

Chuck Skinner Interview 1993

The date is March the 7th, 1993. I'm presently here at the home of Chuck and Connie Skinner, the time is 2:20 p.m. I've come here with my husband Bill H. in order to collect the history of Narcotics Anonymous through Chuck Skinner's eyes, who is at present today the oldest living member of Narcotics Anonymous. (The conversation is reflected with an I for the interviewer and a C for Chuck's responses.)

I: "Chuck, how did you actually find Narcotics Anonymous or how and when did you actually get clean?"

C: "The first time I heard about Narcotics Anonymous was probably in 1959 or early 1960. I and another gentleman, both of us loaded, went to our first Narcotics Anonymous meeting in Sun Valley. My interpretation of it at the time was some old gentleman giving last rites to lames on the floor. It had very little appeal to me. After continuing to use and drink to my limit and finally coming back, I went back to AA because in those days there was not in NA meetings other than the one in Simi Valley that I know of. That year was 1961. I went to AA meetings, got involved in the Harbor Institutional group which was one of the only groups of AA at that time that you could talk about being an addict. In that group, you had to be at least a 3-time loser and shoot nothing but pure heroin. I wasn't a 3-time loser, I had shot some heroin, I didn't deny or admit – I just smiled a lot. I continued to go to AA meetings for a couple of years being involved in institutional groups. I was not getting what I wanted out of it and I was running around with a certified nut who was going to this NA meeting on Wednesday night in Sun Valley and kept asking me to go.

I: "What part of Sun Valley?"

C: "At the time, I didn't know. Just Sun Valley, which at that time thousands of miles away. We didn't have the freeways then and it wasn't that quick to get there. However hat had happened in AA, I was only hearing, I come to this wonderful program that you wonderful people and everything has been wonderful since, of course my life was falling apart. Finally in desperation, I went with Jack."

I: "Is he dead or alive?"

C: "He died with fifteen years clean."

I: "That was Jack Wayland?"

C: "Yes, that was Jack Wayland. We can't use these names, you know."

I: "He's dead."

C: "I know he's dead but see I still can't use names. I went in with my usual line of bull and they told me you better get it together or you're going to get loaded and they were talking about the things that I wanted to hear. How you take care of your finances, how you take care of wives, or jobs. The thing that I was not able to take care of at the time. I haven't left since. Being involved in the institutional group, I usually took charge of the institutional committee and started from there. About this time..."

I: "What we know today as the Hospital and Institution group is what you're talking about? What year was that?"

C: "That was 1964 or 1965. Dates I'm not too good at. Later they formed the Board of Trustees and of course being as by that time I had a car and I asked the Institutional committee why I was put on the board of trustees. I was chair of the Institutional Committee. Then from that point on, we started building the Board of Trustees. Picking civilians to go on the Board of Trustees because they had various skills such as probation officers, lawyers (expecting free legal advice), doctors (expecting free medical advice), and of course, after dealing with us they found that they were too busy to stay on the Board of Trustees or those who did stay would never accomplish much for years with them."

I: "Are there any records of the minutes of any of those meetings anywhere that you know of?"

C: "I am not sure that there is any, yes there should be some records is all the World Service Office records were turned over to the new World Service Office. There should be records of all those meetings. At this time there was very few meetings even though we had started many. The only meeting that I can remember now that is still in Forest State was the one in Manhattan Beach. There is still in force around those days. When we got tired of driving to Sun Valley. Jack and I or Jack and Slick Phil decided to start a meeting in Manhattan Beach."

I: "And you all were clean about how long then?"

C: About 5 years. We made a commitment that we would keep this meeting going for 1 year, regardless. In the beginning, there would be one of us showing up, there would be 2 of us show up or sometimes there would be all 3 of us show up. We would make coffee and we would sit there and we would talk about everything from fishing to fighting to our love affairs. We stayed till 9 or 9:30 p.m., poured the coffee out, and then would go to an AA meeting because it was our only source of survival at that time. I had an 'in' with the Department of Corrections. About this time, we opened up Sierra Conservation Center. The program director there happened to be a former lieutenant from San Quentin who I got to know through some of my escapades in San Quentin. He was the one that took me back to my cell, after almost

getting killed, saying don't believe that son of a bitch, he won't give you the correct time on your own watch. He is now program chairman of Sierra Conservation Center and is in contact with us and gives us information of the forestry camps. Unfortunately, he was about 10 years ahead of time. We did not have enough people to cover them and we got spread thin. Each camp was at least 250 miles away from Los Angeles. We were trying to cover all of these and of course, none of us with any skills at that time. Bob B. had the skill, he could fix his own car, so he took the brunt of a lot of it. We had firm commitments from people, that they were going to carry the message to the institutions and then you wind up 3 months later finding out that there hadn't been a meeting there for 3 months. One month, we lost him. Mr Frickie got promoted, of course they got a new one and he wasn't as enthusiastic as Mr. Frickie and they just died, one by one. Along about this time, people had migrated to San Francisco. They started some meetings up there."

I: "What year was that?"

C: "About 1970, maybe a little bit before."

I: "So who at this time was on the Board of Trustees for Narcotics Anonymous?"

C: "There was Greg P., Jimmy K., Jack W., Bob B., Bill B., myself, and Carl B. and Judge Leon Emerson. Judge Emerson was a real advocate and I think probably had more to do with Narcotics Anonymous then, in the eastern counties than everybody else. Everybody that appeared in front of him that had smoked a joint, he sent to Narcotics Anonymous. He's still around. Mel H. was also on the Board of Trustees at that time."

I: "So you're saying that Mel H. is Mel Helman?"

C: "Yes. We were talking about people migrating to San Francisco, the Bay Area and about this time we finagled our first convention. I can't remember when that was, can you?"

