.

Danny: Can we start this from the beginning, about your mom living in Philly and your dad in California and how you went back and forth and all that?

Roy: Yeah. Do you want me to start where I first heard about...you don’t want to know all the stuff I did on the street, right?

Boyd: Roy, this is your time.

Roy: I’ll tell you how it went down because what I see is a series of unrelated events that you could look at like a pinball machine, where the ball is just bouncing all over the thing, but it’s not. It’s being somehow, through a lot of madness and just things that don’t seem related, there was a hand that was working through all of that. Today, I see that clearly. I got chased out of the Bay area. I got chased out by the police and by a group of individuals who did a lot of drug deals.

Danny: That’s right below San Francisco Bay area.

Boyd: The whole Bay area.

Roy: San Francisco is the whole Bay area.

Danny: Oh, ok.

Roy: These guys controlled a lot of the

Danny: You were born and raised there?

Roy: I was raised in San Francisco, yeah.

Danny: Ok. Where were you born at?

Roy: I was born back here. My parents met back here. My father was in med school; my mother was finishing up her studies for physical therapy. They met, got married, I was born, and then they moved.

Danny: When were you born?

Roy: 1949. They moved to California, and that’s where I was raised because that’s where my father was raised.

Danny: Where’d he go to school at?

Roy: Hahnemann was the medical school.

Danny: Still is too.

Roy: Yeah. That’s where he went. They were both very smart people. My mother went to University of Pennsylvania; she graduated cum laude in a day where the women, that was a big, big deal for a woman. My father had a football scholarship to USF out in San

Francisco, varsity player, this big guy. They were really motivated people, but my father had gotten involved with drugs. Amphetamines he became addicted to and was addicted to them all his life. They ended up killing him. Amphetamines don't have a really good effect on people's character or personality, and he was a badass son-of-a-bitch. He really abused, my sister more so cuz it was sexual, and myself physically and mentally. It was awful growing up there. It was awful. And the thing is, people couldn't conceive, cuz we were upper middle class. I was born here, went back, lived out there in a neighborhood called Hillsboro and the type of people...two properties down, Caspar Weinberger lived there, and he was Reagan's Secretary of Defense. About 8 houses down, Shirley Temple Black lived there, who was the child movie star. Within walking distance, Bing Crosby had one of his homes. This was big time money. That's what I was raised with and highly educated. I rejected all that. I mean, I dropped out of high school. That was my way of giving the finger to their system. Tried to become a hippie and all that. I was a drug addict.

Danny: How old were you when you started using?

Roy: My father turned me on to amphetamines when I was 15 years old. From the first time I took them, because I was afraid all the time, I didn't know how to get along with people, wouldn't try anything, wouldn't try any sports, wouldn't try nothing. He gave me a bottle of Benz amphetamine sulfate, Benzedrine. I took that, and it was like, "This is what I'm looking for, man. This is it. I don't need anybody. I'm cool." I think I probably sat there all night and talked to myself. I was supposed to be studying for some final, a freshman in high school. I probably sat there all night and talked to myself. It was like, "Yeah, this is cool. This is all I want to do." From there, that was it. At the same time, the hippie stuff was getting fired up in San Francisco with the LSD. I got involved in all that, but I was never like the hippies. I wanted to be cuz I saw some good things there, saw people helping each other; I saw people being kind to each other, sharing food. They used to have these things in Golden Gate Park, where they would put out food. This group called The Diggers would make this food, and it was good food, vegetarian stuff, but it was good food. But I just couldn't belong because all I wanted to do was shoot up methamphetamine. I couldn't fit in. That's been the story of my life until really these past 16 years with Narcotics Anonymous. I surrendered and become a part of this program. Even though there were periods of complacency in this 16 years, outside events which were long-term consequences of my addiction, always kicked me in the ass and got me back involved. Today, the sense of belonging, and the sense of, "My life has meaning today because of Narcotics Anonymous." If during this interview, I start to cry, I've gotten really emotional this past year, and as things have gone on in the health, the news about my health has gotten worse, I've become more emotional. And it's not just sad. It's like a joyfulness. There was a twinge of sadness there, but I can't really explain it. But it's not sad, "Boohoo, poor me." It's like a joy. NA gives me life...I have meaning in my life. I'm part of something really good today, and really, thinking back, that's what I wanted all my life. The drugs killed it off for a long period of time, but it was always there. I always wanted to just be part of something good, to do something good with my life, to help other people.

Danny: You did, buddy.

Boyd: You did. That's for sure, Roy.

Roy: God gave me those opportunities, and it's like...it's a dream. It's a miracle. All our lives are God's miracles. I tell myself that today to keep my mind positive. Otherwise, it starts getting thoughts like, "Oh, you're a dead man walking." No, no, no. My life's a miracle because of Narcotics Anonymous, what my Higher Power does for me each day. My life's a miracle, and it is for everybody who's a member of this program. That to me is, hands down, I don't second guess that.

Danny: Can we get back to San Francisco?

Roy: Yeah. So anyway, I got chased out of the Bay area. These guys, the cops led them to believe that I had ratted people out. It took me awhile to figure things out, but the police had their own informant in there because when I walked into the thing to bring the guy the money, they let me handle a little drug deal selling kilos. The police were in there waiting. It wasn't me that ratted anybody out. They were waiting. I was able to put the cops in a tough situation because there was marijuana they confiscated that they didn't turn in. So, I went to court for people. Anyway, the police told my father, "He comes back to the Bay area, he's gonna disappear." I knew the drug guys, I'd be fertilizing almond trees out in San Fernando Valley. I was chased out of the Bay area. My mother lived in Palm Springs. I was down there.

Danny: They were divorced and separated by then?

Roy: Yeah. I was using and in bad shape. I knew that I was in bad shape. I was in bad shape mentally from a lot of LSD and the methamphetamine. Started seeing articles in papers about the beginnings of rehabs, things they were trying to do out there for your non-traditional addicts. The traditional addicts were all heroin addicts. In those days, we used methamphetamine because we weren't real addicts. Yeah, we used needles, but we weren't addicts like the heroin guys. So, I started seeing articles about there were places being set up for non-heroin users to help. So, I was kind of open, but my mother and sister went and got a court order to have me committed. I was put in a facility, a mental hospital that was working with the...they were private because they were doing things there that were, I don't know, but there was some connection to state facilities. But in there, it was all alcoholics, addicts, people who used all kinds of drugs. They were using electric shock treatments. They were using surgical procedures, partial and full lobotomies. They were using another type of shock therapy, insulin, all this stuff, experimenting trying to cure addiction. I ended up when I saw what was...because I didn't think it was going to be in this kind of a place, I started fighting with the big goon attendants and in ended up in a straightjacket shackled to a bed. When I kind of came around after a few weeks of eating right and whatnot and getting my bearings, I saw that this place...I wasn't going to get out of here in one piece if I stayed in here. So, I stopped fighting them. I started volunteering for everything I could, cleaning the latrines, cleaning the kitchens.

Danny: What year was this? How old were you?

Roy: This was 1968, and I was 19 years old. I saw people who had had 70, 80 of these shock treatments, and they were gone. They were vegetablized. They were taking them to Camarillo I think and these other state mental hospitals for custodial care, and they were over. There were people in their early 20s, and their lives were {sound of clapping}. They had finished them off. Whatever they had, the addiction, the drugs they'd done, they finished them off with these treatments. So, I was petrified. I convinced my mother and my sister to go to the courts and get me out of there, which after a couple months,

they did. I had, I don't know, between 20 and 30 of these electric shock treatments. When I got out, I started using again, started having grand mal seizures, but when I was in that place, there was a guy in there who turned me on to the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. He started telling me about the Steps. He spent a lot of time; he was patient. I liked what I heard with the Steps, conscious contact with a Higher Power, spiritual awakening, the idea that people came together to help each other, and they didn't care about anything, what somebody did or anything else. They came together to help each other. I asked the guy, cuz it all sounded so cool, "How'd you end up in here? How come you're in here with the rest of us?" He said he had a slip. I didn't know what that was, but anyway, it sounded good. When I got out and I used awhile, then started having these grand mal seizures, I thought, "You know, I don't want to end up back,"—I didn't tell anybody about these seizures.

Boyd: How'd you get out?

Roy: They went to the courts and got the paperwork signed and got me released.

Boyd: "They" meaning your mom?

Roy: My mom and sister. In those days, there was no patient bill of rights. Back in the '60s, there was no patient bill of rights. You could get put in a place like that and just get lost and be in there like the poor people I saw in there they were putting through these treatments. So, they got me out. When I got out, and after having these seizures, which I didn't tell anybody about, but they scared me cuz I knew something happened. There was blood; my mouth was filled with blood from chewing on my tongue, lip bit up, and I knew something was bad. I asked, could they get Bob L.—Bob Laine to come talk to me cuz he was a long-time family friend. He had an art gallery in Palm Springs. I had known him; I had seen him over the years. He seemed like a good-hearted guy. So, he came, and he 12-stepped me, started taking me around to meetings. Nobody really said anything, and I know the people in AA meetings there in Palm Springs, they were kind of put off because I was so young. I would say, "My name's Roy. I'm a speed freak." I didn't know what to say. The people cut me a break. They let me participate in the meetings—probably because Bob was there, and they didn't want to dump on him. So, I stayed clean. Then I came back east here and went to live with my grandmother cuz part of the family still lived back here looking for work. She and other family members owned this elevator contracting business. I wanted to get some kind of trade or some way to make money legitimately. I started looking around for AA meetings cuz I wanted to stay straight. I couldn't find any. People were very unfriendly. A lot of it, for years I thought it was just because I was a drug addict. That was it, but it was also my age. I thought recently, "What if I had not used any other drug other than alcohol?" I still don't think I would have been accepted.

Danny: Yeah.

Roy: Cuz here I was, 19 years old, this young guy. You know what I mean? Kind of weird looking by adult standards, with the hair and the way I dressed.

Boyd: Did you have long hair?

Roy: Yeah. It was like this, "I spilled more than you drank" kind of mentality. With the drugs, that put the finishing touches on it. I couldn't find acceptance. They told me, "Look, we can't help you. I'm sorry." They were kind about it. They didn't throw me out and tell me, "F you. Get out of here, you drug bum." They were kind about it, but it was like, "Look, we're not really here for you. We don't know what to do." This one meeting

down in Glenside, there was a clubhouse there. It's this little town outside of Philadelphia. A woman followed me out of the meeting. Her name was Annette. She told me about this young men's club, which was down toward the Kensington section of Philadelphia, and she said, "They're young guys down there, and they might be able to help you." She asked for my name and phone number, and I gave it to her. The next day or so, I was contacted by Dick Flanagan, Dick F., to come take me to a meeting. He picked me up, took me to the meeting.

Danny: To what meeting?

Roy: At the young men's club. There were young guys there compared to the other AA meetings. Cuz the other AA meetings, people were in their 40s and 50s and 60s. At the young men's club, you had guys in their 30s. I was still 19 years old. But they accepted me. I didn't have to change how I talked. I didn't have to say, "[and a?]" I was still saying, "My name's Roy. I'm a speed freak." I think in time, I changed that to "drug addict." They accepted me. I made my 90 meetings in 90 days, and that got my name up on the wall. That was a big deal. They didn't care what kind of time somebody had. To get your name up on the wall, if you had 10 years, you had to make 90 meetings in 90 days down there. The club had a funny philosophy. They were renegade AA. They were renegade. They were known throughout the area as being renegade AA. When they would go and, they call it blitz, another group's meetings, they would show up and you hear this collective groan. They would see the guys. "Oh man, here come those a-holes from the young men's club." To them, everybody else in AA was full of shit. They were the only true AA message. Therapy was bullshit. Rehabs were bullshit. Psychology was bullshit. Everything was bullshit except the young men's club. That's what I learned. It was like, hardcore. Because they tried to appeal to guys on the streets in Kensington, it was like, "Look, you can do anything you want. Just stay sober. Just don't pick up. You can do anything you want. You want to be a burglar? You're going to be a better burglar sober." They tried to make the door as wide as possible, but with the addict mind, that kind of goes into like a license to go do whatever you want. It's pretty tough long-term to stay clean and be living by a philosophy like that. At least it was for me.

Boyd: It is.

Roy: Yeah. So, I went there, and we went to prisons, and that was the thing I really learned from that club and the early NA guys learned is the importance of 12-step work. Wherever there might be a sick, suffering addict, you went there. Now, the young men's club, they would go down to Skid Row and literally pull people off the street. There were flophouses back then. We'd go to the flophouses; we'd get the people rounded up because they had an ongoing commitment at the Salvation Army down there on Skid Row, and they would have coffee and cigarettes and doughnuts, and they'd pull the people out of the flophouses, off the street, and get them to the meetings. Then if the guy had any kind of an inclination, they'd get him up to the club, take him right up there. Get them a place to stay; if they needed treatment, many nights I was with guys, we would take them out to the Philadelphia General Hospital and get the guys medical treatment, get them detoxed, whatever they needed. Cuz there was a rooming house next door to the club they had an arrangement with, they could get people beds and stuff. It was heavy duty. The young men's guys were always the first in line for prison commitments, commitments to mental institutions. They would push other people out. Other clubs, other groups, they would push them out of the way and go to the front of the line.

