

## Bob Stone Interview 1994

The following interview was conducted with former WSO Director Bob Stone in Missouri on July 29, 1994 exclusively for New Awakenings.

(Editor's note: New Awakenings was a membership newsletter published six times a year circa 1993 to 1996.)

**Bob:** What you've asked me to do here is to record my response to a series of questions that might be published in a newsletter called "New Awakenings", and I'm reluctant to do that for two reasons, and I'll explain those. One, I'm fairly seriously ill and I'm not certain that I am going to be around long enough to engage in this kind of discussion in the fellowship, particularly from the standpoint of if things that I might say are used, or quoted out of context, I would not have opportunity to correct those kinds of things. And the other is I'm not particularly interested in furthering conflict or controversy in the fellowship and from what I've read of the new awakenings publication, it apparently doesn't feel it has any responsibility for publishing fact as opposed to incorrect information. And I'm not at all satisfied that that's a way that people should behave responsibly in any society, much less in the context of being honest and truthful in Narcotics Anonymous. So I'm reticent to do this, but on the other hand in fairness to the question of being asked to do this, should I refuse to, I would look suspicious in some way, I have no doubt, or would be cast in that vein, and from that standpoint, I'm willing to do this to the extent that I'm willing to answer questions that you graciously provided that seem to be relevant to things that I have personal knowledge of. Things I don't have personal knowledge of I will pass over. And things that would require me to speculate about, things I don't know, I won't respond to. There are a series of questions here that would require speculation and I will avoid them. The first question that you have here that I wanted to address is: "What would you like to see happen with the information that you have shared with us?" Well, I am hopeful that what you will do is not print it out of context. And that you will take it as being of those things I have personal knowledge of as factual as I can provide it.

**NA:** Ok. That's supposed to be one of the last questions you know.

**Bob:** Well, I wanted to start that off, because what I'd like to have you do just to assure that some objectivity is allowed to be maintained in the future is that you make at least one additional copy of this for my friend Bob here, so that he can keep it in case he's interested. The first question that seems to have any relevance is the one that says, "Stone first shows up working with addicts to the best of my knowledge in 1976." and there's another question that's relative to that, "How did you first hear about N.A.?" Those are essentially tied, when I had gone to college in the late 60's I had become acquainted with another student whose name was David Gildersleeve. And through that became acquainted with his mother, and some year's later after college, and while I was active in community events in my community in Sun Valley, I needed to find out what was going on in the social service activities that I didn't have much knowledge of, and as it turned out Dorothy Gildersleeve was a county social worker at the time and her task was to identify and use volunteer resources in the community to address problems that the county would otherwise have to spend money on. She was very happy to plug me in as a volunteer in a number of these non-profit corporations. This started in 1973. And during the next seven years she got me involved in one corporation that needed help after another. One of those came in 1976 when she called and asked if I would be interested in helping an organization with a parliamentary procedure matter. They were about to have their first substantial business meeting and needed someone to help and she thought I was right for the job. I said I would be happy to, and she then had Jimmy K. Call me. And Jimmy explained that they were having what he called a world service conference (WSC) and asked if I would come and serve as the parliamentarian. I without hesitation agreed, he sent me some information, since we lived in the same town, not more than a mile apart it was fairly convenient for us to communicate.

**NA:** Yeah, Sun Valley.

**Bob:** . In Sun Valley. So that was how I first heard of N.A. Of course I didn't understand it, but I came to the first meeting. The WSC in November of 1976 in Ventura. And I thought I did a very unsatisfactory job and I was greatly intimidated by these addicts that I met and when it was over I was glad that I would never see them again.

**NA:** (ha, ha, ha, ha) who was doing the intimidating?

**Bob:** They were doing the intimidating.

**NA:** They being the...

**Bob:** The participants in this meeting. I had never met such gruff people. For a mild mannered, conservative politician it was a real experience. But the next year they had the WSC in San Francisco and Jimmy called and told me that and indicated that they wouldn't probably use my services because they couldn't afford it. Not that I was charging anything, because I didn't ask for anything. He just said they would do without me. The meeting didn't take place in '77. Not enough people showed up and in the spring of 1978 he called and said, "Well we're having another chance at this in a couple of months and would you be available to do it?" and I said yes, having forgotten how intimidated I was and came back in the late spring of 1978 to what was theoretically the third WSC, but in all practical purposes, it was the second. It was at valley college in Van Nuys, California, at the border between Van Nuys and Hollywood. In the cafeteria of the college. And my only contact at that time was at the meeting. Jimmy would talk to me in advance to schedule it and other than that I would have no contact with the fellowship between WSC's. In 1979 he asked again and I came. In 1980 he asked and I came. In 1981 he asked and I came. In '82 and '83 he asked and I came.