I: "Our very first world convention at La Mirada?"

C: "You can get it off that other tape."

I: "Our very first World Convent, that was before my time. How many people went to that?"

C: "245 people were there. At that time, Sylvia M. Had spent hundreds of hours and hundreds of dollars getting approval to rewrite the book of Alcoholics Anonymous for Narcotics Anonymous. She brought the book to our first World Convention. I read about 2 paragraphs and gave it to Jack W., Jack read one paragraph and threw it in the trash. Of course that upset Sylvia somewhat. All she had done other than getting approval to use the AA book was by changing words she found like alcohol to addiction but it was still and our reply at that time was if we're going to have a book it will be a book written by addicts for addicts. At our first

convention, we had 245 people. We ended up making 245 dollars. That's profit. Knowing that this is to progress and each year we will make more. I asked for and got commitments, pledges from people at that convention amounting to over 6 hundred dollars per month. So being the brilliant businessmen that we are, we opened our first World Service Office. The rent being 200 dollars a month. Plus utilities. And we never got one dime of the pledges. Our World Service Office, Jimmy Kinnon was in the hospital at this time. He had been in the hospital for years, I think it was with tuberculosis as I recall. Bob B. had the World Service Office in the trunk of his car up to this point. We opened the World Service Office up on Crenshaw with voluntary help. A gal by the name of Bids last I knew she moved up to San Luis Obispo many years ago and I haven't heard from her in many years. She was our volunteer office manager. As I say, we got very little left, we got little or no support from the pledges. Our literature sales was not that much. All we had was the Little White Book at that time and the meeting directory which didn't amount to much."

I: "So that was the only literature that we had? The Little White Book and the meeting directory?"

C: "About this time is where the Northern and Southern California war started."

I: "In '70?"

C: "In the 70's."

I: "Early 70's?"

C: "Addicts being what they are, the people up north found that they could have printed and they put the little white book together themselves, they could do it for 3 cents. So rather than send the 15 cents that the World Service Office was charging they did this and of course we were getting no revenues, we had no way of supporting the World Service Office. The irony is that we were forced to close it."

I: "The doors on Crenshaw closed?"

C: "On Crenshaw. We then went to, we were fortunate enough to get an office at suicide prevention, in Los Angeles for about a year it was. We had that office there for two or three years till such time that they had a change of management and they asked us to vacate. Carl B. one of the Board of Trustees rented a place and he got commitments sight unseen and of course when we seen it, we refused it."

I: "That Carl B., the attorney?"

C: "We refused it. We couldn't hold to our commitment because it was in a place that even I

was afraid to go down there in the daytime. We then rented a place out in the valley.”

I: “Rented an office out in San Fernando valley?”

C: “We rented an office in South San Fernando Valley.”

I: “Do you know approximately what year that was?”

C: “I’d say ’73.”

I: “’74?”

C: “Somewhere in there and Jack Bernstein took over the management of that. Narcotics Anonymous had started to grow in Pennsylvania as well as a few little meetings here and there. Nothing sufficient. Pennsylvania I guess had the 2nd largest number of members of Narcotics Anonymous as we know it today.”

I: “Do you know that group of people were that left California on motorcycles and wound up in Pennsylvania per chance?”

C: “No, I don’t.”

I: “I heard Vito tell that story?”

C: “I’m sure that’s like Russ when he went to Oklahoma, he started NA back in Oklahoma.”

I: “When was that?”

C: That was probably in 1970, somewhere there.”

I: “So people from California that got clean in Narcotics Anonymous would pick up the White Book and directory, get information and data and scatter across the country sounds like.”

C: “Start meeting wherever they went. It was kind of like broadcasting to the wind. People in Narcotics Anonymous would migrate.”

I: “The seeds would be planted like Johnny Appleseed?”

C: Wherever we go, we have to have other addicts so we can survive.”

I: “So the office in San Fernando Valley, Jack V. was overseeing?”

C: “He was overseeing that. At this time Jimmy Kinnon had gotten out of the hospital he hasn’t able to work but he was well enough and he needed something to do and he agreed to take the World Service Office back in his home at this time.”

I: “So they closed the doors in the San Fernando Valley and turned it over to him in his

home?”

C: “Yes. Coming back to the convention, after the 3rd convention we found that it was too much work after the 4th convention we found it was too much work for any one individual to do, so we formed a committee and this committee was to take the World Convention. After the first year the committee had the convention, the World Service Office never heard any more from it. We never received a dime, we never got any reports. It was just a committee that was on their own and didn't seem to be responsible to anybody. At our 8th World Convention at the hotel in San Francisco we had a Board of Trustees meeting.”

I: “Who was on the Board of Trustees then?”

C: “The same bunch. When we set up the Board of Trustees it was a life time appointment or until you wanted to resign so it was practically the same group. Anyhow Jimmy was the one that faced the crowd.”

I: “You and Jimmy and Bob B.?”