Because these guys were these kind of goon street guys, they didn't get argued with very often. So, they had all the prison commitments. But that's what we learned there was 12-step work and carrying the message was like, this is what you did. There wasn't much other in the way of recovery as far as working the Steps, getting to know yourself with the inventory, spirituality, other than reaching out to that guy who's still on the street. We learned that.

Boyd: So, at that time, did you have a sponsor?

Roy: Yes.

Boyd: Was sponsorship big?

Roy: Well, I don't know. I think over time and a lot of things and a lot of areas, things become ritualized. It wasn't so ritualized back then, but yeah, I had a sponsor. Now, a good number of those guys at that young men's club, they knew the streets. They knew about shooting meth. They knew about all the drugs on the street because that was part of their life in those areas of Kensington and north Philly. That was just part of the streets. That's why I was accepted there and not the other AA places. There was a guy down there who ended up being the first black guy in NA, a guy named Bill Green. He's passed now. He was a heroin addict. These guys knew what the score was. I had a sponsor, Don H. He was a pretty cool guy. Not real honest. One of these guys who was a contractor and ended up taking everybody's money and not paying the guys. Of course, all his work crews were all young men's club guys. Then one day, he's just not around anymore. He gave me a lot of encouragement. It was good. I really felt good about being a part of that place. Over time, people started hearing about there was this young drug addict going to this club, people in AA. They had sons and whatnot who were messed up behind drugs. So, they would seek me out. I was getting more and more opportunities to do 12-step work, and a lot of people would stay and come around, go to the young men's club, where there was a contingent of maybe five or six of us. One of them was the first drug addict who had been processed through Eagleville Hospital cuz Eagleville Hospital started taking in addicts other than just the alcohol people. He was a heroin addict, and he latched onto it solid. We were part of things down there. And then Dick F. started bringing...he had left, kind of left young men's, and he took a job up at Eagleville as a therapist. He was a charismatic guy. He was charismatic; he was super intelligent, well spoken, but as far as the young men's club, when he left to take that job, he became a pariah. Because remember, their philosophy was rehab was bullshit.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: So, he became a pariah. What he started doing was bringing his group in a facility van down to one or two meetings a week. Man, that did not go over cuz the people talked in different terminology. There was that basic tenet of "Rehabs are bullshit. Therapy's bullshit." They were talking in more therapeutic group terms. It did not go over. But they had no way of saying by the Traditions, "You can't come." They just didn't do it. So, they discussed it at the business meetings and what they came up with was no more drug addicts at the meetings because these groups were mixed groups of people who used all kinds of substances. And that's what they did. Someone told me, they brought up my name, "What about Roy?" They were like, "He's out." There were a few people down there who didn't like us addicts. Some of the older guys, this guy called Horseshit Bill, there were some of them who had a really negative view of addicts from day one.

Interesting thing about Horseshit Bill because he was the leader, kind of coalesced around

him, and he was always dumping on me. He was always dumping on me. Years later, I heard he died of a drug overdose. He was strung out, and it was a shame.

Boyd: It is a shame.

Roy: You know what I mean? Because we were confrontations of his dishonesty. It was like looking in a mirror like, "Oh shit." So, we were out, and it broke my heart. The way I react to stuff back then was I would get real angry. I was enraged because I was part of that club. I took guys everywhere. There weren't that many people with cars. I had a car. I never held back anything, and then we were out on some whim. We didn't have anyplace to go, so we tried holding meetings in different people's homes and apartments, but it was such a slap in the face that all except the one guy, Aaron, they all dropped away. At that point, I decided I about had it. "I don't want to live on the east coast anymore." I didn't like the climate here. I still don't. So, I went back to California, went back to Palm Springs, looked up Bob Laine.

Boyd: From the time you came to Philly first after you got out of the mental institution to the time that you went back, how long would you guesstimate, were you here for three months, six months, nine months?

Roy: I guess it was six, seven months.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: It was about six, seven months.

Boyd: So, we're still in 1969?

Roy: This would have been the first quarter of '69.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: I went back. Now, Bob had kept...he had kept contact with me the whole time I was back east.

Boyd: Oh cool.

Roy: He called me up just about every week to see how I was doing. This was real hardcore 12-step stuff this guy was...it was his life. It was his life. He would call me up just to see, "How you doing," this and that. So, when the thing went down at young men's club, he knew I wasn't happy about it. So, I went out there to see him. I was looking for if there was some kind of work. He got an earful night and day, and he would give me work in his art gallery. He let me vacuum now and then, clean the windows. He heard an earful from me about the hypocrisy, the unkindness, the full of shitness of AA. It really hurt him. Eventually, he got mad and told me to shut up, that there was a convention coming up that weekend. There were going to be guys there from something called Narcotics Anonymous. There were going to be some big shots there from Narcotics Anonymous that he knew, and I'd get in touch with them. Now, Bob knew everybody. He was a professional jazz pianist. He ran this art gallery, but everything was done really because of his name as this jazz pianist. He played with, I don't know much about music or jazz, but he played with a lot of the big name people. He had come from Sweden, and this whole story about how he lived in Harlem when he got over here because he wanted to...he was a concert pianist over there. His obsession was to learn jazz. He learned the jazz, and he learned everything else too about the drinking and the dope, and everything. But when he got himself straightened out...he died with over 50 years of not using anything. But everybody knew him. I saw Lucille Ball in his art gallery. Red Skelton. The guy just knew everybody. The kindness and love that he had toward people just...if you look at that picture of him that I gave you, you can see,

there's almost like a aura around the guy of peace and gentleness and kindness. He was the real deal, man. He really was. There was no holding back from reaching out to help another person. The guy was 100 percent. So, we went to the convention, and he introduced me to these three NA guys there: two guys and a woman. The woman was younger. There were two older guys, and they looked really old to me. By then, I was still 19. I was only a couple months short or a month short of being 20, and they looked old. We had a meeting in a room there, and at the meeting, the NA people were there, myself, Bob, and there was also the guy who I met who was one of the founders of Gamblers Anonymous, and I don't remember his name. But he came to the meeting. This was like the first meeting I went to of Narcotics Anonymous. These guys were fired up about carrying the message and this program and how it was going to turn things around for addicts, that we'd be accepted there. There would be no more of being at somebody's whim whether you could attend the meeting or not, whether you have to change your vocabulary or try to be somebody different than who you were to fit in so they wouldn't throw you out. You could just be yourself. You know what I mean? I thought that was really cool. These guys were old-time hypes. I always looked up to older guys. Maybe I had a father fixation or something, but I always looked up to older guys. These guys were old-time smack hypes, and they accepted me. Here I was, this meth shooter, and we were kind of looked down on out on the street. We weren't like "real" drug addicts. "They're just shooting that funny stuff that makes them all jittery." But these guys accepted me. It was like, "Yeah. You're a drug addict. This is it. This program's for you." I told them, "I want to stay out here." This was the thing, cuz over the years, people have said, "We were at an NA convention," and they have somebody called the 'person' who brought the meeting from California to the east coast. They didn't know the name. "Well, you should just tell them you did it." I've never followed through on any of that or done any of that because Jimmy K., when I met him at that convention, he didn't say, "I'm Jimmy K. I started this program. I was involved in this and that." He was just a clean drug addict. Clean smackhead. It was like, "This is it. He's cool." So, I've never been disposed toward, "I'm this or I'm that," because I didn't find out Jimmy K. was involved, this man was involved in NA and going back to the beginning, until years later when I saw pictures and stuff. "That's the old head I met in California." Because all he was about was the program, how it could help me, and about carrying the message to the addict that was still out on the street. That was his message to me. Not about who he was or what he did. It was just about carrying the message, and man, it got me fired up.

Boyd: I got two questions right here. Did I hear you correctly in saying that you wanted to stay out there?

Roy: Yeah, I wasn't going to come back here. I was not going to come back to Philadelphia. I really don't like the climate here. I wanted to stay out in California.

Boyd: And now you've found that there's NA and you're accepted. What brought you...

Roy: Why I came back?

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: Why I came back was because they encouraged me to come back here and start meetings. Jimmy K. and those guys, that was the thing. "You've gotta go back to Philadelphia, and you've gotta start meetings back there and carry the message." All weekend long, that's what I heard from them. "You've gotta go back to Philadelphia and

start meetings.” They gave me a little handful of these white booklets, which still today is my favorite NA literature.

Boyd: Of course.

Roy: They gave me them. They said, “Get them copied and go back and start meetings.” Because of my personality that I wanted to prove myself right and the people who threw me out of their club wrong, that they were unkind hypocrites, that it was like, “Yeah. Now we got something that’s ours. They ain’t gonna throw us out of anything again. We got our Narcotics Anonymous program, and nobody is going to make us second class anything to anybody. We’ve got our thing now.”

Boyd: Second question, who were the other two people there? You mentioned there were three. Do you remember who they were?

Roy: No, I do not.

Boyd: Ok. I just wanted to check.

Danny: Do you know what she looked like?

Roy: She was younger. She wasn’t real tall. She either had black or brown hair. She was reasonably attractive

Danny: Was her name Sylvia maybe?

Roy: I don’t know, but she was a lot older than me. Anybody over 30 seemed like an old person to me. I was 19, 20 years old.

Boyd: Yeah. Understood.

Roy: She was an old adult, but not as old as the guys.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: So, I came back east. We had some more meetings that weekend, little impromptu meetings. It was really cool. I was fired up, man. I was fired up. My whole life, I’ve been filled with fear. I’ve been afraid of people, afraid of new situations, never thought I was anything other than a piece of shit. Carried firearms, was armed most of my life with guns. Sometimes I did it legally, other times not. I was afraid. When I would go and be carrying the message about NA, for that period of time I was doing that, that fear was lifted. I wasn’t afraid to go and talk to a psychiatrist or somebody running a prison or detox ward or the VA hospital. I wasn’t afraid. God lifted that fear. Back in those days, I didn’t see it. I see it clearly now, and I wish I had seen it back then because it probably would have made a difference in how things turned out for me over the years. But anyway, I came back here really fired up. There were a lot of obstacles. The environment in society was against drug addicts, against this counterculture, against all the things that were happening in general in society, and I did not get a good reception about Narcotics Anonymous. Going through that, one of the guys at young men’s club was a printer. We called him Bill the printer. He’s still straight today. I was just talking to him. He’s close to 50 years.

Boyd: Yeah, It would be at least 40.

Roy: He’s a good guy, good hearted man, and he printed up the White Books. I only wanted 500 cuz I thought that was a lot. He told me, “You print 500, you print 5,000, the cost is going to be the same.” And over the years, he would cut us breaks. He would have left over paper and different things like that, so he’d run it for us. So, we always got a really, really good low price getting our White Books printed up. Now I had 5,000 of these White Books, and I’m going around, going to churches, going to Ys, going to youth centers, going to hospitals. Everywhere I could think of or get a lead on from AA people,

I would pursue. People were just scared. They didn't want addicts around their facilities. They would ask me, "Where do you have these NA meetings? Do you have other meetings?" I tell them, "Oh, they're all out in California." They'd say, "Well, when you have other meetings and you can give us some references and you have other meetings going in the area, stop back." Now, was that already on there about the guy, the state cop?

Boyd: Yeah, we've got that on here.

Roy: That was a friendlier reaction. Some of the reactions, like that ex-state trooper, they were not friendly. They treated us like we were still on the street. It was discouraging. Then, Dick F. approached me with an interview, said he could set up an interview for me with the head of Eagleville Hospital, Dr. Ottenburg. He would give us a facility, a room in his facility, to hold a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. So, I went up there. By then, I was 20 years old. I was uneducated. I had rejected everything to do with that part of society, filled with all the humbug from the young men's club. "Therapy's bullshit. Rehab's bullshit. Psychiatry's bullshit." Plus, my own thing against...my father was a doctor, so I didn't think much of the medical profession in general with his drug addiction. So, I go up there and start laying on about, Narcotics Anonymous is the solution to every addict that he had in that place's problem. That he lets us start these Narcotics Anonymous meetings, you might as well just go and close this facility down because we got the solution for drug addiction. That didn't go over so good. So, on the second interview that Dick arranged, Dick told me, "Look, cut out all the stuff criticizing the facility and psychiatry and rehab, and just lay the thing out." Like, "Look, we need a place to meet. This is a 12-step program. It works for people. Can you cut us a break and let us meet? If it doesn't work out, you have the option to tell us to hit the road." Higher Power touched his heart. All of this now, the hand, the Higher Power, me and the other addicts being thrown out of the young men's club because of people from rehab being brought to the meeting in the club, me then going back to California in a fit of rage. "Screw them. Screw the east coast. I'm going out there." Bob Lane, the convention, meeting the guys from NA, all of this is like, is it an uncontrollable pinball, or is there a hand at work here? It's clear to me that there was a hand at work. God was able to use my personality defects, which I was filled with, and my insanity and put it to some kind of good use. So, Dr. Ottenburg allowed us to have a meeting there. People in the place, the residents who were drug addicts got a really good reception. They pitched in. They were part of the meeting from day one. Once it was there, there was no having to sell anything. The people just came to the meeting, and we had those White Books. It just worked.