**NA:** And these are all voluntary.

**Bob:** Yes. It was about a 3 or 4 day event. I think in 1983 if I remember it started on a Sunday and ended on Friday, and I was a self-employed land use planning consultant. People came to me if they wanted zone changes or to use their land differently. And I was able to schedule my time in general to accommodate a lot of my volunteer activities, N.A. Was just one of many. So that's how I came to get involved in N.A. And that also answers the question about I became parliamentarian it says here in 1980 or 81. No, as I explained it came in earlier. About the next question, "Had you participated in WSC prior to this?" No and only at the WSC.

**NA:** So that's kind of like a baptism by fire. Is that kind of what they would call it?

**Bob:** (laughing) well, by the third time I had come I really enjoyed it and began to understand what this was all about. And I'm sure like Dorothy Gilder sleeve before me, who was also a non-addict, had become dedicated to helping as best we could as people on the side.

**NA:** But she was a social worker for the county, a paid employee of the county.

**Bob:** She and Jimmy K. Had made contact in the 1960's and when the Board Of Trustees (BOT) was formed, she was one of the first non addicts that they added. And she served on the BOT until about 1973. Okay, the next question is, "There is at least a rumor that you had worked for the government for a time. Could you share about this?" Yes, I was an enlistee in the united states air force in 1962. I served a little over 4 years. I was a clerk typist and had no significant responsibilities other than typing.

**NA:** So you didn't start the Vietnam war?

**Bob:** No, I didn't start the Vietnam war. And fortunately no one shot at me and I didn't shoot at anyone so...but, I had my own share of delayed stress syndrome, but that's not relevant to this. These questions are not in the best order, but I am going to try to keep them in some reasonable sequence. In terms of time sequence, the next question that would be relevant is, "When did the discussion of removing Jimmy from the office first include [me]?" Well, actually, there had been a running conflict between the world service office (WSO) and a large portion of the fellowship starting sometime probably around 1978 and it was generated over the fact that the office wasn't generally able to respond quickly enough or adequately enough to the needs of the growing fellowship. Literature sales and other kinds of assistance. How do you get meetings started, what do we do in this situation. At that particular time the office was entirely voluntary. Jimmy was doing most of it with the assistance of his wife, betty. Well, I don't think they were married at that time. Not until '78 I think they got married. People that Jimmy sponsored helped. And people who knew enough about the office would occasionally go over to his house and help. One of the major participants in getting this office functioning at the time was, of course, Greg Pierce. Most of the people who provided help however were his sponsees. That's a normal relationship in this fellowship.

**NA:** Was Greg his sponsee?

**Bob:** Yes, Greg was his sponsee. So the discussions about Jimmy didn't involve me at all until it came to meetings of the WSC and when it came to discussing the removing of Jimmy, I was not involved in that as a discussion until the meeting of 1983 when the conference took some action. The next question here is, "What were some of the major concerns?" Well, we've touched on those. There were, of course, forever in the fellowship, suspicions about other people, especially those in authority and responsibility. People who are not close to what goes on are susceptible to believing some of the worst things that they might themselves do and might see others do and kind of suspect that people in the office would do those kinds of things. I don't know what all the concerns were, but being able to respond to the growing fellowship was really I think the crux of the...

**NA:** Of Jimmy's removal?

**Bob:** Well, of the conflict. Of the conflict.

**NA:** Between the office and the fellowship?

**Bob:** Yes. The next question is, "Who were the people involved in these early discussions?" Now I think that relates back to the question of discussions about my involvement. I'd like to say that that only occurred at the conference in 1983, and the discussion was primarily with one person, and that person was a guy named Keith S. From Ohio whose region had pretty much sent him on a mission to either close the office or move the office or remove Jimmy and all the people concerned with the office and in that conference in 1983 the issue was over the Basic Text. Nearly all this other stuff that they had been fighting over was in the background, but not nearly as important as the conflict over the publishing of the Basic Text. They had published it the day the conference began in 1983. They showed up to the conference with a truckload full of books. But the book had been approved the year before and had taken 365 days essentially to produce it. And even then as I'm sure you know there was a conflict over tampering with the language.