C: “Bob wasn't at this convention at this time. When we had the Trustees meeting the public. After this point, the Board of Trustees meeting had not been open to the public. However having been on the Board of Trustees for 5, 6, or 7 years at this time, I did not know that they were not open to the public. At the convention, Jimmy made the flat statement that they were closed meeting. This drew some hostile response and I said I didn't know it but I would find out when I went to the next Board of Trustee meeting and at the next Board meeting I put forth a proposal. I proposed that we open the meeting to the public, not for participation but so that any member of Narcotics Anonymous could attend and it was voted on and passed. However at this convention at San Francisco and this is the one thing that I'd like to get across more than anything else. I was fortunate enough to hear Bill Wilson talk about the roles in Alcoholics Anonymous in the early days. How he had worried about it and wondered about it and prayed about it and finally he had to come to the conclusion that it was a God-given program and the good would stay and the bad would go. I finally accepted his deal in that at it's worked pretty well. At our 8th convention, I asked the chairman of the convention where the next one was going and he said it's up to the committee. I said oh no, this is a peoples convention, the people tell you where it's going. He didn't know that I didn't have the authority but being that I was on the Board of Trustees, I bulldogged him into asking me how do you do that. I told him that I would do it. So I called a business meeting at the convention and got 3 areas who wanted to have a convention the following year. In the meantime, 4 people from Houston, Texas were in San Francisco on vacation. They were not there for the Narcotics Anonymous convention. They happened to hear there were some addicts at the Jack Todd Hotel and they came out to see what it was all about. Somebody said that Houston

would like to but in a bid for the convention. I said fine, it won't do them any good but they can put it in. So when the bids came in there was one in Santa Clara, one in Santa Monica, one in Phoenix, and Pasadena. When the vote was counted it was so close you couldn't determine. Nobody had went to Texas at this time. How you would think that Pasadena and Santa Monica would merge but they didn't. Somebody started walking over to the Texas side and it was like a flood. Everybody went to the Texas side. If you get that tape from that convention, you'll still hear me say how that you got wat the hell are you going to do with it?"

I: "This is 1977?"

C: "1977. Again this being a God-given program this was all an accident but it was one of the greatest things that ever happened to Narcotics Anonymous. We went to Houston, they had a wonderful young peoples' AA Convention. It went from Houston to Atlanta the following year and we had another wonderful young peoples' AA convention."

I: "Why do you say AA Convention?"

C: "Because they did not have enough NA. Everybody was AA orientated back in that time. In Houston, I don't think they even had an NA group. In Atlanta, they had a few NA groups but most of them had to go a lot to AA. When we left Atlanta, I told my wife it was to go to Wichita the following year. I said if we go to Wichita and they have another young peoples' AA Convention, I'm going to blow the place all to hell. When we got to Wichita, they had one of the best NA conventions that I think they could possibly have had. They have had one ever since. They were no longer riding on somebody else's coattail."

I: "Did they tape that Wichita, Kansas convention also?"

C: "I rather doubt it. They were rather paranoid back then of pictures and taping and all of this so I would rather doubt it."

I: "Who would have that Houston tape?"

C: "Bob B."

I: "He was there in Wichita also?"

C: "Oh yeah."

I: "Was Jimmy K. there also?"

C: "No."

I: "So it was the most wonderful NA convention finally got accepted?"

C: "Finally we came into our own in Wichita. From there each place the convention has gone

Narcotics Anonymous has continued to prosper in those areas. There again being a God-given program, God saw fit to but the NA convention where it was most needed at the time. NA has continued to flourish. About this time NA is growing. It's growing to the point to where volunteer services is not able to keep up."

I: "Volunteer service at the _____?"

C: "Volunteer service at any level, World Service Office, Regional Office, any office but especially at the World Service Office, it is just not a one man operation, it cannot be.

I: "The regional office, the Southern California Regional Office opened up in 1978?"

C: "That was."

I: "That was a different issue but you're saying that there was not enough volunteers at the World Service Office in Simi Valley to keep up with?"

C: "Up to this point also our intellectual geniuses for 10 years, the first 10 years that I was around was Jack W., he had been to the 10th grade twice. And when Greg P. came around he was Jimmy's Protege. We had an attorney on the board, who we begged, pleaded with, we'd done everything to get him to incorporate the Wold Service Office. He would always come back with things for us to do and if we could have done it we would've, we were not capable of doing it. So everything set in limbo for years unincorporated in the World Service office. Greg P. was doing the writing at this time and Greg being persistent we finally said, "Ah print it, nobody's going to read it any how." Along in the late '70's early '80's people started reading and they found some things."

I: "Because in 1976 when I came in there were 10 lps then and the White Book. Are you saying that most of those were written by Greg P.?"

C: "Most of them."

I: "But at the World Service Office in Simi Valley under Jimmy's tutelage?"

C: "That's right. As I said, we had this lawyer on the Board that we thought was going to incorporate the World Service Office, we argued for years on that. Finally, Jimmy and Greg got the World Service Office incorporated on their own making it a one-man operation.

I: "On their own making it a one-man operation, what year (approximately '77) was this?"

C: "Somewhere in there."

I: "Because the records say 1977."

C: "That's probably it then. We weren't apprised of this."

I: "We meaning the Board of Directors, the Board of Trustees didn't know?"

C: "We were apprised that it was being incorporated but not as a one-man operation. Where one man had control. About this time there was a movement to write the book."

I: "Give us our Basic Text? That was part of that movement?"

C: "Yes. I was not enthused about it because I said no book can be written by committee."

I: "Is this about the time when Santa Monica, Bay Cities was using the '12 and 12' in Narcotics Anonymous meetings? 1977-78?"

C: "The book writing did not start in Santa Monica. The book writing started in the South and the East and bunch of newcomers with lots of enthusiasm would form a committee and many of them would have to hitchhike across country to get there."

I: "But this is about the time when the Bay Cities went to the Region and then the Region connected them with the Board of Trustees to get permission to read the AA '12 and 12' and then close the book and formally open up as a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. After we closed the book?"

C: "Yes."

I: "You were chairman of the Board of Trustees when that took place?"

C: "I recall that which was the way..."

I: "Which was the way to make it be so there wasn't anymore antagonism but it was a true Narcotics Anonymous Meeting?"

C: "Right."

I: "In the meantime, in the East and in the South is when the movement was going on to begin the fundraising for the Basic Text?"