Danny: Do you remember any of the members, any of the people that were coming?

Roy: I remember there was a young woman who was a speed freak. She went through the program. Now the programs in those days were much longer. They were 60 days, 90 days, and they had what they called a graduate program, where I think you could get up to 9 months in there. So, they were long-term. I guess there was funding back then for these kind of things. Once she got out, she kept coming back to the meetings, cuz this was an open meeting. All these early facility meetings that we had years ago except for the locked wards, like at St. Luke's Hospital, or the VA, or Walson Army Hospital, they were open. So, we'd have a meeting at like say, Haverford State Hospital, people from the street could come to that meeting. It wasn't like today how it's set up with H & I. It was much more liberal, less rules and regulations, because the system really hadn't been

abused. The abuse of people who were using, then coming back and doing dirty stuff there, that's what got the restriction put on it. But the early NA, '69, '70, '71, '72, into '73, these meetings were...just because they were in a facility, they were open-type meetings.

Boyd: Do you remember the date of the first meeting?

Roy: It would have been early summer of 1969. I was out in California that first quarter right around...I was out there the first quarter: February, March, April, something like that. It took a few months of beating bushes before this opportunity at Eagleville was given us.

Boyd: So, from the time that you got kicked out of the young men's club and you went back, how long did you stay in California? Was it just a week or two, or was it a month that you stayed from when you got kicked out of the young men's club, went to California, and came back?

Roy: It was less than two weeks.

Boyd: Yeah, ok.

Roy: I came right back because once I had that, I was fired up, man. I wanted to make a difference with what was going down back here. I was just fired up. I can't explain it.

Boyd: Don't tell an addict he can't do something, right?

Roy: That's it. Yep. And now we have something. It was like, "Here it is." This little white book and those three people...they might have been the only three people in NA there were. I wouldn't have known. As times went on, into the '70s when we started, we called it an intergroup. We were getting a pretty good spread of meetings, and we wanted to start coordinating who was going to go to Chester County Prison, who was going to take the commitment at Haverford State Hospital, different things like that. So, we wanted to coordinate. We wanted to coordinate about the literature and just have an opportunity for all of us who knew each other to get together. So, we called it intergroup and we met. What was I saying?

Danny: About intergroup and how you guys got together.

Roy: Yeah, but before that. What led me into talking about intergroup?

Boyd: I think we were just talking about the meetings and about people attending the particular meetings. Then we talked about structure, and that kind of led you into intergroup. Is any of that ringing bells?

Roy: Yeah. Yeah.

Danny: H & I you were talking about, like how it's different. It was liberal back then.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Let me interject here because I'm real curious about what the format of the meeting was out at Eagleville. Did you guys do readings?

Roy: Good. The early meetings back then, they were very different than they are. They were very different. Into the mid-70s, they all followed...there was a chairman/speaker, the same person. You ran that meeting. The meetings had no time limits on them. It was very important that everybody got called on. If the meeting started at 7 and it ran to 10:30, that was it. Because what was important was that everybody got a chance to share, and you were called on. Because some of us were too scared to raise our hands. Some of us were too scared. And this way, you may just say "Pass." "My name's so and so. I'm a drug addict. I pass." But just maybe, it might give you enough of an edge to blurt that thing out. "Man, I feel like getting loaded tonight." "I feel like throwing in the towel and

giving up.” So, the meetings were run very differently. We might read a part of the White Book. We might read from AA stuff that we would redact. I had a 12 and 12 with everything with alcohol scratched out, and for awhile, we were going to write our own kind of 12 and 12, but that never came to pass. Oh, that was my point, about the three people. They might have been the only ones because for a year, with the intergroup, we’re writing letters to California and not getting any response. We’re writing letters and writing letters. People would look at me like, “Well, is there really anything out there?” “Well, I met three people back in 1969,” and here it is ’73, and we still can’t get any response. The only one who knows that once upon a time, I met three people in NA out there was me. It was like, “I don’t know.” That was my point with that. Because as far as we knew, they might have been the only three, but I didn’t care.

Boyd: Nobody really picked up the phone and made a long distance call and called?

Roy: We didn’t have a phone number. Finally, when we got a phone number that worked, there were no computers to do anything on.

Boyd: Oh sure.

Roy: So, finally, we got a phone number; there was a phone call that was made, and there was a response. And it was a very general kind of feedback we got. I have more exact dates of when we finally got a firm response from them, but through those early ‘70s, I guess they didn’t have any organization either. But the meetings, back to your question, all those early meetings were run very differently. I hear people say—some oldtimers—say, “Why don’t we start a meeting like that today?” It’s like, “Well, do you really want to sit in a room for 3 hours?” If we’re going to run it like that—and the chairperson would comment on what people said. Today, they call it called crosstalk. I kind of have a problem with that, with the prohibition against crosstalking because the point of it was to give encouragement to another person. If somebody was talking about going out and getting loaded, that they just couldn’t take it anymore, it was up to...like, “Yo, man,” and to encourage them. When it came your time to share or the person, the speaker/chairperson, you reached out to them. I don’t remember in those early meetings, there was any kind of criticism coming down on somebody. “I remember I did this,” “I did that. That’s what you should do.” “You’re a stupid jerk doing that. No wonder you got loaded.” I don’t remember any kind of heavy duty, negative stuff because we were there, and we knew what we were there for: to help one another. We might not like one another, I saw plenty of fist fights out in the street, but I never saw anything like that go down in the meetings. There were guys who didn’t like each other. Certainly, there were people who didn’t like me; I didn’t like them. But in the meeting or when we were doing 12-step work, we knew what we there for. We were there to help one another, to help the new person. That other shit, that could wait til we were out on the street. That is a thing that’s been kind of prohibited in a lot of areas, the crosstalking, that I really think is not a good thing. We should be able to encourage somebody who is talking about something they’re doing where it’s obvious they’re going to get loaded. “I was with some friends, sitting in a car. I didn’t use, but they started lighting up and smoking crack.” I’ve said things at meetings to people like, “Yo, brother. You’re my brother. You’re an addict. You’re clean today. You may not like what I’m going to say. Everybody may yell at me for that, but man, you’re putting yourself in a position.” You know what I’m saying.

Boyd: I know exactly what you’re saying.

Roy: I think that's real important because I've seen people share that they had a [cop man?] that was on the way to the house, but they left. They came to this meeting instead. They share that, and the next person starts talking what a bum day they had because they had a flat tire when they finished work. And nothing else is said, and the person gets out in the middle of the meeting and walks out. What's going on here? That ain't why we're here.

Boyd: That's right.

Roy: We're here to help each other stay clean. That's something that's been cut out of the mix that I think is a loss. I really do, cuz in those days, to be a chairperson/speaker, was considered quite an honor. It was an honor. This was a big deal. This was a growth opportunity. You ran that meeting. You went around the room. When there was encouragement to be given, you gave it. If somebody was going off on a potential 20-minute rant, you got some interpersonal skills of how to shut them down in a kind way. It was a growth, and it was seen as that. This was a big deal. This was a big deal to run that meeting, give a little share or whatever the topic was. Some of that's been lost, and that's too bad. That's what the meetings were like.

Boyd: Did you read readings in the beginning?

Roy: Yes. Yeah.

Boyd: Ok. So, you took the little White Book?

Roy: We used the White Book, and we also used AA literature that we would redact.

Boyd: Right. Did you close the meetings in a circle like we do today? Do you recall?

Roy: No. We would just stand, and we would say... whatever it was.

Danny: The Our Father?

Roy: What Christians called the Lord's Prayer or that little Serenity Prayer. It would depend. In Philly, there was kind of a gap between what we were doing in Philly and what they were doing in the Norristown area because most of those people had come out of the Eagleville program, and that's where they got turned on to NA, where more so, the people down here, there were some who had gone through Eagleville, but more had been gotten from the street.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: The meetings up there were more stable because they had the stability of that kind of group therapy regimentation. The people in general, they were just more stable. They had more recovery, the term used today. We never used terms like "recovery" back then. It was like you were getting yourself "straightened out." You were "getting better." "Recovery" was something that came after. I always liked, "I came to NA to get straightened out."

Boyd: Well, I've heard terms like "cleanliness." Even as late as '81, I was seeing it written. I would guess you would call it sobriety. "In my sobriety," or something like that.

Roy: Some people did. I always used "straight." I liked the term "straight." "I'm straight," and I still like that term today. "Clean" reminds me of a junkie term

Boyd: Right. I like that, Roy.

Roy: I'm no junkie.

Boyd: I'm no junkie. I'm a speed freak, but I'm no junkie.

Roy: Yeah. Ain't that a crock?

Danny: I got a couple questions. Who started the Westchester H & I meeting? Any idea who started that?

Roy: At the prison?

Danny: Yeah.

Roy: I was involved in starting that.

Danny: Who else was there?

Roy: At the first meeting? I know Brian was there. Myself.

Danny: It could've been just you two.

Roy: No, there were more than that. Jimmy Boyd. There were at least two others. There was a group of us that went. That was a good opportunity. We got in there. We were in there a few months before...now, in those days in those facilities, the Bucks County Prison, the Bucks County Work Release Center, they didn't ask for...you didn't have to get preapproved or anything. You could just show up with people. That's what we did for several months at the Chester County Prison.

Danny: Chester County Farms, yeah.

Roy: Yeah. Then we took a guy to the meeting. I had gotten pressure to pick this guy up to do a 12-step call. He wanted help. He must've taken something before I picked him up. By the time we got inside the meeting, whatever drug he had taken was taking effect, and he started really acting up. He started dancing around, singing, and all I remember is the sergeant, the CO,

Danny: correctional facility

Roy: yeah, he was really, and they threw us out. We ended up getting in after a couple more months, but after that, they started putting up, you had to have so much time straight and whatnot, but we were able to get back in there.

Danny: Who do you know that started some other meetings, like Springfield, Delaware County?

Roy: Springfield, Delaware County was the Sheehan brothers, and they played a big part in it. Their father was in AA. And the two brothers were, I 12-stepped them. Their father, Jim, had asked me to talk to them, first Mike and then later, Danny. They really, they bought the program.

Boyd: About what year are we talking about?

Roy: This would have been 1970.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: I think I first met them in '69, and they got straight in '70. They were a big part of early NA. They started, along with Maureen McG., they started the meeting in Springfield in Delaware County. They were involved with that first meeting in Philadelphia. They started the first meeting in New Jersey, in Belmar, New Jersey. They started the first meeting up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Danny: What was that meeting?

Roy: It was at a church up there. I think there's a meeting there today at that same church. It's kind of around 413, north of 413.

Danny: Was it in Doylestown?

Roy: No. This would have been that area, what's that called, that Lower Bucks County Bristol area?

Danny: Ok.

Roy: That was the first meeting there. Before we started that first meeting in Philadelphia, their father let us addicts attend his two meetings that he ran at Broad and Duncannon. It was called the Saints Group, and they had a meeting.

Danny: That's where the Saints, I thought the church was called the Saints.

Roy: No, no. I think it was Holy Child Church, but the AA group was called the Saints Group. And they had a meetings, a step meeting on Wednesday and a meeting on Sunday. He let us attend. We talked any way we wanted to, shared anything we wanted to share about. They finally, the AA intergroup, de-listed him from their meeting list because they were allowing drug addicts to attend, and they got complaints. He put a good word in for us with the pastor there, and that's where we got the first meeting. But the difference was they had the run of the facility. They had the upstairs: nice big meeting hall and whatnot and a place to make coffee. They put the addicts in the basement because the basement didn't have access to the rest of the church. You had to go in from the outside, and you couldn't get up into the rest of the church, and at the time we were in there, there were no working toilet facilities. After this past fall, that Mike and Maureen and Ray, that we nailed down that yeah, that was the first meeting in Philadelphia, then I remembered peeing in the bushes there at different times and being all worried that I was going to get popped for exposure or something. I asked Maureen, "What did the women do cuz I remember having to go outside and pee," which is one of the things that prompted us to get out of there and then start a meeting at 13th and Ruscomb. The meeting at Springfield and the guys that started a meeting in Norristown in this church in Norristown, in our literature, "we are under no surveillance at any time," and that definitely was not the case back then. The Springfield meeting, we were under surveillance there just about every Friday night.

Danny: Really?

Roy: Yeah. They would send a police cruiser, and he'd be out there writing down license numbers. There were people who had left the meeting and had the police cruiser follow them all the way until they left the township. The same up at the Norristown meeting. There were two detectives in an unmarked car for months and months and months at that meeting until finally, the detectives in Norristown, they brought a fella in and told them, "Look, this is somebody we know. He's a junkie. We're going to leave him off here. You guys take care of it, do something with him." That was the last time that meeting was under surveillance. At the Springfield one out in Delaware County, it never ended, and that prompted us to close that down and start a meeting at 10th and the Boulevard in Philadelphia.

Boyd: Approximately what timeframe was that out in Springfield, Roy?

Roy: That was '71, '72.

Boyd: Ok. In that area?

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Now, by that time, were there 7 meetings a week? What did you do in your off nights when NA wasn't available? Did you go to AA meetings?