**NA:** In the 4th and 9th traditions.

**Bob:** We'll get to that in another question you've got here. So the only person I was actually involved with was Keith and in the course of our discussions probably on the 3rd or 4th day of the conference, the notion came up in our discussion about the possibility of me becoming the manager rather than him proposing the motion that they close the office and kick the Board Of Directors (BOD) out. And my response to him in our personal conversation was if that's what the conference would want to have done, I would certainly be willing to do it, within certain reasons or bounds. He apparently talked with other people about it during that day and the next morning when we started he asked the question from the floor after getting recognition from the chairperson, and my response was the same. There followed a motion that was worded in the way to the following language. It said, "Move that the WSC ask the WSO BOD to invite Bob Stone to become the office manager," and that was to the best of my recollection, you would want to check the minutes on this, probably unanimously adopted. I'm not sure in what period of time it was, in terms of new business/old business, whatever. You'd have to look at the minutes for that. After that motion was adopted, Martin C. From Oregon rose, maybe about 10 minutes later, and said something to the effect of, "You know, I think we've made a mistake here and the mistake we've made is not adopting the last motion but in the fact that we've done so without saying anything about Jimmy, and I think that we need to give our praise and thanks to Jimmy and give him our love and affection. And he had then advanced a motion that a letter be sent to Jimmy post haste by the secretary expressing these kinds of sentiments to Jimmy on behalf of the fellowship. To the best of my knowledge the letter was never sent although the motion was adopted unanimously. How Jimmy found out about the motion I do not have precise knowledge. I have been told from several sources that he found out in several different ways and that's in itself a long story that you will want to spend time on here. The question here that addresses this issue is very long. And it says, "By 1983 the fellowship had expressed enough concern that a motion was made and passed to ask Jimmy to step down as office director." As I've just kind of recited the motion, it wasn't that he be asked to step down, it was asked that they ask the BOD to invite me so he was never asked by the conference to step down. The original plan was to write a letter to Jimmy from

the conference expressing this and the WSC's hope that this would free Jimmy to do other things. As I explained that came after the motion was adopted, and it didn't make reference to anything they hoped Jimmy would do or wouldn't do. It was just a thank you letter of intent. Jimmy did not attend that year's conference and we would expect he would receive a full report on what had happened that year.

**NA:** Do you have any idea why he wasn't there?

**Bob:** Jimmy made it a practice of not coming to the conference for very long periods of time.

**NA:** Because of his position with the office?

**Bob:** Well, for several years, there had been a very protracted struggle and emotionally a violent struggle amongst the principles involved and Jimmy was the focus of a lot of these attacks, and they were vindictive and personal attacks. And I believe that he just elected not to subject himself to that kind of vilification.

**NA:** So it wasn't unusual for him not to be there.

**Bob:** That's correct. The first couple of conferences, '76, '78, '79 he did come but about 1980 he only came for a little while and then in '83 he only came on the last day in the last hour. The struggles with the WSCLC and Chuck S. ended in several resignations at the WSC including trustee Bill B. and Jimmy. This question is disjointed in terms of its facts. There was a struggle between the World Literature Committee and others, it didn't involve Chuck S. Chuck S. Was a proponent of what the Literature Committee was doing which was at that time writing the Basic Text. The resignations that are mentioned here of Bill B. and Jimmy occurred two years earlier in 1981. As a result of a conflict between the BOD and the trustees over an action by the BOD to have removed two of its existing directors who also happened at the time to have been trustees. The two trustees the BOD removed were Bob B. And Greg P. The issue, as Chuck S., who was then chair of the BOT, made very clear, he essentially was saying to Jimmy in private conversations at the time, "What you did was probably correct. They weren't participating and you need people who participate, but the way you did it was probably not very good. You didn't notify them in advance that they were going to be the subject of a removal motion at the board meeting and give them an opportunity, either in writing to visibly be there to defend their absence from the board meetings." The result of that was that Jimmy held over the BOD meeting, inviting the two people they had removed, voted them back on, this time however as ex officio members. In that same period of time Jimmy who was then head of the corporation resigned as president of the BOD of the WSO as did his wife who was the secretary at the time and they elected someone else to fill those positions. I do not believe that Greg or Bob subsequently attended BOD meetings for a long time but again more because they had other things that they were doing.

**NA:** Ex officio member of that would be just able to participate....

**Bob:** There was nothing I've been able to find in writing that defined or described what the duties or relationships were.

**NA:** There was no real...why would you show up?

**Bob:** Good question. Now the resignations came at that same WSC just a few weeks later when Jimmy in showing his disgust in having been beaten up in this way by the BOT who forced a change in something they had done. It was at least in some ways embarrassing to the BOD, he resigned. Bill B., who had been on the BOD and the BOT at that particular time also resigned. And their resignations were from the BOT, not from the office. Then the BOT met soon after that conference was over. The trustees voted to accept Bill B.'s resignation, refused to accept Jimmy's resignation, and always considered Jimmy a member of the BOT, even after that.