C: "Not the fundraising, the writing."

I: "The writing. People were hitchhiking to get to where?"

C: "We always think of our own things last, the funding never even entered into it."

I: "No, it's just that doing that counts. Who was the biggest movement behind this, what section of the country was the biggest movement behind the Basic Text that you feel?"

C: "Georgia, Tennessee, and Ohio were the ones that were the most active in this. However,

there were people coming from practically every state in the Union. They were sleeping in the halls. They were sleeping in the cars.”

I: “As Board of Trustees Chair were you receiving a lot of phone calls about this?”

C: “Oh yes.”

I: “Can you tell us some of the conversations that you had with people?”

C: “Along about this time trough no fault on anybody I’d say Narcotics Anonymous had outgrown our volunteer services. A lot of people, people would send an order for 2 book, White Books – 50 cents, to the World Service Office and of course then on the East coast or down South not knowing that maybe Jimmy had to wait till he go his social security check before he could get out printing, didn’t understand why it took so long and then of course I, a one-man operation that maybe an order got misplaced or not and of course these people sitting back there talked about people stealing their money our in California. It wasn’t that at all, Jimmy if he’d taken all the money that Narcotics Anonymous had then we’d never even started to break even. The people sitting back there who were newcomers didn’t realize that that they don’t understand that and of course they got all kinds of deals and there were movements to move the World Service Office to Georgia and all these other places and do all these things.”

I: “How was the World Service Office funded at that time if you had, Jimmy had to wait every month for a social security check in order to publish literature in order to mail it across the country? Was the Region supporting the World Service Office at all?”

C: “Very little.”

I: “Southern California Region or Northern California, very little?”

C: “Very little. We didn’t have anything to support with. There was just not that much money. Back in those days people would go to an AA meeting, pull their dollar out, put it in an AA meeting - come to an NA meeting, put their pennies in our collection, or take some out at the NA meetings. We just didn’t have any money, it just wasn’t there.”

I: “So around the same time as the Survivors’ Club in San Fernando Valley was still open and having NA meetings was there any fundraising coming from the World or anything out of that at all?”

C: “As I recall the Survivors’ Club couldn’t even support itself, it folded. There again that was...”

I: “Another part of NA. But I know that it needs to be told.”

C: "It's another part of what people used to think addicts should be in a dump behind something and I think that is probably one of the reasons that Survivors' Club never survived, it was not that attractive."

I: "So people in other states, other parts of the country pictured the World Service Office as being something like official and an office with lots and lots of Narcotics Anonymous meeting happening and California had the best of it all and they were being left behind somehow?"

C: "That's true. Anyhow the World Service Conference it was growing, we were getting represented by many states and it was getting more information out and the final result was when the big split came. As I told you the World Service Office had been set up for a one-man operation."

I: "Is that when Corina was also put into place and somebody suddenly wanted a corporation?"

C: "Yes. Anyhow Bob B. and Greg P. had gotten ill and had to move up to Oregon for their health. I think when he moved Jimmy kind of felt that he'd stabbed him in the back."

I: "Any particular reason?"

C: "Well, Greg P. was Jimmy's apparent heir to the throne when he dies. Whenever Greg left why Jimmy felt that he had stabbed him in the back. of bourse Bob B. had got involved in several things. Two years later Jimmy called a meeting of the World Service Office Board which included his wife and one other member who was one of his proteges and did not notify Bob B. or Greg P. that they were going to have a meeting and kicked them off the Board."

I: "Now what year was this? '81-'82?"

C: "1980, '81, or '82. You'd have whenever he went to Oregon. Bob can give you the information. Anyway they both came to me, I was chairman of the Board of Trustees. I went to Jimmy and told him his reasoning was justified it was just the method was what we were talking about. I would like for him to have another meeting notifying Bob and Greg that there's going to be a meeting and why. If the results were the same, fine. He told me that he said who was on the Board and I told him that I didn't think it was supposed to be that way, he says that's the way it is. We happened to get into talking about the book and he says the book will be written when I say so and that's where he and I went on outs. I told him that if we could just rectify these two things, we were in trouble."

I: "This was 1981?"

C: "About 1980 or '81. Anyhow, by this time the book was getting close to being approved. It had been edited and re-edited and it was beginning to look like a book, not a perfect book but

at least a book written by addicts for addicts. With the knowledge that it was going to be improved upon from time to time I go behind it and started the campaign to get the World Service Office turned around and the book written. We got the book approved before we got the World Service Office turned around. Then the fight was on to change the World Service Office.”

I: “At what level was this? The World Service Conference?”

C: “At the World Service Conference. After 2 or 4 years of battling back and forth, we finally were able to get concessions from Jimmy without trying to destroy what had already been built.”

I: “Who was Jimmy’s advocate at this time?”

C: “Greg P., Greg F., Phil P., Henry S., and Chuck G. Chuck G. was on the Board of Trustees at this time.”

I: “And Doug F.?”

C: “No.”

I: “He was Jimmy’s biggest champion.”

C: “He was Chairman of the Region.”

I: “Southern California Region?”

C: “He was also manger of the World Service Office after they moved it out of Jimmy’s house.”

I: “Is that who you met with at the conference, I remember back, were talking about the conference where they were attempting to pull the money from the Southern California Region because the convention had finally made the most money ever and I was treasurer to Southern California at that time and it was dictated to me to get that money over to open up the new World Service Office and I received all the phone calls. That was 1981 and then Doug went to the conference in May and met with you, Chuck.”

C: “It was about the money.”

I: “No, it didn’t have to do with the money, it had to do with the office.”

C: “It had to do with the book.”

I: “It had to do with the book, okay.”