Roy: Yeah, that's what we would've done.

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: Now by '72, the young men's club was letting addicts back in there.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: Because you had a different group.

Boyd: Kicked you out in '69 and let you back in in '72.

Roy: Yeah. But by '72, people made some meetings there now and again, but it wasn't really their thing because as long as you had wheels, or you had somebody who would drive you, there were NA meetings every night of the week. A good portion of '71, there were also NA meetings just about every night of the week.

Boyd: That's awesome.

Roy: A lot of driving.

Boyd: Oh yeah.

Roy: Forty-some miles one way was not...this was just what you did.

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: When I think today that we did it without air conditioning, it was like, that's what you did back then.

Boyd: I understand. When I got clean, in the area I got clean at, we had to drive about 55 miles on Sunday because we only had 6 meetings. We had go over to Chapel Hill on Sunday night, and we did it. So, I know.

Roy: By '71, it was really getting established. In all those meetings that I just mentioned that the Sheehan brothers were involved in, there was also a woman involved. It's not anywhere in any of the things, the recollections of NA history in this area. Maureen McG. was involved in starting all those meetings. So, there was a woman, 19 years old, was involved in all of that. So, for the women, it seems like it was a guy thing. That's not how it went down around here. Women were involved. She played a big part in early NA in Philly.

Boyd: And I'm sure that that helped attract other women to the Fellowship.

Roy: It did. Definitely. She was everybody's sponsor.

Danny: She sponsored all the women. Who was the second woman in?

Roy: There were two women who came from Willingboro, New Jersey. They were heroin addicts: Bonnie and Big Linda.

Danny: When did Linda Flanagan come in? That was Dick's daughter.

Roy: '73, '74.

Danny: Oh, ok. That was down the road. I got a couple questions. When were you able to go seven meetings a week just Narcotics Anonymous instead of going to AA too?

Roy: About '72.

Danny: Oh really? But you had to travel far.

Roy: Far.

Boyd: You were out of the room; we were talking about [inaudible] this.

Roy: Norristown, there were meetings getting started.

Danny: Collinsville, Lansdale, Norristown.

Roy: You had the meetings in the facilities.

Danny: Springfield.

Roy: Haverford State Hospital. There were meetings. We were just about covered every night of the week.

Danny: Who was the first person you sponsored?

Roy: It was a guy back in '68, that guy Aaron.

Danny: How about in NA? You were still in AA at that time. How about in NA?

Roy: Might have been Brian.

Danny: Ok. Did you guys do a roll call or sign a book or anything?

Roy: There was a sign-in book.

Boyd: At the meetings?

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Oh really?

Roy: I don't know why we did that.

Boyd: Every meeting you had a sign-in book?

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Interesting.

Roy: They did that at the young men's club, so I guess that's why we did it. The young men's club it was part of, if you wanted your name up on the wall.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: We just did the same thing too cuz we didn't think about it, you know?

Danny: What meetings did you start other than the first one, in Springfield, Delaware County?

Roy: When I was around...we all played a part in starting the...

Danny: You went in groups and did it. That's why.

Roy: Yeah. That's how it went down. I was around when the first meeting at Broad and Duncannon in Philly was started. I wasn't around for the Belmar, Springfield, or any of them.

Danny: Why weren't you around for that? You went back to California, you relapsed?

Roy: I was getting loaded.

Boyd: You got loaded, ok. Doing more research.

Roy: Yeah. The hard way.

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: That's the consequences I have today cuz if I had stayed clean from about '69, I wouldn't have liver cancer today. Don't think I don't think of that every day. I'm not beating myself up about it. The Steps have helped me deal with that. It certainly is the thought every day, like, "Shit, man."

Danny: You were saying that under the carport: consequences from years ago. Same here.

Boyd: Myself.

Danny: Who was the first person in Narcotics Anonymous that you actually did a 12-step call?

Roy: They were, Danny and Mike were from the north Philly/Logan section of Philadelphia, and once we got that meeting at Broad and Duncannon, we were going on the streets there getting their old corner buddies and stuff to come to the meetings, and we would drag them to the meetings.

Danny: Wasn't there a guy, Ronnie?

Roy: Ronnie [N?] was the first guy from the phone line.

Danny: Oh, ok, from the phone line.

Roy: Yeah. He was the first guy who came from that, the phone

Danny: 215-2176 number.

Roy: Yeah, whatever.

Danny: Yeah, 2307 or something.

Roy: Yeah, but he was the first guy from that phone line. It goes back to '70, '71, where those old neighborhoods got pretty well scoured by us. And Brian T., his brother, Ray T.,

took them to the meeting there at Broad and Duncannon, but Brian knew Danny from the streets, Danny S. Yeah. When he saw Danny, he knew, Danny was much older than Brian, and that made an impression on him. We were scouring the streets for people. Most of the people didn't stay. A lot of them didn't. It just kept us clean another day, and it gave us that, you know what I mean?

Danny: How about the story about the first guy who died that was a member?

Roy: Now by then, there were meetings every night of the week. There was a solid in Philly of 30-some people, a solid, solid group of us. One of them was this guy, Jimmy C., Jimmy Corringa. I remember, I had come back, and Jimmy and another guy spent til 4 or 5 in the morning with me on Kensington Avenue talking me through a obsession. I wanted to get cranked up, and they talked me through that. Jimmy had a good heart, good guy, helped a lot of people. He got involved in a relationship he was suggested not to get involved with, with an old ex-wife or something, and drifted away from the meetings. Got loaded, and then he ended up getting popped, and he hung himself in a jail cell. I often wondered what his last thoughts were. Was he thinking about NA? Was he thinking about giving up? Because he had been in prison before, and he wasn't going to go back, I guess. And he hung himself. We were devastated. This was the first guy, and he had almost a year clean. That was a lot of time back then.

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: Man, we were devastated. We were devastated. This guy, I mean, he had been through it. We called him Jumping Jim because he had jumped out of a second story window in a meth panic, had broken his ankle, got pins and all this stuff and because he was still out on the street, he never got the pins taken out. Gangrene set in. He had a partial amputation of his foot. This guy had experienced some heavy duty pain on the street. And yet, without the meetings, he picked up. We went to the funeral, and we were crying and hugging, and that was not something we did much of in those days in Philly, was the hugging stuff. But it brought us closer together. That was the first man who died, first person who died around here.

Danny: How did the hugging get started, that you know of?

Boyd: What year was it that this guy died?

Roy: That Jimmy died? It would have been the end of '71—cuz I remember it was cold—or the beginning of '72. It was the winter of '71, '72.

Danny: Did you all go to the funeral?

Roy: I went to the gravesite too. I remember it being really cold.

Danny: I've still got several more questions.

Boyd: Oh, definitely.

Danny: Tell us about the hugs, what you know about hugs, how that started.

Roy: What I saw, once again, the people who had come out of the Eagleville program, they did that. They would hug. "Show me some love," and this kind of stuff.

Danny: So, hugs came from Eagleville then?

Roy: They came from the Norristown area. We didn't think much of it down in Philly. It was kind of like, "That's group therapy stuff."

Boyd: About approximately what year do you think that was, Roy, that they started doing that, and y'all started being a little [abrasive?] with it. Can you give me a timeframe?

Roy: Yeah, like '72, '73, started seeing it.

Boyd: Ok. When do you think it finally got a little bit better accepted down in Philly? Was it like 2, 3, 5 years later?

Roy: It took awhile.

Danny: Yeah, it did.

Boyd: I would imagine.

Roy: Yeah, it took awhile. I think it was well into the '80s.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Well, it's interesting because I read somewhere that they didn't do it on the west coast either, and there was somebody who said, "No, it's an east coast thing." That's the reason I was really trying to pinpoint it. That's a thing that we do today all over the world.

Roy: It's a good thing.

Boyd: Yeah it is, isn't it? I think so too.

Roy: Yeah, it is. It shows it's a physical expression of kindness, love, acceptance. It's a good thing.

Boyd: It is. I know. Most of the men are a little abrasive about it at first.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: I hug everybody now. I don't even think about it.

Danny: Yeah. Did you guys pay rent when you had meetings? Did you pay the facilities rent?

Roy: Always, except at the state facilities, like Haverford State Hospital, or the VA hospital, Walson Army Hospital.

Danny: How did you get money for literature?

Roy: We passed a basket.

Danny: Oh, you had seventh tradition.

Roy: Oh yeah. We had that from day one.

Danny: How about fundraisers? Did you do fundraisers?

Roy: They would have little raffles. They might have dances. I remember they used to hold dances at the...the people at the 10th and the Boulevard group, they would let us have a Christmas dance, a Thanksgiving dance. The money that we took in, because they weren't elaborate, it was just a place. We'd have punch; we'd have people bring hot dogs and stuff like that. It wasn't a big expense, and that money would go toward...by then, we had the intergroup going, and it would go to intergroup to be used for different expenses, like the literature,

Danny: the phone

Roy: the hotline, and little advertising things. Because we would try the little, just experiments with advertising, like a radio thing, get a little announcement.

Boyd: Now, before 1976—I'm placing that year as when the west coast actually published the [IP?] pamphlets—what type of literature would you have had available? The little White Book, more reprintings of it?

Roy: We had our own literature that we printed up. Different guys would come up with stuff. "Who's an Addict."

Boyd: So, you had some intergroup approved stuff that was very local?

Roy: Yeah, we had our own stamp, "Intergroup Approved." That was a big deal. "Yeah, yeah. Look at that, man. We're legit now. We got our own stamp to put on this stuff."

Boyd: That's real important stuff.

Roy: It was '76 that the intergroup, that they changed the whole thing. The first intergroup meeting was back in 1973, that we had in Philly. I really liked that because it gave a chance, because the meetings now were getting more widespread. We had more meetings in our location. We weren't doing as much traveling. So, you started to miss the people you were kind of growing up with. The intergroup once a month allowed us to all get together. We'd bring food. We'd bring soda, and we'd have an opportunity for just talking. The business got done, whatever it was, but the important thing to me...I was never good at any of that business or organization or anything like that.

Boyd: Seeing the people.

Roy: Yeah, that was it, to see the people and say, "How you doing," and this and that.

That was really cool. In '76, when we got the guidelines from California.

Danny: It was called the NA Tree.

Roy: Yeah. Divide it up into two different areas. I was really sad about that because then you never saw the people anymore.

Danny: What other things did you do other than the intergroup, the dances, did you have any functions that you participated in?

Roy: Well, they would have get togethers at state parks, like French Creek State Park was a big park they had that seemed to be a favorite cuz the Norristown people could go. The people from upstate around White Deer Run, they could get there. The other one was, not Core Creek Park,

Danny: Tyler State?

Roy: No. No, there's another little park in Bucks County.

Danny: Toahican, or something like that?

Roy: It's up off of, if you take [Bustleton?] Avenue, and you keep going on it, it changes from [Bustleton?] to something else. You keep going up that way, there's a park there. They had a lot of functions there.

Danny: Tyler State's up there in New Town.

Roy: Tyler wasn't until later. Tyler didn't get put in, actually put in, until the '80s up in that area. There was no Tyler State Park. They were picnics. That's what they were. We'd have get togethers, and that'd help keep everybody tight, you know what I mean? You'd get to see how everybody was doing.

Danny: I'm almost done here on the questions. Did you ever go to any other cities or countries with Narcotics Anonymous other than the California time? Did you ever go out of town and find other Narcotics Anonymous meetings, like Georgia, or Florida, or vacation? Nothing?

Roy: No.

Danny: Ok. How about...the meeting list, there was no meeting list from '69 until '73, that meeting list that I have, you would call that the first meeting list that you ever seen? Back in the California days, they had a meeting list on business cards, and it would be like one or two, and that was their meeting list. Did you ever have any business cards?

Roy: There were lists of the meetings before that '73.

Danny: Oh, there was?

Roy: Oh yeah, there were. I don't remember, but there were...I know there were because we had stuff to give out to people.

Danny: And the literature, all you really had was the AA stuff, and you used the White Book, and people were working on some of our literature here?

Roy: Uh-huh.

Danny: Ok, and I think I got like two more things, and I'm done. What did you know about Traditions? Were there any Traditions or anything, other than the seventh, where you collected money?

Roy: Sure, it was just like AA. We had our Twelve Traditions. That was it. That's what we went by. As far as I was concerned, the most important one was "Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addicts still out on the street." That was it. Everything else was, as far as I was concerned, designed to support that. If it didn't support it, it was fucked up.

Danny: Ok. [Bill?] Alison, from what I understand, he was the guy who wrote the 20 Questions, and he was the first one to go out to California other than you.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: Because you guys kept writing and calling, and you weren't really, and sending money for literature, and it wasn't coming.

Roy: It wasn't a lot of money. The White Books we had. We were hoping there was more stuff than that. We would send, by today's standards, piss-ant...

Danny: It was \$11 at one point.

Roy: Yeah, \$11, like that was

Danny: Back then, that was a lot of money.

Roy: I guess there wasn't enough of an organization out there. This was where, starting to have some serious discussions at intergroup about us starting our own headquarters here, Narcotics Anonymous.

