

I Stand At the Door

Roy K.'s last recorded talk

Greeting the 2008 International Convention: Chorus of Recovery in New Jersey

My name is Roy and I'm a sexaholic and I'm standing here in the West LA Saturday night meeting and I'm talking to a large group of sex drunks. This is where the first meeting of Sexaholics Anonymous, I think in the world, ever took place, right in this room, January 25, 1981.

If this tape works out, I'll be also talking to the international convention and I greet you folks. I wish I could be there. I wish Iris could be with me. And this *Chorus of Recovery* theme that you have is just a marvelous idea, because in the Maryland convention we were looking at the depths of the problem and now six months later in New Jersey I understand you have solicited stories from every aspect of real recovery in SA and have turned it into a *Chorus of Recovery*. That's really good news because, as difficult as this is, God can do and is doing for us for we cannot do for ourselves.

So, you know, thinking about the *Chorus of Recovery*, you have asked for comments on it. Every chorus starts with one note. And then there's another note and another note, sometimes a melody, sometimes a chord, but it always starts with one note. And so what I'd like to do is kind of trace the steps, the voices of the chorus that brought me here, and brought us here, and roughed the program here. So it'll be kind of semi personal, my semi historical reprise. So bear with me and we'll try to see what we can do here.

I go back to April 24, 1974 when I walked into the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous for the first time. There was a man at the door. His name was Dick. And he handed me an AA brochure shook, my hand and offered me a seat.

That was the beginning where I found, for the first time in my life, where I knew I belonged, because they were leading with their weakness and I always thought we have to lead our strength. The next thing that I remember doing was, after a few months of sobriety, not even knowing what happened (I have been separated from my wife), I met a man named Jim R and here was somebody in Alcoholics Anonymous who knew what I was and who knew where I came from. He had been a homosexual hustler in the streets of Los Angeles and had lost a family. By the time I met him he was about four years sober in AA, clean and sober from drugs and alcohol, had a new family, two little girls, two beautiful little daughters. Well this man and I, here was somebody who understood.

He was my first sponsor. Jim R. He's dead. So when we look at a *Chorus of Recovery* we find that not all notes keep singing. They found him hanging at the offramp of Temple Street. What had happened was he'd 13th stepped a newcomer woman in Alcoholics Anonymous. Thirteenth step means having a sexual affair with a newcomer. That took him out of his marriage. It took him back into drugs and back into everything. The last time I saw him he told me he was speaking with the devil. The next I heard ...But this man saved my life. He was at the door. I was the only one who spoke at his funeral. I couldn't stop weeping. All the devastation of his life was there in that small little funeral parlour. But he was there at the door.

Next was Carl J, my sponsor. He died a quiet sober death recently but thank God he's the one who started me through the steps. I'd go to his house every week and do it. The next person at the door was Kevin B. He was the guy, he was bi, he was a high school dropout I was a college graduate, we had nothing in common, nothing in common! His no religious background, my religious background.

Anyhow he was the one I could pick up the phone and call and he was my life connection where an impossible situation....

I will never forget the first time I called him. And I said that she is, she just walked in, a new secretary, micro mini skirt, high heels! She's got it on a platter! And I'm going to pieces inside. He was there on the other end on the phone. He says yeah, I went by Ralphs (supermarket) and there on the street so we we we just, the honesty was what saved us both. We didn't have sponsors. We didn't sponsor each other but he was there, he was there, he was there!

Then there was the first pseudo meeting of SA which happened in James Allen's office. James Allen was there, Frank H, Carl and myself. We had the AA big book. We were the sexaholics, in AA, in that one meeting in Simi Valley, that identified. It took us quite a while to get to know each other, but we did. We met to kind of, hey, this is a new program!

That was the meeting where James Allen W., that was his middle name, that's not his last name, James Allan W. After that first meeting we were so joyous that we recognised we are honest with our sexual stuff and he said we ought to call this Lustaholics Anonymous. Well of course, later on, it ended up not getting called that. It got called Sexaholics Anonymous. But it's instructive. Listen to that term. It's Indicative of where we are going today. It was the door to his office that was open, and that was great!

Next one standing at the door, most of you have heard about, Clancy I, the great West Coast AA sponsor and I decided after a slip, after a year and a half that I needed tough direction. I never had a father, never had taken instruction from a man. I needed a sponsor. For a year I'd pick up the phone and after 15 seconds he'd read the situation intuitively and then he'd give me an action and hang up without saying goodbye! that man was at the door. I couldn't stand him, But I followed direction. And he was at the door.

Next man at the door was Chuck C., his sponsor. The people that I have been dealing with in AA, that identified, who wanted to start some kind of fellowship for sexaholics, had all gone by the wayside, and I was left alone. So I went to Chuck C. I said, here's the deal, I've got to find my people. But I don't have anybody. Chuck C. gave me about four hours of his time in Laguna Beach. I'm just sitting there with my mouth open and he's giving me the best of his advice and wisdom. He said "don't worry, God is your partner" and if it hadn't been for that you and I would not be here today because I needed that direction. He was at the door of his own home.