C: “Jimmy pointed out in the boo in the 4th Tradition, a couple of lines he did not like and

walked out.”

I: “He walked out of the room?”

C: “Yes. He told us to fix it. We at that time had 11 thousand dollars already invested in the book. We were close to the printing.”

I: “Who was going to do the printing?”

C: “I really don’t know.”

I: “Corina?”

C: “Well Corina is only a name it’s not a printing of it.”

I: “I know but it was going to be through Corina.”

C: “I think it was through Corinas here because they were our approved legal printing office. So after studying, I , Doug F., and Bob B. who was Chairman of the World Service Conference.”

I: “Bob B. or do you mean Bob R.?”

C: “Bob R.

I: “The Chairman to the World Conference at the time, 1981?”

C: “Edited to line to where we all agreed that we could live with it.”

I: “Meaning taking out that line ‘all else is not NA’?”

C: “Yes. I went home and called the Chairman of the Literature Committee. You’d have thought I’d committed rape. It really created a lot of conflict.”

I: “Is that when you took full responsibility for removing that line since you were Chairman of the Board of Trustees at that time? Did you realize that you, yourself were signing your way out of the picture of Narcotics Anonymous?”

C: “No, I had already intended to resign anyhow. The last 3 years on the Board of Trustees had been horrendous. It was my worst 3 years in the program. I had not enjoyed myself anywhere in 3 years. Every place I went and I had flown all over the country at that time.”

I: “At your own expense, I remember that and that was the days before that happened in ’81 when finally the Board of Trustees had opened up to many people like Hank M. and Dave C.?”

C: "I don't want to get into that."

I: "I know, but you had written a letter, you had me write a letter for you to that gentleman up in Canada and what was his name?"

C: "James D."

I: "So things had changed at the Board of Trustees level of Narcotics Anonymous?"

C: "We put a woman on the Board. We put Sally E. on the Board. We voted to put that line back in the book the following year and they voted to take it out again. So you know it was the right thing to do, it was the wrong way that I did it."

I: "What would that line really cover?"

C: "What it was saying was that all else is not Narcotics Anonymous."

I: "Meaning dances and picnics and the actual functions of, the social functions of?"

C: "It left open for interpretation where it would have been a lot of trouble on down the road. Addicts being what we are we find something we can pick on. Like the Yiddish layers today."

I: "So that red edition of Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text, I remember some..."

C: "The reason for the red edition was a special edition to raise money to pay for the real book publishing."

I: "And is that edition where Jimmy altered the 4th Tradition?"

C: "Jimmy didn't alter the 4th Tradition, I altered the 4th Tradition."

I: "You altered it, okay."

C: "See what was told to one of your political people was that 'oh I didn't have nothing to do with it, it was the Board of Trustees' and I happened to hear him and I said, 'No, don't tell the Board of Trustees did it. They did not do it. If you don't want to take your part of it tell them that I did it. I'm quitting this year anyhow, I don't care. Then my greatest fear, not my greatest fear but the thing that really go me most was that they made the Board of Trustees to listen to the Board of Trustees ended up justifying them not doing it at the conference. By the time they called on me, I was insane. I'd lost all of the control. Of course there was a few boos after I got up and made my little speech. My wife told me they don't have any respect for you, hell if somebody had talked to me like I talked to them I would've killed the son of a bitch."

I: "But I'm hearing you say, I think in 1980 when we all sat down and met at your house in Whittier and worked on those traditions for the Basic Text, I remember that one line real well,

and I remember who made the input with regard to that and we have the tapes of all that. A lot of it, am I hearing you say that a lot of people who were involved with that stood up at the Conference in 1981 and denied being?"

C: "No, the Board of Trustees had absolutely nothing to do with that. I as chairman of the Board of Trustees, took it upon myself along with the chairman of the World Service Conference and the chairman of the World Service Office to do this. Doug F. never denied his part of it. It's a funny thing, I was talking to a guy several years later and he'd tell me he was talking about the one guy and says, 'oh, he's changed.' I said well what about me. He says well you could of made a mistake there. I'll never be forgiven for it. Which is alright, I thought it was right then and I think it was right now. I didn't have to get loaded over it and I don't thing anybody else did so it worked out. So up until 1982 when the World Service Office got established as it is today I think you will find it will be really hard to find legitimate continuity in records. I know when I was Chairman of the Board my first secretary had gotten married, she and her husband got in a beef and she ran off, I had absolutely nothing. Not a letter, not a thing. She took everything with her. I was unable to find any of it. Same way with passing down, I never got a letter from the Chairman that I believed. All I got was the minutes which I already had, not one bit of correspondence. So over the years there had just been no records kept. Everybody was an individualist and they kept their own. You may wonder why I was Chairman of the Board as long as I was, it wasn't because of my brilliance it was because NA was in such a state at that time and nobody else wanted it. They were all afraid to take it. One of the worst things that Narcotics Anonymous has ever don was to put the Board of Trustees in the political arena. I hope that that will be reversed. In my opinion the Board of Trustees can no longer give an opinion on whether something is a violation of Traditions but whether it is popular for a vote at the next election.

I: "What was your reason on that rationale years ago for the Board of Trustee members to have an actual cast of vote and say so at the Conference level since they represented no groups?"

C: "The Board of Trustees had never needed a vote at the conference. Neither has the World Service Office voted. Neither has any committee. In my opinion then and now only the Regional Representatives should have the vote. I don't think that the Board of Trustees needs to vote. I think they should be put back where they are and they should be the 'supreme court' of Narcotics Anonymous. To where they give opinions on Traditions."

I: "Or their experience of Traditions?"

C: "Not political matters."