Danny: What year was that about?

Roy: From '73 on.

Danny: Oh, a lot of discussion about it.

Roy: Oh yeah. That was always in the mix of, especially every time there was no response to any of our inquiries, or we got a response that was like...what year was it? We finally got a list of NA meetings.

Danny: I think the first one was '72.

Roy: Yeah, but we didn't get that list until...when we got it, it was a couple years old.

Danny: Ok.

Roy: We wrote letters out to everybody, and we got some of the returned to sender, address unknown. We got one or two responses, and that was it. We were like, "Why can't we start an independent headquarters?" We had enough people, enough support. NA was growing here. Why couldn't we do the thing ourselves? That was a sore point with a lot of people that it didn't go in that direction. When we got that notice in '76, the NA...

Danny: Tree.

Roy: Yeah. I don't know why. That sounds stupid to me: NA Tree. The outline on a structure, that put an end to all that. It was like, "Ok, they got something going on out there."

Danny: All right, I got one more question, and then there's a couple minutes left on this tape. Then, why don't we take a break? The last thing I got here was about Ralph

Stewart. What do you know about Ralph Stewart or Dutch, or any of the old guys that...I understand there was like six dudes that came out of Eagleville.

Roy: I don't want to talk about anybody else because a lot of these guys and myself included, they haven't seen me in 30, 35 years.

Danny: Well, Ralph passed away.

Roy: Yeah, I know Ralph passed away. Ralph and I did that NA meeting at St. Luke's Hospital. He was stand-up. He was always there with me because a lot of guys were scared to go in there. It was all black. The guys who were in there, these were heavy duty drug addicts. Now once again, we're in our twenties, and your average guy inside that St. Luke's detox was in his late 40s and 50s. These were guys who had been shooting drugs since before we were born. They were in there just to get their jones down, and they weren't all street thugs. There were teamsters or longshoremen. But a lot of people didn't want to go in. They weren't needle users, weren't dope shooters, so they were afraid. But Ralph, Ralph always

Danny: He was a big guy. He was like 6'5.

Roy: Yeah, but that wasn't it. He was dedicated. The Higher Power took the fear from him, and he went in there and carried the message even though we didn't get much support from some of the people who were running things. We didn't get any support, but we kept going in there. When I went off on one of my adventures off the reservation, Ralph kept it going. He kept the St. Luke's thing going.

Danny: Are you ready to take a break? When we come back, you can ask all your questions, and then you can go through your book.

Roy: Yeah, cuz I'd like to talk about, one of the early controversies we had, which was drug testing at NA meetings.

Boyd: Wow.

Roy: If things had gone a certain way, that could've probably been pretty much a standard operating procedure throughout NA, and it would've killed it.

Danny: Hold that thought, man.

Roy: When I talk about it today, the hardest thing, it's like, "Why was I so fucking stupid? It was all there." The keys to the kingdom were right there for me. I kept figuring, "Man, I know something better. I'm going to be like Mahatma Gandhi."

Boyd: Yeah, but just be glad it's going on today.

Roy: I'd like to say a little more about

Boyd: Well, this is your time. You're welcome to.

Roy: of what I was like. God can use anybody because I was the least...if you were going to choose somebody to try to accomplish something, it wouldn't have been me. I was really mentally ill. The drugs had broken me. I was pretty well broken up to begin with, growing up the way I did in the house that I did, and then the drugs, man, they finished it off. I was real mental hospital material. My family getting me court committed there wasn't like they were picking on me.

Boyd: They were really scared for you.

Roy: I was in bad, bad shape. And with all that, and all that fear I had, the Higher Power was able to use this broken person to further His purpose of saving drug addicts. What a miraculous thing, man! What a cool thing! That's a message for people, they feel bummed out about themselves, "I can't do this. I can't do that." Or people at meetings say, "Yeah, I'm only 20 years old." I tell them, "Look, the first meetings in this area were

started by a 19-year-old woman and a bunch of 20 year olds.” Age has got nothing to do with it. Don’t limit yourself. The Higher Power, He uses all of us. He uses all of us to help make this world a better place. By staying clean, carrying the message to other addicts, it’s so cool.

Boyd: It’s way cool.

Roy: Yep.

Boyd: It really is. Yeah, you touched me in one of those talks that you gave, talking about just what you said right there, that we’re making a change in this world.

Roy: We are.

Boyd: One addict getting clean is making a big change in this world. Man, I got teary eyed when I was hearing that. I really did.

Danny: Me too. I got teary eyed like 3 times since he’s been talking.

Boyd: Yeah, you should see. I’m riding up in the truck from North Carolina; tears start to roll down my face cuz it really is, it’s powerful stuff. For me, that feeling that you’re talking about, about getting joy, ok, and being teary about it, to me, the best way I’ve been able to describe it is just a deep down sense of gratitude.

Danny: That’s what it is.

Roy: It’s a gratitude. More and more, since I’ve been getting sicker, it’s like just the miracle of our lives, that God has given us this miracle. Our lives are that miracle. It’s like, “Whoa, man! It’s all ok! No matter what happens to me, no matter how sick I might get, it’s all ok. My life has been, and continues to be with this program, a miracle.” A miracle. It’s beyond anything I ever dreamed about. Anything that I ever thought I saw taking LSD, and I took a lot of LSD, man. They were just about giving it away for nothing. When Osley [inaudible] was cranking it out in the Bay Area, you could go to the Haight [inaudible], and they were handing it out sometimes! So, I took a lot of it, and it was like, all that illusion. This is real. This is no illusion. This is real. Narcotics Anonymous and what it can do for our lives is real, and it is miraculous.

Boyd: Isn’t it? It’s wonderful.

Roy: It’s great.

Boyd: It really is. Yeah, I’m just going to be hardly walking on the ground this afternoon, Roy. This is awesome.

Roy: Like I said, that is my goal and my dream: I am going to stay alive. No matter what I gotta go through, I am going to stay alive to that convention 2013 in Philadelphia. I’m going to stay alive, or they’re going to have to resuscitate me some way cuz I’m going to that convention.

Boyd: And you know something? I would be honored to be there with you.

Danny: That would be so cool.

Boyd: It will be. It will be, and I believe it’s going to happen.

Danny: Yeah, I’ll be there with you.

Roy: Six months to live? Bullshit. Bullshit.

Boyd: Give me a hug. That’s awesome.

Roy: It’s great. It’s great, man.

Danny: I was looking at the photos that I had of you when I interviewed you at your house, and Ross Perot is in the back of the photo.

Roy: Yeah. This past 16 years, I’ve done all this stuff: went back to school and got some stuff with engineering, a different career, was involved in a political campaign, a reform

candidate. Did all kinds of stuff that I always wanted to do, and just was too scared, too fucked up.

Danny: I got a question for you. When I came and interviewed you, did that have an impact on you getting back involved with Narcotics Anonymous at all at that time?

Roy: You know, it did. Anybody remembered anything...I knew guys from here years ago, of course, and I knew they were still around, but that anybody remembered anything about those days or who I was or anything I did, kind of blew me away. It was like, "Wow. Isn't that something?"

Danny: Yeah, I had some questions to ask you, and I knew some things to ask you because I was pointed in that direction by the Higgins actually. Brian was my sponsor at the time. Brian called his dad and got your number for us. That's when I contacted you.

Boyd: So, when did you go out there and interview Roy?

Danny: It was like '95 or '96, something like that.

Roy: It was '95. I had gotten clean in April of 1994. My ex-wife, who had been in the program. That was a bad story for both of us. She was still using; she's using to this day.

Boyd: I'm sorry.

Roy: Yeah, she's pretty bad off. But I was trying to get custody and keep custody of my kids. I had my daughter living with me back then, and I was under a lot of pressure to try to keep her cuz every day, there was a phone call. My wife lived in Vermont. There were phone calls, "Come on up. Come on up." They weren't going to school. The kids all were using drugs. He was seven years old—my youngest boy—he was smoking reefer every day. Cuz Sharon was dealing drugs, and the drugs were all over the house. Her and that oldest girl, who was with me at the time you met—Star. She and the mother ended up, they were smoking dope together. It was as bad as anything you can imagine. I knew it was going to go down like that. I knew what Sharon was like. I knew what I was like. I was really fighting to keep custody. That was another, dealing with a consequence that...I kept trying to get custody of them, and I finally got my two sons. I made a difference in the younger one's life. He's a Navy airman today.

Boyd: Cool.

Roy: Yeah. He's done really well. He's coming out of the military for awhile. He'll be here in a few weeks, and he's doing really good. My oldest son, he's in NA today. He ended up going back up there with them. The two girls and him ended up in prison for several years. They got into some really, really bad stuff. So, I knew it was going to go down like that. I just had a sense that if they didn't stay with me...but I fought that. I used up all my savings, all my money. I would do it all over again because I believed it was the right thing to do to try to save them. But it was awful. It was awful going through.

Danny: Having the relationship you got now, making meetings and all with your son, I think that's awesome. That gives me the chills.

Roy: Yeah, it's good. Cuz I didn't expect anything to come out. He served almost six years. Hardcore heroin addict. And the things he went through in prison, he developed schizophrenia from shooting up ecstasy. He would do that all the time, and that really blew things apart. But he's clean today. Every day is a struggle, but he's got a shot.

Boyd: He does. He does. How long has he been clean, Roy?

Roy: He got out of prison, it was April or May.

Boyd: Beautiful.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: Four or five months?

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: 120 days. I met him. Nice kid. You would think...he's one of us!

Boyd: Sure.

Danny: [You wouldn't?] think that he's this extra big badass or troublemaker, or anything more than we did. He just needs a break like we got. I think he's gotten that. He's got an opportunity.

Roy: The thing is, the prisons, when they have people who have mental illness—severe mental illness, schizophrenia and whatnot—there's no facilities for them. They throw them in the hole and that's it. The things for helping people in need, whether it's addictions, or psychiatric problems, or both, there's no help out there for people. Today, everybody gets shunted off to the correctional system who have the dual diagnosis, what the recovery field calls it. They lock them up.

Danny: They closed down all the mental hospitals.

Roy: Lock them up, and that's it.

Danny: Treat them as a criminal now instead of a patient that needs medical help.

Roy: That's right. NAMI up there, told me that if they're not mentally ill when they put them in...they put all the mentally ill prisoners in the maximum security prison up in Vermont. Now, Vermont's a pretty liberal state, you would think. And there is no treatment for them. Their idea is put them in isolation. They're in a thing that's in the basement. No windows. No lights. They get a few hours a week out into the yard. They just keep them medicated up. If they give them any kind of trouble, that's it. Roy has had just about every bone in his body broken from the goon squads from his acting up from these schizophrenic episodes that he has. It's like their idea is just going in and beat the person senseless. Taser them. Gas them. It's bad.

Boyd: It is bad.

Roy: The United States has really gotten...things were better as far as treatment in the early '70s for addicts as far as facilities, lengths of time you got in a facility. Giving somebody a couple days and figuring, "Well, here it is. We're going to detox you and then kick you out on the street," it's tough.

Boyd: Very tough.

Roy: It's tough. Back in those days, 28 days was nothing. I mean, Eagleville was a 90-day stay!

Danny: If you were doing 28 days, it sure seemed like something. Other than that though, really, it's a drop in the bucket.

Boyd: Yeah, 90 days compared to now.

Danny: We were all kids when we were doing that. That's why it seemed so long. To sacrifice a summer or something to go to rehab, that was like, "What?"

Boyd: Well, no, it's interesting. I mean, you brought up a great point that I'd like to find out more about just for my own personal interest is about the [longevity?]. Who was actually paying? Were insurance companies paying for it back then? It was even late in the '80s in North Carolina in Wake County where they even started accepting people with drug problems. You could go in and say you had an alcohol problem when you really had a drug problem at a particular county-funded facility, but it was as late as '85 in North Carolina. So, who was paying for the 90 days up at Eagleville?

Danny: In '83, I was on welfare, and in '84, I got in a facility with an indigent package. They would get government money that would be put aside just for indigents.

Boyd: Ok.

Danny: So, that was two of the ways I got in facilities in '83 and '84.

Roy: I remember when we wanted to get people in rehabs, the first thing we would do—some of the facilities would do it, like Eagleville, would do it—but if we could get a jump on it, we would take the people down to the DRC they called it, Department of...

Boyd: Rehabilitation?

Roy: Yeah. We would go to them. They would get them an MA card, Medical Assistance Card, and then we could get them into St. Luke's to detox, and Eagleville for the 3-month stay.

Boyd: So, it was government-funded.

Roy: It was all medical assistance. I'm sure there were people that had private insurance, but as kids—kids—as people in their 20s, a lot of us didn't have any kind of jobs to speak of, so it was all medical assistance.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: So, the people, the state were paying the freight to try to help. All the rehabs were that way.

Danny: Was that [inaudible], the DRC?

Roy: Yeah, that's it.

Danny: It's still there.

Boyd: Yeah, the Department of...well, it's what we just talked about, in North Carolina, at least in Raleigh, they still...I don't know that they do that, but they pay for education stuff and stuff like that.