So that brings us to just before SA. What about the chorus of recovery that started Alcoholics Anonymous? Because our program is the AA program. What about that chorus of recovery? Let me just briefly, off the top of my head, recap some information. In 1917 a new Episcopal clergyman by the name of Sam Shoemaker, was in China trying to be a missionary and failing miserably. He met Frank Buchanan who was also a clergyman--Frank Buckman, I'm sorry--who was also a clergyman, and who was the founder of the Oxford Group. When Sam met him accidentally and they got to knowing each other, Frank Buckman challenged Sam Shoemaker with the absolutes of the Oxford Group, which was the precursor to AA in New York City and Akron. The Oxford Group, believed in, amongst other things, the four absolutes: honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. And if your decisions and manner of life conformed to those, then you are probably on the right track. But that was just one of their tenets.

So, he challenged Reverend Shoemaker with this. Now Shoemaker took those four absolutes and for some reason did an inventory of his life based on those absolutes. He was devastated. He had nothing. At the time that made him so powerless, that gave him the awareness, that he surrendered

his life to God. The key word in his life of Sam Shoemaker was self-surrender. That's where surrender got started. What I have been leading up to is, that the principles of our program, of the AA program are our program, there are people, there are notes, in that chorus of recovery, one at a time.

And now what happens? In Sam Shoemaker's Oxford Group in New York, a guy named Ebby, a hopeless drunk, comes in and got sober. He happens to be a friend of Bill W. Bill W. is last-gasping, totally lost. One day he gets a call from him, Ebby comes over, and it turns out Ebby sponsors Bill into sobriety. And Bill starts going to the Oxford Group. So, it was Frank Buckman, Sam Shoemaker then Ebby and now Bill Wilson. And then we have Dr. Bob when Bill goes to Akron and he can't stay sober, he is going to relapse. He is in the Mayflower Hotel. Nothing is working for Bill, he is six months sober from alcohol, which is a miracle. He calls ten churches and one answers. He makes a connection. He sees Bob and Bob was a hopeless drunk. But he was there, and he got sober. That's how AA got started.

So, it's a marvelous journey. It's a marvelous chorus and we are just a small part of that chorus in Sexaholics Anonymous. We are not unique. We are part of this chorus. I wish I would have had the foresight to call AA Central Office and see how many organizations have gotten permission to use the steps and the anonymous thing. Probably 500 at least. There's just an incredible number of fellowships, offshoots from this; good, bad or indifferent, whatever! There's something happening. It's the chorus of recovery! A chorus of recovery with some bad notes and some stuff in there. But that's the way it goes. So, we are being called to a harmony that is here and it's our doing.

Now I'd like to read a short piece, a poem that Sam Shoemaker wrote. And I would like to close with this. It's called **I Stand at the Door**. By the way, during the 1955 St. Louis convention, 20 years after AA was born, where Bill W. turned the organization over to the fellowship, one of the keynote speakers, one of the two keynote speakers in that convention was Reverend Sam Shoemaker. I urge all of you to go to the AA book, *AA Comes of Age*, and read the transcript of Sam Shoemaker's talk to the fellowship. Sam Shoemaker apparently was not an alcoholic, but he sure sounded like one! And he was accused by some of the people in St. Louis of being an alcoholic. And he said that was the greatest compliment he ever had. He was an amazing man. Bill, in that same talk, gives credit to Sam Shoemaker, a little belated, gives full credit for the principles of the program

Now, *I Stand at the Door*, is some blank verse written by Sam Shoemaker. And I want to close with this. There will especially be five or six hundred people in New Jersey who are hearing this. What it all boils down to is one person to another, one drunk talking to another. One person standing at that door. And here we are going to hear it from a man whose life and work was so influential in why we are here today.

I Stand at the Door

By Sam Shoemaker

I stand by the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out.

The door is the most important door in the world -

It's the door through which people walk when they find God.

There is no use my going way inside and staying there,

When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,

Crave to know where the door is.

And all that so many ever find

Is only the wall where a door ought to be.

*They creep along the wall like blind people,
With outstretched, groping hands,
Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,
Yet they never find it.
So I stand by the door.*

*The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for people to find that door - the door to God.
The most important thing that any person can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands
And put it on the latch - the latch that only clicks
And opens to the person's own touch.*

*People die outside the door, as starving beggars die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter.
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live on the other side of it - live because they have not found it.*

*Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him.
So I stand by the door.*

*Sometimes I take a deeper look in.
Sometimes venture in a little farther,
But my place seems closer to the opening.
So I stand by the door.*

*There is another reason why I stand there.
Some people get part way in and become afraid
Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them;
For God is so very great and asks all of us.
And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia
And want to get out. 'Let me out!' they cry.
And the people way inside only terrify them more.
Somebody must be by the door to tell them that they are spoiled
For the old life, they have seen too much:
One taste of God and nothing but God will do any more.*

*Somebody must be watching for the frightened
Who seek to sneak out just where they came in,
And tell them how much better it is inside.
The people too far in preoccupied with the wonder of it all
Do not see how near these are to leaving.
Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door
But would like to run away. So, for them too,
I stand by the door.*

*I admire the people who go way in.
But I wish they would not forget how it was
Before they got in. Then they would be able to help
The people who have not yet even found the door.*

*Or the people who want to run away again from God.
You can go in too deeply and stay in too long
And forget the people outside the door.
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,
Near enough to God to hear Him and know He is there,
But not so far from people as not to hear them,
And remember they are there too.*

*Where? Outside the door -
Thousands. Millions.
But - more important for me -
One of them, two of them, ten,
Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.
So, I shall stand by the door and wait
For those who seek it.*

*I had rather be a doorkeeper
So, I stand by the door.*

Thank you and may God bless our fellowship.

END