I: "What do you think maybe was the one thing that turned the who service manual service structure around in terms of when I came around. I was taught that anything having to do with writing or changes or whatever came from the individual members from the group. We used to supposedly give the message up the ladder to the Area to the region to the World Conference and to the Office what we the members wanted. When do you think the change came about that it was the World Service office, the Conference that started dictating to the Region, the Area, to the groups. When do you think you saw that start?"

C: "Probably in 1983 – '84 when people from outlying areas would come in and believing that in service work that they knew something about Narcotics Anonymous. A representative would come from a small area and he would come in with his groups' vote and he would hit the Conference and of course the politicians and the money and power makers would grab him and tell him well you if you don't vote our way you can forget about your home group."

I: "Did you find that to be true as you traveled across the country later on when you were no longer involved as the Board of Trustees that people who cast votes against their Regions, group conscience did you com across that?"

C: "Oh, yes."

I: "People would come up to you and confess so to speak."

C: "Well no, the area would vote this way and we would vote this way and he would vote that way."

I: "Oh the area would make the statement we sent out..."

C: "Somebody from the area would come down and of course the politicians would meet them at the door and pat him on the back and make him promises that you do this and we'll do that. He won't get on the Board of Trustees on this board or that board if you don't do this and he would believe them. After all he got down here with these people and they knew more that his home group did, so he voted the way they wanted him to. It's been going on since probably the beginning of time. My worst 3 years as I said as Chairman of the Board of Trustees when we were in this political battle and financial battle and all these other things was that during this time I played the game."

I: "You're talking about '81, '82, or '83?"

C: "Yes, justifying it under the guise of expediency and necessity."

I: "I remember one time you told me that you'd never make a good politician, Diana because you got to give up something to get something else."

C: "That's right. A politician has to give something to get something and I have done that under the guise of expedience and necessity."

I: "Do you still believe that way today?"

C: "I definitely do. I believed it then and I believe it now. Again coming back to this being a God-given program the things that I gave up there's conditions, are no longer in place. Which means only the good stays and the bad goes however sometimes it take a couple of years. Thank God now the people in Narcotics Anonymous have grown up and has go some experience that it is not as easy to sway them as it used to be. We're now getting down to some of the hard facts."

I: "What do you think about those language changes that took place in '85 and '86? Do you think they benefited Narcotics Anonymous as a whole?"

C: "To some degree they have, however the people who hate rules and regulations we have imposed more rules and regulations on ourselves than anybody else. I can say this that anybody who has fifteen years or more in Narcotics Anonymous and a lot of places outside of the metropolitan areas, five years or even less than five years has had by necessity to go to a lot of AA meetings. To eliminate somebody by their word because they say a work I think we're losing a lot of experience. Same way as getting speakers at conventions by tapes. I remember San Francisco Northern California Convention to where the leader of the meeting got up and gave about a fifteen minute dissertation out how this man's message has just jumped out at him and of course knowing this guy he does have a terrific message. However he also is a space case and when he go up he stared at the ceiling for about 45 minutes while the leader is trying to hide his face. I think you should know how people live not what they can say on a tape. I can make some real marvelous tapes. Whether I live that way or not is another thing."

I: "So in other words I'm hearing you say in synopsis is walk like you talk?"

C: "That's right."

I: "If you don't really walk like you talk who are we fooling?"

C: "That's like several years ago I got a call from Oklahoma and waning to know they had suggested my name to speak and would I send them a tape. I said no. They said why not? I said I'm one of the oldest members of Narcotics Anonymous so if I have to send you a tape then forget it. They forgot it and I didn't send them a tape. However, not a year later they picked a guy by the name of Johnny H. who had as much time as I had but who has never attended a Narcotics Anonymous meeting."

I: "No kidding?"

C: "When I called them and asked them why they were picking Alcoholics Anonymous speakers, they didn't believe he and called him and of course he admitted he didn't go to NA so they cancelled him. They wanted a tape of me and then picked an Alcoholics Anonymous speaker, I thought that was really wrong."

I: "After as many of time, energy, effort, money out of your own pocket, putting your whole heart and soul into this program for over 30 years that I know of because I came into your life in 1979 or something like that, 1980 for sure right that's exactly right. How does it feel to sort of like be in the background by a large majority of people not know. It feels good to you?"

C: "I think that were all in our time. I think that I was fortunate that I got out in my time. I didn't have to go through the ego trips and some of the things like Jimmy and some of the others. I am well aware that unless they put the Board of Trustees back to where I would like it to be and that is like the 'supreme court' to where all we do is make a decision. So young people are not tolerant. I can recall that as I came around. I can remember these old-timers in AA and celebrating their 15th year birthday and saying I am so grateful my grandson's in college or my son's this. I'd walk up to them after the meeting and say do you want to dancing with us sonny? Shit no I ain't going. You ungrateful son of a bitch. I can understand that today, I couldn't understand it then."

I: "Because you'd get to be such an age or stage of your recovery you get tired or you..."

C: "Well it's not tired it's that you have other priorities. You now have that grandson or granddaughter that your supporting in college and you have a job to do and you have a home that you have to mow the lawn you have all these other commitments. It's not that you get tired, you'd love to go. I would love to go all the time but there is other commitment, physical problems."

I: "Do you see recovery as stages perhaps because I remember when I came into NA it was you were an old-timer in NA when you had 5 years. That's the way it was when I came in, in '76. Then all of a sudden the change came about that in order to be a dinosaur in NA you had to be 10. Boy, I remember that long gap between 5 and 10 but what I guess I'm saying is do you see plateaus or stages in your recovery?"

C: "I think our priorities change as we get here. When we come here the only thing we have is staying clean."

I: "And lots of energy?"