Roy: Maureen got her four years of college paid for through the DRC. Two years of community college and two years at LaSalle, which is a first class university, and they paid it as a recovering addict. They paid the freight. That was the kind of thing that was available back then to help people get on their feet. Today, there's nothing like that. It's like, why? Why is that?

Danny: Well, the thing is, is that the facilities follow what the government pays for. That's why people are on methadone now and Suboxone because the government is financing that. That's why it's like it is. There ain't even a lot of 28-day facilities anywhere anymore.

Roy: That's rare. The guys like Eagleville, just about the only ones who get the 28 days, guys who come directly from a penitentiary, state penitentiary, through programs that the state has, and they get put in Eagleville. They can get the 28 days, and they can even get longer than that.

Danny: They're system people. Guys who are already in the system.

Roy: It's prisoners. Somebody walking in off the street from northeast Philly, north Philly, south Philly, walking in like that, you're lucky if you only get a couple days.

Danny: Well, the whole thing is, we get them in. Believe it or not, we tell them the [lie?]. We gotta tell them that they're suicidal, and they're going to either hurt themselves or somebody else. That's how we get people in detox now. I just took a guy in three weeks ago at [Worsham?] Clinic, and that's what we had to say because they'll pay for insanity type things.

Roy: Mental illness, where there may be harm.

Boyd: Harm to themselves or others.

Roy: That's what you gotta tell them. You're going to kill yourself or hurt somebody else. But even then, they're lucky they get 14 days.

Danny: He got five days. That's it! Now, the reason why—and I understand this too—is because in the '80s and early '90s, the addicts were going in for vacation for 28 days and coming right out and using again. I know people who've been in places 30, 20, 15 times. They burned it all out. They used up all the funds, and the government got sick and tired of it. They cut it. I guess some statistics somewhere say that that methadone is working, that that Suboxone stuff is working because that's where it came to. You go to rehab now, they put you on that stuff. Originally, methadone was to get off of opiates, a detox. Now, they use it that they want you on it the rest of your life. It's crazy, man.

Roy: Back in the '60s when we started hearing about that, and the early '70s about methadone, it was for those guys, like I said, at St. Luke's Hospital. Guys in their late 40s and 50s who had been shooting heroin all their lives, and this was a way to try to mainstream them into society, that they could keep them intoxicated, but not too much. They wouldn't have to steal and whatnot. That was the whole point. It was guys who, they were writing them off, but they were already pretty old. The track record, now they're giving it out to teenagers, the Suboxone, and it's like, "Whoa, whoa. That wasn't the original plan there now. You're going to write people off. You're writing teenagers and people in their 20s off? That's not right. You're not giving them a shot."

Danny: It's 400 and some dollars for a prescription of 30 of them. Ching ching. It's all about the money. Everything, man.

Boyd: It's interesting. What I understood, my understanding of the methadone stuff was it really, it's not necessarily to get somebody clean; it's to stop them from doing the crime.

Danny: The maintenance that goes along with the drug addiction.

Roy: Get them out of the street. You're keeping them intoxicated, so they don't have that jones for the street drugs, but you are in effect writing those people's lives off. They can't live straight. They can't get clean. They can't get themselves straightened out. You're just saying, "Look, ok, we're going to write you off, man," and that's bullshit.

Danny: Let's go back in and we'll finish up this NA history. Boyd, you ask him your questions, whatever you got.

Boyd: Actually, Roy's got some stuff he wants to talk about.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: So, I would like to do that.

Danny: Ok.

Roy: That was right in the beginning, with the intergroup. We formed that intergroup in '73. There were meetings who came to the intergroup. They had started up around White Deer Run, and that's where Dick F. had moved to. He got a chance to start a rehab up there, and he did.

Danny: White Deer Run?

Roy: White Deer Run. Flannigan's involvement in Eagleville and White Deer Run, he had access to, he had a supply of White Books. He knew about the Narcotics Anonymous program. White Deer Run program, being up there in Williamsport, they got people from, not just Pennsylvania, not just this area of Pennsylvania, but they got it from Pittsburgh, the whole state. They got people from New York, from Ohio, from Baltimore, Maryland.

To people coming there, that's when NA really started spreading out to other areas and groups.

Boyd: At White Deer Run, you got an approximate date, maybe a year?

Roy: White Deer Run, because he wasn't at Eagleville that long. He was at Eagleville '68, '69. By sometime in '70, he started the White Deer Run project.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: So, '71, that thing was up and running. They were taking all kinds of addicts in there. They had some NA groups, and those NA groups from Williamsport and Lewisburg, which are areas right around White Deer Run, they would come to our intergroup, and they would participate.

Danny: [Remember?] anybody from back then?

Roy: Well, I remember Bob Gray. He was later on in the '70s. I met Bob.

Danny: How about a guy named Don L., Langendorf, or something like that?

Roy: I remember Don.

Danny: My understanding was—and I have some literature on it—there was two facilities that was in Williamsport and Lewisburg, were called Drugs Anonymous. And he was sort of in charge of them. He found out about Narcotics Anonymous through you guys from down here and Dick, and he changed them to Narcotics Anonymous.

Roy: Yeah, ok. See, when they came to intergroup, they were Narcotics Anonymous.

Danny: Right. They changed it in '72 by the way.

Roy: Ok. But what they had was, they had a requirement to participate. To come to the meetings, they had a requirement that you had to be drug tested.

Boyd: Come to which meetings?

Roy: At Williamsport and Lewisburg, the two NA groups there, had a requirement.

Boyd: What year?

Roy: Well, it would have been '72.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: In '73, when we had the intergroup, and they were participating in that, that became a question.

Boyd: I'll bet.

Roy: Now, Dick F. insisted that everybody had to be drug tested. When people went up there to speak at the White Deer Run facility, they had to be drug tested. I'd never submitted to a drug test. I just wouldn't do it. I told Dick, "You're making me different than an alcoholic. You wanna test the alkie? That's fine. But you're saying that somehow, we're different. Somehow, we're more dishonest than somebody who just uses alcohol. They have more of an ability than we do to straighten out our lives. Bullshit." The Narcotics Anonymous program and the Alcoholics Anonymous program gives people with addiction the ability to free themselves from that, arrest it, straighten out their lives. There's no difference between the two. No difference. And I would argue with Dick about that. I didn't like that because it showed that somewhere a mindset of they sensed there was some kind of difference. That somehow, we as users of illegal drugs somehow just didn't have the same abilities that a user of a legal substance. I thought, "That's bullshit, man."

Boyd: It is. I mean, it's the whole because the drugs were made illegal in whatever, 1908, or whenever the Harrison Act was, the whole package of criminalization.

Roy: Demonization. Cuz it wasn't just criminalizing. It was making a demon out of it. Fiends. So, that became an issue of their participation in our intergroup, their use of the Narcotics Anonymous name because it violated the Traditions, and this was your question about, was it just the Seventh Tradition. No. We were on top of, to the best of our ability and knowledge, we were on top of all the Traditions. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using. It was like you're saying the only requirement is to stop using and submit to a drug test. It's like, "Fuck you."

Danny: Well, that was crossed off the meeting list in August of 1973.

Roy: It wasn't taken lightly. We talked about it in intergroup.

Danny: It was even tabled at one point. [It took?] about a month.

Roy: Because these people were our friends. We had become friends with those guys up there. These were our brothers and sisters. We didn't take that lightly. It was like, "It's not right what they're doing." We took it back to all of our groups. We voted on it. There was a lot of discussion. The groups down here overwhelmingly voted that they couldn't attend meetings. We sent a letter respectfully asking them to not use the Narcotics Anonymous name and that until they changed that policy, they were in violation of the Traditions, and really, they weren't Narcotics Anonymous. They weren't acting like Narcotics Anonymous fellowships.

Boyd: Sure.

Danny: Did you know [Danny?] Sampson from up there?

Roy: The last names aren't...you know what I mean?

Danny: Danny and Bob, Bob got clean first. Danny came in in like '76 I think. Bob came in like '74, '75. Remember those guys?

Roy: Yeah. There were a lot of good people. They would drive down here to the meetings, and we'd go up there. We'd hold a couple of picnics up that way, up in

Danny: Sunnyside or something like that.

Roy: Somewhere up there, along the Monongahela River. It was right on the Monongahela River by a junkyard. Boy, but we had a good time. It was like a 3, 4 day.

Danny: Oh, the roundup was up there.

Roy: Yeah, we'd have picnics, and we used to meet up at that, there was a big University up there.

Danny: Bloomsburg?

Roy: Bloomsburg, yeah, and we would have activities there. It was cool. It really was. It kept that unity and kept us all fired up. I don't know how to say it. We may not have all liked each other, but we were all friends and brothers and sisters.

Boyd: A bond.

Roy: There was something, and it's still there today. It's something really, really good about this program, you know? That was the first big controversy we handled in intergroup. If it had been let go, because they were vibrant groups up there. They had a lot of members. They had a lot of people who were going through, like Deer Run. If that had been the message they got, "Well, you start NA meetings, but you do this drug testing of members," how different maybe NA would have ended up. It would've ended up collapsing because I know what my reaction was, and I think most people's, "We ain't doing that." You know what I mean?

Boyd: I do. Roy, what was the end result? Meaning did they stopped their drug testing or?

Roy: After some time. They didn't do it right away.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: What it took was, they had to make an emotional break with White Deer Run and Dick Flannigan.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: And Dick F. was a larger than life individual. Like I said, he was charismatic. He just had a dynamic way about him. In honoring our Traditions, they had to break emotionally and physically with Flannigan's philosophy. They had to break physically and emotionally from Flannigan and really become independent Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Danny: Well, they had to stop the dictation is what it was. He was dictating what went on.

Boyd: So, did they continue meetings at that facility, or did the people break and just actually find another meeting facility?

Roy: Well, these were off-site.

Boyd: Oh, ok.

Roy: Yeah, they weren't held on the grounds. They had NA meetings on the grounds, but these were independent in that they were off-site. But see, the people who had went through that program held Dick Flannigan almost in a icon, deity kind of status. He just had that kind of personality. You know what I mean?

Boyd: Yeah.

Roy: That kind of, "Wow."

Danny: Well, he had a lot of years sober too.

Boyd: Yeah, I understand that, and I was not aware. Thank you for clearing that up, that these facilities that were doing the drug testing were off-site.

Roy: They were off-site. And see, that made it even more like, "Why are you guys doing that," but because they were tied in emotionally with Dick, it probably was really hard for them to drop it.

Boyd: I'll bet.

Roy: He was held in high esteem. The people here in Philly didn't know Dick F. from a hole in the ground. I mean, Maureen, the Sheehan brothers, all those early NA people here in Philly, some of the guys up in Norristown knew him because they had gone through Eagleville when he was a therapist, and they knew him. But your average NA member down here in Philly, they didn't know Dick F. from Archie Bunker. It didn't mean anything.

Boyd: Which kind of segues into something you told me in a telephone call that you had wanted to kind of make sure that it was said, was that it's been written that Dick was the father of NA.

Roy: On the east coast.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: Yes.

Boyd: And that that may have been a situation that was up in Norristown or at White Deer Run, but down in Philly, it was not.

Roy: And really, it's not that way in Norristown either. He was a therapist. They knew him. Dynamic guy and so forth, but he didn't have the status in this area that he had up there. I want to say, he helped thousands of people.

Boyd: Sure.

Roy: He helped, because of that facility, its location, all the people from adjoining states who went through there, that Narcotics Anonymous was part of that program up there. People were exposed to it. It really added to the growth of NA. So, I want to say that and give everybody their due with things. The people down here never saw him in an NA meeting. He wasn't at the NA meetings that, those first NA meetings at Eagleville Hospital, he wasn't at the first meeting. He just wasn't there. There were a lot of people in those early NA meetings here in Philly from AA who had come. Guys who were friends of mine from young men's group, they would come. They would share at the meetings. They would help us with different things. They participated in NA's growth. But Flannigan, as far as his doing anything down here, he didn't. He didn't. I want to be clear about that. You've gotta give people credit where it's due, and when it's not due, you gotta say, "Well, that's not the way it went down." Like I said, to me, you want to say a person who was a key in Narcotics Anonymous coming to the east coast, it was Bob Lane out in California. It was his loving heart, which just opened up everybody to him, and he had all these wonderful relationships with people. His love-filled heart is what got NA back to this area.

Danny: Well, you gotta remember, he was a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, and people were taught, "You gotta give it away in order to keep it," in Alcoholics Anonymous, and he was just doing his 12 step of his program to help, whether they were addicts or alcoholics. He was doing his job. God bless his heart.

Boyd: Well, Bob and Dick, and many members of AA, the printer, the man who...I believe it was Mike and Frank's father who

Danny: Danny. Mike and Danny. Mike Sheehan, Senior.

Boyd: Mike's father who allowed y'all to go into his AA meetings and even got him kicked off the list. There's many, many friends of NA that were primary AA members.

Roy: That's right. God's hand worked through all these people, and the colors they were wearing—whether it was AA, or NA, or whatever it was—just doesn't matter. God's hand worked because these people's hearts were receptive to that carrying the message.

Boyd: That's it. And you know, just for whatever it's worth, Roy, in our research and stuff, we're finding that all over.

Roy: It's beautiful.

Boyd: Isn't it?

Roy: It's beautiful, man. It really is. So many people, they have...not so many, but there's people who have a hard on for AA, and I certainly at times in my life, really did because of what happened back in '68, but to have that and to think about, if they knew what the young men's club had been like—this was a real renegade AA club—they would be proud that the early NAers in this Philly area got how it was supposed to be and the carrying the message and starting meetings from that club. They would be proud of that.

Boyd: I understand.

Roy: Not looking down like, "Oh well, they were the two programs," because that club was unlike anything that I ever saw anywhere in AA. These were renegades, man.

Boyd: I do, I understand completely.

Danny: Keep going through your book.

Boyd: Yeah, definitely. Well, with your first intergroup, what would have approximately been the number of attendees, I mean, the meetings that y'all would have had. Would y'all have had 20, 30, 15?

Roy: I would say, the first intergroup meeting was 12-15 people.

Boyd: Yeah. That's great.

Roy: Then it increased as the meetings got more and more people, like Collegeville, out that way. Every intergroup—not every one, but almost every intergroup meeting—there were more groups being added because the groups were growing. We had to get bigger and bigger places to meet at. They were great. Like I said, it was a real opportunity to, all of us keep in contact with each other and talk about program business. The unity and the friendships that kept us bound together, it was good. We would talk about, from the beginning in '73, about the literature because we had the little White Books, the stamp we got, that was in '73, we got the stamp "Intergroup Approved." We used that. We put that on all the little literature and pamphlets that we made up. All these things were, for us, big steps. Every little thing, like today, you think, "Man, that seems stupid." For us back then, it was all, every little step was a real advancement.

Boyd: Is that the...

Roy: Yeah, that's it, man. That's it. That was a big deal. I remember when the guy was given the money to go out and get that stamp.

Danny: Do you know who that person was?

Roy: I don't remember.

Danny: Richie M.

Roy: Yeah, yeah. [Malar?].

Danny: Richie Malar picked up the stamp.

Roy: Yeah. That was it. By then, we had our little number. In those days, everything was—you didn't have anything computerized, so it was all switchboard-type deals, you know what I mean?

Boyd: Right.

Roy: They had a circuit going to Ray T.'s house because Ray T., he was pretty stable compared to the rest of us. He had a house he lived in. He had a wife and kids. He had a steady job that must have been something because he had a car and a house, and whatnot, so he was doing pretty good. So, he had the phone coming into his house. Then, the next step was we went to an answering service. They did the answering service; it was right around the corner from where Ray lived.

Danny: At Dairy and Broad. 6261 North Broad.

Roy: They would take the calls, and then we would divvy up who would take the calls for the week, for the month, and you would take the calls into your house. They would call you up: "Hey, we got a call." We got our first 12-step call with this guy, Ron M. There was a psychiatric facility down in south Philly. He was from south Philly. Run by Einstein Hospital. We went into the ward there.

Danny: Was that the one at 3rd and Reed?

Roy: Yeah. We 12-stepped him. He came and was an active member in NA for many years. That was the first 12-step call from our answering service. So, we had that number. We were running little ads on the radio when we could afford it, or when we could get ads for free run by the radio stations.

Danny: That number was 215-276-2703. Just like I said.

Roy: Yeah. In '73, we did get a letter back, a general letter from California, from the headquarters—GSO, they called it—from World Service, and at that point, we voted on adopting their guidelines for GSO to meet our needs. That was '73. We printed up some literature, a 4th Step inventory sheets. That too was from Billy A., Billy Alison.

Boyd: Was this before the 20 Questions or after the 20 Questions? Not real sure?

Roy: No.

Danny: I think before.

Roy: Yeah, I think the 4th Step, that was before. Billy had a way with writing stuff. He was really good at that. At the same time we got the thing from out in California, this GSO structure, they called it, we also got a letter giving us a list of all NA meetings in the U.S.

Boyd: Wow.

Roy: There weren't many. We got around to writing letters out to all of them. We did it in two batches. We got a few back in response. Most of them nothing, some of them return to sender. Then Ralph S., he wrote a paper on the 1st Tradition, "Personal Recovery Depends on NA Unity." We were going to start to write our own...it was voted on; we were going to write our own 12 and 12 type book like AA had. We started doing that. We started writing stuff, and that was 1973 under the auspices of the intergroup.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: We were having a lot of fun. '74, we got together sobriety chips, we called them. They have little chips that they gave out. There were certain people who were always, always had all these creative ideas, and I think Linda F. might have been...she had a lot of creative ideas like that. We would give out these chips.

Danny: What'd they look like? Were they like poker chips?

Roy: Yeah. Like that. Little plastic, they had a thing on them, "Narcotics Anonymous," and they would have the time: 1 year, 2 years, whatever it was.

Danny: Wow. I'd love to get some of them.

Roy: Yeah. I don't know. One other thing, I'd like to go back to '71 with Maureen.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: And how her mom played really a...because we had the meeting. We would finish, and then what do we do?

Boyd: Right.

Roy: Do we hang out on the street corner? Bad idea. So, her mom had been a long-time member of Al-Anon. Now, Maureen had been thrown out of the house. I don't think she ever moved back. She got her own place with some other women in the program. The mother would let us come back and have coffee and talk at the house, and it gave us a place to hang out after meetings. So, you might have 15, 20 people in this little row house in Kensington, talking til really, really late at night, coffee and whatnot, and then we'd all drift out and go home. That was an important part of just rebuilding a new life, getting us off the streets.

Danny: What neighborhood did she live in?

Roy: Kensington.

Danny: The mom lived in Kensington?

Roy: Yeah. She lived in Kensington, a couple blocks above Allegheny Avenue, around K and A, around Kensington and Allegheny.

Danny: Which was a tough crowd back then.

Roy: Yeah. Yeah. It gave us something else to do. We always had people who had these creative ideas, like Maureen. Maureen came up with...because we'd go to meetings. We were staying straight. We'd hang out at her mom's house when we can. What else do we do? What do we do? She would come up with ideas like, "We'll go play miniature golf." We'd go bowling. We'd go out to a diner to eat. Things that are considered pretty common today, but for us back then, I remember thinking, "Bowling? Miniature golf?" It's like, "Whoa!" We'd do stuff like that, it's like, "Hey, this is pretty cool." Because so many of us were so mentally and emotionally destroyed from the addiction that ideas like that, we would have never come to that on our own. The Higher Power always puts somebody with a creative mind in with us to just help us on our path to getting better.

Danny: That's why it's a we program. Cuz you might not be able to come up with the idea, but Boyd might be able to, or I might. That's why we came together.

Roy: Yeah. It was cool like that. So, '74 was the sobriety chips, and we reached out because one of the names on the list we had gotten from California was a group in New York City, they said. So, somebody in intergroup called them and spoke to a woman up there. There was some dialogue about what their meeting was like, and what they were doing, but it was only one or two phone calls.

Danny: Her name was Sandra.

Roy: Was it? Yeah. We wanted to start changing some of the in the White Book. There was a lot of discussion about that in '74. Now, some of us thought we should just go ahead and do it, send it back to the groups, go through the process of how we had handled things, like with the White Deer Run, Lewisburg, and Williamsport controversy, and handle changes to the White Book that way. And other people thought, "Well, we should really write to California," since that's where the books came from and ask them what they thought of the changes we wanted to make and get their permission. So, after going back and forth about what approach to take, we decided we would reach out to California to get direction. We had discussions that any changes in the White Book, Traditions, or Steps should be sent to California for approval. One of the things they wanted to...one of the things that we originally started discussing was the honest desire. There was a lot of, "I want an honest desire." Well, what the hell's an honest desire? A desire? So, desire's not good enough, you have to have an honest desire? It was like back and forth. "Let's just eliminate honest." Well, I believe "honest" got eliminated anyway, but we wanted to do it back then. There were other things: the way the drugs were presented. There were more and more people coming to the meetings who weren't just needle users. You had people who were using a variety of drugs. They weren't IV users. We wanted the door to be as wide open as possible. We wanted to drop all that street shit: "I'm cooler than you because I shoot meth, and you just drop Black Beauties, and you're not really cool like I am." It's like, "Give me a break, will ya?" There was a constant evolution in that area of, "We're all addicts. Drugs have kicked our asses, and it really doesn't matter whether you're strung out smoking reefer every day or you're shooting a couple thousand bucks of heroin a week." It doesn't matter. It's about addiction, drug addiction, and that's it. There was a lot of discussion, a lot of debate. Nothing was taken lightly. A lot of arguments, but it was always constructive. I don't remember anybody wanting to blow up the bridge before the train went over. There was no fighting about who did what or who thought this, or "We're better than this one." "We got the true message, and they're full of shit." There was none of that. The focus always was on making things good so we can

all stay clean and carry that message. That was number one. That was number one before anything. I liked that because so many groups that try to do good, whether it's different churches and you look through history and you see people, they have basically the same message, the same ideas, and then they go out and massacre each other because some wording is different in their Scripture from the other group's Scripture, so it's open season on each one. That's madness. That's madness. And I'd really like to see Narcotics Anonymous keep growing and not fall into those pitfalls of "We're purists and the other people are this." "We're that, and they're no good." I'm going off on kind of a personal thing here but, from my times off the reservation looking for an easier, softer way to get better, I went to a lot of different churches. Not just Christian ones, but a lot of ones. But the Christian ones struck me as, people would be arguing about different Bibles: who they were written by. This one, "We got the true message because the book was translated by so-and-so. These other groups don't use that interpretation; those people are done. They're going to go to hell; they're condemned." I would think, "There's just something that doesn't make sense about all this." It'd really be uncool for NA to get like that. It really would be. That's just my own personal rant there. '75, still printing our own literature, and we were keeping California abreast of what we were doing with our own literature, sending them samples. People started getting very concerned in '75 about separating NA from AA and not having people from AA chairing NA meetings or speak at an NA meeting and just that we have our own solid set of resources and not use AA.

Boyd: '75 you said?

Roy: Yeah. That's when it really started to solidify in this area.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: I don't really know what I thought about all that. I guess probably I was only closing the door on the AA people because of resentments I had that I was still stirring up and festering, letting fester, which was to my detriment. That became quite a topic. It probably continues to this day with people.

Boyd: But it's also the start of wanting to grow up and stand on your own two feet type of thing.

Roy: Yeah. But see, I never saw that we weren't doing it.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: I mean, to me, that first meeting at Eagleville, from those people I met out in California, we were doing it. Drug addicts were doing it. As soon as I got that white pamphlet, I knew we didn't need AA anymore. We had our thing for drug addicts. Period. We don't need anybody. And I knew that then. Discussions about California being used as the authority, that's when we had the...so '75. So, the Fourth Step inventory was first; then in '75 came the 20 Questions about, "do you have a drug problem." And we printed that up ourselves and distributed it, and that was Billy A. who was the author of that. He had a real talent for that. What was cool, it always seemed the people who had the talents that were needed just got, you know what I mean? The Higher Power just worked through and

Danny: stepped up and took the ball.

Roy: Yeah. It just worked that way. And then in '76, Billy A. and another person went out to California, and that was the big thing. Finally, somebody was going to go out there besides the three people I had seen what, seven years before that. There was something out there! There really was something real out there. He went out and went to their

headquarters and met with them. That was a real turning point and an inspiration. Because that's when we stopped using that little stamp we had, "Intergroup Approved." California at that point sent us the guidelines for structure, which is also called NA Tree. That's when we changed the name from intergroup to area service committee.

Danny: How many people are coming to meetings at this point now? And how many meetings would you say are around? '75, '76 when that NA Tree came about because I know Jim was involved with that at his house.

Roy: Yeah. Well, you could go to a meeting every night of the week without having to do too much driving. By too much driving, I'm talking

Danny: Within a 10 mile radius?

Roy: Yeah, within a 30 mile radius, you could get to a meeting. It was every night of the week, and you had a choice too.

Danny: How many members would you say were coming around? 100?

Roy: Hundreds.

Danny: Hundreds?

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: Oh nice.

Roy: Now, solid core members, maybe 150.

Boyd: That's still a lot.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: It really is.

Roy: Oh yeah.

Boyd: Do you know—and it may just be you, Roy—actually who were some of the first people that would use just NA as their recovery base and used only that? I know in my area, I can remember the two that really...it wasn't until years later that you realized that they actually did not attend AA. They just attended NA.

Roy: Well, I'd say from '73...I know we were talking '76, but in '73, there were people coming—there was access to meetings every night of the week—there were people who had never made an AA meeting. There was a man who had gotten out of Vietnam. His name was Bob. Real handsome dude. He was on one of them boats that Senator Kerry was on, what do they call them things? Swift boats? He was the gunner. The big, that went up and down the rivers over in Vietnam? I used to call him Machine Gun Bob just to kid with him. He was a strong member. I don't know, he may still be around today.

Danny: What was his last name?

Roy: I never paid attention to people's last names.

Danny: Bob McKay?

Roy: No, it wasn't Bob McKay. No, this was a guy, he was here in Philly. He was a strong member, and I don't know that he ever made an AA meeting. So, there were plenty of people who just made NA meetings, and by '76, there were probably a lot of them.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: There were a lot of them. Because then you had a selection of meetings on any given night.