C: "Yes, and lots of energy too. You see I would work when I first came here, I could work 12-

14 hours a day and go to a meeting every night.”

I: “And drink 30 cups of coffee?”

C: “And still get up and go to work the next morning. I cannot do that anymore physically. As the years progressed, if I hadn't have had a wife who supported my and was willing to take the loss of my wages as well as the money spent, I would not have been able to do the things that I did. Not many wives would have let you spent that amount of money or many bosses that would have let you take that much time off.”

I: “To dedicate what you did traveling all around the country for yourself?”

C: “So you know God was working with me at that time. I think probably everybody I've heard these 90 day wonders you come in 90 days and worked all the steps. Of course after the 90 days you don't see them anymore. Most of the people I know come in and probably for the first 5 years at least, about all they do is stay clean and go to meetings. Get their ego stroked or made secretaries they think it's because of their brilliance, they later find out that it's because stupid and dumb to do the dishes. Then of course from there you go to treasure which you're really important. First 5 years, we probably stayed clean on action and activity and with the guidance of a sponsor who keeps prodding us along one way or another. Probably within your next 5 years somewhere along the line you're going to start to try to work the steps. Even though one the first 5 years you had thought that you were trying to work the steps you'll find that your brain was not clear enough to even know what the truth is. I think probable I had at least 12 years before I started to get some of the promises up to that point my life was total chaos financially, marriage wise all these things. Seems like that after I" gotten around to working the steps to my satisfaction and getting a set of principles that I could live by. I'd started getting some of the benefits, the promises, peace of mind. I wasn't financially strapped any more because I had to learn about credit cards and all these things in the first 10 years. Cars we'd financed. I was able to get my life in order. Like I said the thing that probably had 12 years and he said if I wanted to feel good then I have to quit doing the things that made me feel bad. That statement hit me like a bolt of lightning at 12 years in this program. It suddenly dawned on me that just as clear as can be that if I wanted to have a happy home life I had to quit stepping out on my wife. I I wanted a job I had to be there when the boss wanted me. If I didn't want bill collectors hounding me then I had to quit making bills that I couldn't pay.”

I: “Do you believe the program of Narcotics Anonymous is about change or do you believe the program of Narcotics Anonymous is about recovery?”

C: "Both."

I: "Do you think they are both in one?"

C: "Surely. There is nothing permanent except change. If you don't change you don't grow. If you don't change you don't recover. In other words if I was still as insecure and immature as much a liar, all the other things I was when I came here, I would not have stayed here. It would have been impossible for me to maintain my clean time had I not changed. We got some good cases."

I: "We've been hearing about relapses of NA old-timers and I've not personally seen any of them but it seems to be real."

C: "That's because they're still doing some of the same things that they were doing when they were using."

I: "That stuff never went away in other words in recovery?"

C: "Plus they never talked about it."

I: "Never talked about going to meetings and dump?"

C: "They never talked about they were doing because if you talk about the things you're doing that you did in the past someone is going to tell you that this is what's messing with you."

I: "When you pitched for so many years and you told me once you were a circuit speaker and Bill taught me to pitch you do 10 minutes of what it was like, 12 minutes of what happened, and 12 minutes of what it's like today. And that was the criteria I've learned all these years and if watched a lot of you people go by it too. All of a sudden in NA they say, this is what I hear in meetings, we don't want to hear drug-a-logs. We don't want to hear drunk-a-logs. How can anybody identify with anybody if you don't do the 10, 10, and 10 what it was like, what happened, and what it was like today?"

C: "Well what we're supposed to do and I believe for identification only is a little bit of what it used to be like, what happened, and what we're like today. I don't think we can put it in 10 minute increments anywhere down the line."

I: "That's just a guide."

C: "It's sure that nobody wants to hear about each jail that I got into and all of that. I am sure that people want to hear about the 32 years that I've been clean the steps that I probably had to go through to get to where I'm at today. I think the reason they want to hear it is because we all to one degree or another have to go through each of these steps. The beginning the

growing along the line. Getting into that I have trouble sponsoring newcomers today.”

I: “So you feel it’s because you got so much time clean?”

C: “I don’t have the energy to sponsor a newcomer. What I am sponsoring today more or less is people with time on the program. It doesn’t mean that the newcomer doesn’t hear me but he wants to be with somebody near his won age. It’s hard speaking with a youth that has a problem with addiction and you’re 60 something years old.”

I: “In other words it’s like peer identification, close in age, close in the time frame of recovery time. We can talk the same language because we’ve basically known the same people, we’ve been to the same conventions, we’ve been through a lot of the same Waterloos?”

C: “It’s kink of like you parents you know you probably had to get 30 years old before you suddenly realized well mom wasn’t really that stupid when I was young. Maybe she had world of wisdom back in those days but you didn’t listen to it. The same way with the newcomer he’s only interested in his thing, which is generally getting a girl, or getting a car, getting something. If he can stay clean and get it maybe he’ll do it. It isn’t until he makes that commitment to stay clean above all else that it seem that I am able to be of any benefit. Even some of the people with time with over 10 years they call me and they ask me and go right on their merry way. The keep going in on catastrophe after another rather than taking care of the things that they should take care of.”

I: “I find it interesting because I remember calling you back in 1983 becaus Bill and I were having a particular problem at that time and you said something to me that you told me in essence, you didn’t really tell me outright what to do but in essence you shared with me what you would have done. I followed that suggestion and advice and as a result I know that you saved our marriage at that particular point in time and have more than once since then. So it always astounds me when people with time that you work with that don’t follow your suggestions.”

C: “Not really.”

I: “It doesn’t surprise you. I guess it just surprised me.”

C: “They intend to.”

I: “They have good intentions?”