Boyd: Right. So, probably just as soon as the seven meetings a week were happening, that's when you started seeing the beginnings of that.

Roy: Yep. Because I know that's what I did. I didn't go to AA. I hung out at the young men's club. I would go there after hours because I was never really good at working steady. I had kind of a thing where I didn't have to, so I didn't. It gave me a place to go that was safe in that there was no drugs, no nothing there. I could hang out there, have a cup of coffee, and talk to the other bums all night long if we wanted to. But I wasn't making any AA meetings. I had an NA meeting to go to every night of the week, and most people, they might go to the young men's club just as a thing to go to one of their meetings, but you didn't have to anymore.

Boyd: When do you think some of the beginnings of the switch of sponsorship happened? Meaning, like yourself, I'm going to assume that when you came in in '69 and '70 that, since it was limited NA, that you had an AA sponsor.

Roy: Right.

Boyd: What's a time period that's good to say when that kind of switched maybe for you? When was it that you picked up...did you pick up a sponsor that was just doing NA meetings or did that not happen?

Roy: Probably '76.

Boyd: Ok.

Roy: Because I relapsed many times.

Boyd: You were off the reservation a few times.

Roy: Yeah. Off the reservation looking for an easier, softer way to get better. A way with minimum amount of effort.

Boyd: Right.

Roy: It didn't work. Yeah, there were people then who had had several years, by those standards back then, of continuous straight time, clean time. So, you had your pick. You had your pick.

Danny: Who was your sponsor?

Roy: Back then, I had asked Brian T.

Boyd: Back in '76 when you came in in the '76 era?

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: Ok.

Danny: So did Jim Hoffman. So did Jim.

Roy: Yeah. Well, a lot of people did.

Danny: Well, he had his shit together. That's what it was about. He had his shit together and hooking up to people. That's what I would think.

Boyd: Moving right along.

Roy: I'm not saying anything.

Boyd: No need to.

Roy: It's like, yeah. So, '76 was a key that I think we integrated with California.

Boyd: Sounds like it.

Roy: You gotta understand, by today's standards, it was like about as loose-knit a confederation as you can get, but we now had an authority recognized. They were out there. We had people to correspond to. They were sending us things that we could use. You still had your firebrands and your anarchists who have always, probably still to this day, going on about "We should start our own thing back here, and screw them." Really, for all intents and purposes, it was finished as a discussion topic. The headquarters was out in California. They provided the direction, and it was good. That's it.

Boyd: Well, you got a lot of writing there. Was there any more...

Roy: Well, no. I had written some things about what it was like in young men's club, and I think we covered that because a lot of people—myself included—to go to a meeting where you're looking for help and have to become somebody other than what you are to get that help, there's something that sticks in your craw about that. So, having to say and go in there, "I'm an alcoholic and an addict," or whatever. But you never had to do that at young men's club. You never had to do that. There were guys who did, but you never had to. You could say, "I'm a drug addict." And that's what I liked about the place, but it was a renegade

Boyd: AA meeting.

Roy: They were renegades there.

Boyd: God bless them.

Roy: Yeah. That's right. That's right. I'll tell you a little story, cuz I've only shared it with...Mike S. knows it cuz he remembers Billy Green. I wanted to do it that night at Oxford Circle, but there just wasn't enough time. It was ungodly hot. I was starting not to feel good by then sitting up there. The first speaker, he spoke way over his time, and I didn't want...it was like, "Look, the people have had enough. Just short and sweet and let's get out of here and get the cold drinks." But I wanted to share because there were a lot of black people there, and I wanted to share about the first black person who attended and was a regular member of Narcotics Anonymous here in Philadelphia. Can I do that?

Boyd: Yeah, of course! We'd be honored to.

Roy: Cuz I know you've never heard it. His name was Billy Green, and I'm saying that now because he passed. I had run into him as I was going to the young men's club, and Billy was relatively young for AA. He was in his mid-30s. He attended the young men's club. He was the only black member. He attended a group, an AA group out in west Philly called the Parkside Group. Bill took me aside and would encourage me because he was a heroin addict. He knew all about the addict experience, and I got a lot of encouragement from him. I looked up to the guy. The guy had been a professional welterweight boxer. As far as physical, this guy was tuned up. Whenever we would go to a meeting, nobody gave me any shit about, "I'm Roy, and I'm a drug addict," when I was sitting next to Billy. He participated in the early meetings up at Eagleville. He came to the Saints Group. He came to the early NA meetings, like at Broad and Duncannon. He was a big support and encouragement because he was a lot older than the rest of us, and he just had a physical presence of—I guess from his boxing—there was just an air of confidence about him. He always encouraged us. Then I lost track of Billy. I was watching tv. I was at home. I had gotten home from work, watching the 6 o'clock news, and this story comes on about a bank robbery down in Center City, Philadelphia. The guy robbed one branch of a bank, walked across the street to another bank to rob that. By the time he was walking out of the second bank, the area's flooded with cops now. The man has a gun. The guy's waving the gun around, and the cops were telling him to drop it. He wouldn't drop it. They made him look like a piece of Swiss cheese and killed him. They flashed his picture. It's Billy Green. The autopsy showed he was intoxicated. The gun was a toy. That's how Billy Green ended up. He was a good guy, and he really went out of his way to encourage me and other people to stay clean, and he was a good guy. Just like Jimmy C. People ask me, "Why do you remember these guys that didn't make it?" It's like, yeah, but you know, they didn't make it, but they had good hearts, and they

helped a lot of people. I just want to remember them because they're like brothers and sisters too.

Boyd: Thank you, Roy. Thanks for sharing that.

Danny: Good story.

Boyd: They really are.

Roy: Yeah. They are.

Boyd: They are definitely.

Danny: They helped build the foundation for us now, man.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: You can't forget them people.

Roy: No.

Boyd: No. I remember the first person. We were a close-knit bunch in our area when we were getting clean. At 3 years, when I had 3 years, there was a bunch of people, a group of them—about 6 or 7—that all went back out. It was just like experiencing a death in the family. If you really want to know the truth, that particular episode right there probably helped a lot of people work more diligently at their program and make a deeper commitment because it put the fear of God in all of us.

Roy: Sure. Yep. Definitely.

Boyd: Just like Jimmy in the jail cell.

Roy: Yeah. Yeah, we were devastated. We were devastated. Everybody liked him. We were devastated. This was a guy who'd been a mainstay.

Danny: What year was that around that he died? Any idea?

Roy: '72.

Danny: Oh crap. So, he was one of the very original members then.

Roy: Yep. Danny S., he was another guy there from the very beginning like Mike's brother. He did great. I remember envying him. He was staying clean, started a little appliance store, started building it up. By the time he was done, he had like six stores with these block...they'd be in these strip centers taking up the whole block. In those days, there weren't so many foreign cars; he was driving a brand new Cadillac and drifted away from the meetings, started using coke.

Danny: What was the name of the stores?

Roy: Sheehan's Appliances.

Danny: Where were they at?

Roy: In Jersey. They were all through Clementon, Willingboro, Glassboro, and they were big, big stores. He was doing well, and drifted away from the meetings, picked up, lost the stores. He was clean for about eight years when he picked up. The next...for a long time, he tried to get clean, was in and out, spent 6 years in prison down in Florida. Could never get clean. And he ended up, he fell down the steps intoxicated. They did an emergency operation on him, on his hip and stuff. Well, they didn't detox him. So, during the surgery, he stopped breathing, had brain damage, spent the last two years in custodial care in a nursing home, a vegetable. It's like, that's addiction, man. That's it: jails, institutions, death. We pick up; there it is. Danny died in an institution brain damaged, had just enough to know where he was because when we would come into the room, he would acknowledge. Couldn't talk, couldn't move, anything. It was awful. He ended up, as complications set in from vegetable-type patients, and he died. It was like, "Damn, man!" He had the keys to the kingdom, but stopped making any effort. It's life and death.

No bullshit about it. It is a life and death program. The consequences, the drug addiction, nothing to laugh at.

Boyd: Not a bit. Not a bit. You know, many many times I've thought about, "Why do I stay clean today?" It's because I know I've found something that works. It's just as simple to it as that. If you've got the disease that I've got, there was no place else left to go except for to jail, institution. In my case, it was a very good chance of death because my disease had just taken me to that point where it wouldn't have been too much.

Roy: Right.

Boyd: Thank God for this Fellowship.

Roy: Yep.

Danny: I got a question for you. What are you doing now? We're gonna go grab something to eat and then go up to Morrisville and interview another guy and then I'm speaking at an anniversary meeting tonight in Bristol. If you want to hang with us, man, we'd love to have you.

Roy: How about if I follow you to get something to eat. I'll probably go home from there because I want to take a nap and kind of get myself ready for tomorrow cuz I'm going over things with that nurse. It doesn't sound like it's going to be much fun.

Danny: All right, I'm going to shut this off then. We're done? You got any questions, man?

Boyd: I really don't, except for just to say this, and it's, is there any way that you can describe, Roy, in a thousand words or less, what it feels like to...to describe your feelings about being the person who God chose as the instrument to bring the first White Book back to Philly and to watch what it has become on the east coast today?

Roy: To have been allowed to play the little part that I played in this wonderful, wonderful miracle of providing a new way of life to drug addicts, it's beyond my wildest dreams. This is my dream, that I played some part in doing something good. Something good came out of my life. This is a sustaining thing. This keeps me going with this liver cancer disease. The thoughts of that, because every day throughout the day, I'll say "God, my life is your miracle. This miracle is Narcotics Anonymous, my relationship with you, God. You allowed me to play this part in things." It can't be put into words. The joy it fills me with and the meaning it gives me, I have a sense of completeness, a wholeness that you couldn't buy, you couldn't get any other way. This wonderful program has given me—this may sound like jive shit, but it's like being in heaven on earth. It's good, man. It is good, and to see how it's grown, there's times when I'll go to the meetings, and I won't say anything, won't introduce myself. Just sit in the back. I watch all these people, all different ages, young people, and I have to kind of hide my face because I start crying. This is just beautiful. It's going to keep growing, and NA is going to get stronger and bigger. Man, we're changing the world. I played a little teeny part in all that. That's really cool, man. That's way cool.

Boyd: It is. Thank you. Thank you so much for doing this. Very much so.

Roy: I appreciate the opportunity. You guys remembering about me, it's cool.

Boyd: Well, thank you, Roy. I would like to be able to scan those notes. I'm going to bring my computer up here and scan them real quick.

Roy: Yeah.

Boyd: We'll do that before we leave, Danny, if we've got time.

Danny: Can I have that book?

Roy: You know, it's stuff that I've been journaling in. A lot of this stuff is about the illness stuff.

Boyd: Yeah, and I'd rather just get the notes.

Roy: There's stuff on history, but yeah.

Danny: Could you pull out, would you have to rip it out?

Roy: Yeah, I'd have to rip it out. I'd like to kind of keep it.

Boyd: No, we can scan it. He doesn't have to rip it out cuz I can put it on the flatbed scanner. Just give me a sec. Would that be ok?

Roy: Yeah, that's good.

Danny: Why don't you grab a pen and 'x' the ones on the top that you want him to do?

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: I love ya, Roy. I want you to know that, buddy.

Roy: Thank you. You're a cool dude too, man.

Danny: Thank you, man.

Boyd: This has been a great day.

Roy: Yeah, man.

Danny: It's only the beginning of it. We've got some more [hours?] to do. He's 'x-ing' out the ones

Boyd: Yeah, the ones that have the history. That was a good idea.

Roy: I can see, cuz Mike S., he has a little over 20 years today. He has throat cancer.

Danny: Oh, really?

Roy: Yeah, and it's not going good for him. I see the difference because he does his own thing with his spiritual beliefs, and he really doesn't attend our Fellowship or any 12-step fellowship. He has a discipline that he adheres to, but you know, the difference, because he just doesn't have that source of peace and strength. It's just not available.

Danny: He don't have the Steps in his life is what I hear.

Roy: You know what I mean? He just doesn't have that.

Danny: Yeah.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: It's nice that you recognize that. So, you keep in touch with them yourself, the Steps?

Roy: I keep telling him; he lives down there in Saint Augustine, and he's got a girlfriend down there that he's kind of close with I guess. I don't know if he's close.

Danny: Where's Saint Augustine?

Boyd: Florida. A little bit north of Daytona.

Roy: Yeah, and I keep telling him, "Look, man. Why don't you come up here, get involved with the meetings? The people will love to see you. The people would love to see you. The people remember all the stuff you and your brother did, and come up here and be a part of things." I tell him, "Mike, come on up. Until you get things set up, you can stay with Maureen and me. You don't have to go through this by yourself." He drives a cab, and he runs a recovery house for a guy, a big place. He lives in a little room. "You don't have to be by yourself. If you don't do that, why don't you start going to meetings down there? Do something."

Danny: This is the actual book that was sent to Philadelphia.

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: That's Jimmy Kinnon's handwriting on top there. That's pretty cool, huh?

Roy: Yeah.

Danny: You know who had that? John Farrell.

Roy: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I remember John.



Roy Porta 1972