C: “Well they intend to but other things come up such as a new girlfriend or nay number of things come up that they’re going to do it one of these days, maybe. They just don’t get around to it. They continue to wallow like I did for almost 12 years in a mess. I guess if they survive if they stay clean sooner or later they’re going to want some peace of mind, some f

the things that this program promises.”

I: “I know over the last few years I’ve personally called you and Connie my mom and dad because you are the mother and father I never had. I love both of you so dearly. I really appreciated all the time we have spent together ever.”

C: “Me too.”

I: “Call me up and say write me one of those flowery letters that you do. I just wanted to say that to you.”

C: “People that thought that I was so brilliant when I was Chairman of the Board of Trustees didn’t know you were writing the letters.”

I: “Someone said they never saw my name anywhere and I said you weren’t supposed to. I don’t know it’s been an interesting 12-13 years, somewhere around there.”

C: “I think about it, it ain’t been dull. It hasn’t been dull. If I die today, I know that Narcotics Anonymous is still in good hands. I know that Narcotics Anonymous will continue to grow.”

I: “You still firmly believe that it’s the Traditions that will always govern us?”

C: “Without the Traditions we well deteriorated, crumble from within. When you give way on the Traditions you give way on life.”

I: “Are the Traditions open for negotiations at all?”

C: “Not at all.”

I: “Or compromise?”

C: “There is no compromise. Traditions are Traditions. They have worked successfully for Alcoholics Anonymous for all these years, they’ve worked successfully for us all these years, I see no reason to mess with the Traditions or the Steps.”

I: “Just as important for the individual. I just think of it in terms of NA as a whole governed by the Traditions.”

C: “Really, we have enough written material now that other than translations into some of foreign languages if we don’t write another piece of literature for the next 10 years we’re still well ahead of the game. I believe that Narcotics Anonymous is changing thins. I think it will change down the line. When I came here if you weren’t a heroin addict you weren’t an addict. I smoked weed for sex, I taken benzedrine to stay awake, I ‘d taken morphine for pain and sleep and never once considered I was using drugs. For years, over 12 years in the military service and for 5 years outside the military service I never considered that was using durgs. It

wasn't until I was shooting heroin that I considered that I was using drugs. That was the hard thing to break when I came to AA off the streets for the first time. I thought I was doing extremely well, I was not drinking. That's what you do you don't drink. I didn't drink. All I was doing was smoking weed for sex, taking benzedrine to stay awake and morphine for pain and sleep. Saw nothing wrong with it. Nobody talked about it in those days."

I: "You mean in the mother program nobody talked about that just as long as you didn't drink. They didn't even mention the other, really?"

C: "Oh no."

I: "Probably wasn't even thought."

C: "You could go to an Alano Club and hell you could pick up all the Valium and all the Demerol you wanted in there. I didn't see anything wrong with what I was doing. Until in the end I got drunk, I got loaded, I got on my way back to the penitentiary, that's when I saw something wrong with it. That's when I had an opportunity I got back, I couldn't do any of these things."

I: "You believe the recovery when we put down the solid drugs and the liquid drugs we switch to other addictions?"

C: "You generally do. We switch from the addictions of drugs we switch to the addiction of meetings, we switch to the addiction of work, we switch to the addiction of food, we switch to gambling, sex, or smoking."

I: "One more time we have to take it to the steps to break that bad habit?"

C: "You don't give up something without getting something."

I: "I remember for years you used snuff, you didn't smoke."

C: "I used snuff to keep from smoking. I was sitting up in a chair 2 o'clock in the morning puffing on a cigarette saying this is stupid. I wasn't even enjoying the cigarette."

I: "I can relate to that."

C: "I quit smoking by chewing snuff. I chewed snuff until I had my first attack 2 years ago. First couple of months I was scared cause it might irritate my throat and when I got to where it would do good I told myself, self you done without it too much you can still continue without it. So it's been over 2 years now that I haven't had any snuff."

I: "In retrospect, do you regret anything that you've done in the last 69 years?"

C: "Do I regret anything I've done in the last 69 years? Oh yes, I regret many things."

I: "There are things you would go back and do over different?"

C: "No way with what I know today. On the other hand it's made me where I am today. The things that I regret is the people that I have hurt. The wives that I've hurt. Then you know the kid that I killed. I regret that. I regretted getting kicked out of 12 years of military service. I regretted getting put in the penitentiary and jails. Without having done those things in those days, I would not be where I am today. A sister told me you're my brother and I love you but don't come back when I was using they knew who I was. Took her about 10 years before she really believed that I was really going to change. Before she died the last 27 years before she died we were closer than we had ever been before."

I: "You've been a big instrument in a lot of people's lives in Narcotics Anonymous and you've been a big instrument in the history of Narcotics Anonymous. A big history maker of NA. It's going to be nice to know that maybe someday this tape will be somewhere in archives."

C: "Well I am like Jimmy, you go to a meeting today and ask some newcomer about Jimmy K. (who's he) and I think that's the way it should be. I sincerely hope that Narcotics Anonymous never has a memorial group for anybody or names a group after somebody or tries to eulogize somebody. I think Alcoholics Anonymous is setting a precedence for that. My sponsor his sponsor in Alcoholics Anonymous when they died they had memorial groups. After about 5 years those were old groups back in those days, after about 5 years of being a memorial group each one of them folded. Cause after a while you get the people who knew these people were just no longer around and nobody else is interested in them. I think Narcotics Anonymous can stand on it's own without being named after somebody."

I: "I've said many times I was too late for the beginning of the mother program of AA but I feel that I was right on time to help perpetuate Narcotics Anonymous and I'm grateful for that as I know you are. Is there anything else?"

C: "No, I'm just glad to be here."