**NA:** But did Jimmy?

**Bob:** I've no knowledge. Jimmy and I never talked about that issue. Next question..."Had you prior experiences with offices of this sort before becoming the new executive director?" Yes, I'd been involved with managing a number of nonprofit corporations at the time this took place when I first joined NA In 1976 as a parliamentarian I was on the directorship of about 12 corporations that had offices, so I was quite familiar with management of offices from the board of director position and had served prior to that as the chief executive officer of a nonprofit corporation. The next question says here, "Chuck G. Was the

BOD chair at the time, correct?" The answer is yes. In 1982 at the WSC Phil P. was then chairperson of the BOD and he remained as chairperson of the BOD until Feb. Of 1983, about 10 months later, just before the WSC in 1983. And I believe that he resigned for a number of reasons, and I've not spoken to him to find out his own reasons, but the failure to get the book done in a reasonable time, the change of the language and that fiery confrontation were probably reasons that he elected not to come before the conference and be vilified for things that took place upon his watch. Chuck G. Was then the secretary. The Vice President of the board of the time was Doug F., and at the meeting where the board accepted Phil's resignation, Chuck immediately assumed as everyone else did for at least a minute or two that Doug F. Would be elected to succeed phil. But that didn't occur, someone nominated Chuck and that's where the votes went and Doug F. apparently then resigned in anger and never came back to a board meeting. Chuck was another one of Jimmy's sponsees. As were Phil P. and Doug F. As were all but one of the other members of the BOD. At the 1982 conference the WSC had added five directors to that BOD, none of whom were sponsees of Jimmy's. Three of those directors participated in most of this activity and they constituted a regular minority in decisions of the board during that period of time and probably swung the vote in favor of Chuck because I don't think they liked Doug F.

**NA:** Do you see that as an issue that is maybe pertinent to where we're at in the office, conference boards and things with regard to sponsorer/sponsee relationships on boards like that?

**Bob:** I'd never seen any direct evidence of a sponsor/sponsee relationship impact on decisions of boards or committees or even on staff in the office. I've always felt uncomfortable about it. It's difficult for us in spiritual fellowship to take an individual and say, "Because you are going to occupy this position you have to change sponsors. "I don't know how you can get away with doing that any more than you can say, "We can't use you because you are sponsored by this person." So it's a riddle that I've never found an answer for. "When Chuck wrote his letter about the meeting held in June of 1983 with you and Jimmy, he said that Jimmy still felt that he would be working in the office. Did you sense the same thing?" I'm going to presume the letter that is being referred to was part of Chuck's report to the fellowship in the august 1983 fellowship report. In that report he included an apology, mostly to Jimmy, about how he had been involved in the transition from the conference action to what eventually took place. In that letter he said that Jimmy was his best friend and his closest friend and just didn't have either the heart or the will to tell Jimmy that he was being replaced. And in his concern, and love, and affection for Jimmy he just dragged his feet until it was too late. Jimmy and Chuck and I had a meeting following the WSC in which we talked about the management of the WSO. Jimmy at that time was aware a change was going to be made and offered a number of suggestions, saying, "There are some things here that you know maybe can get done now that a change is going to take place." However Jimmy wasn't specifically told he was going to be replaced as office manager or he didn't get that impression, and it's that issue perhaps more than anything else that Jimmy was hurt most over, I believe. He wasn't just told. My business office was about 100 yards from where the WSO was at the time. Although I had no reason to go over there and I didn't, it was close. On the Friday in June before the WSO BOD meeting, in which the decision was to officially be made the woman we had working in the office, a woman named Jody, called me up. My name was in Jimmy's rolodex file and she said in her tears that she was very upset. That she didn't like what was going on. That she felt it was very unfair to Jimmy for all the things he had done for NA That no one had told him that he was being replaced as office manager and she thought it sucked. I said, well, that's not what I expected was to take place. I'll come over, we'll talk about it. We hung up, I walked over to the office and we talked for about a half an hour and when I got her calmed down enough I called Jimmy and told him that I was in the office and Jody had called and she was very upset and asked if we could come over. He of course said yes, so we drove about a mile to his house and it fell on my shoulders to explain to him what had been taking place and what was to be expected. And Jimmy as always was very kind and very straight forward. He showed and displayed no anger. He was a much as anything disappointed. We sat around for about two hours, had some tea and when we left it was in as was customary between Jimmy and I at the time under good circumstances. The next night when the BOD met, we left off with the discussion about Chuck's letter in the world fellowship report. He also reported about discussions that Jimmy and Chuck and I had had during the course of the month between the WSC and the June board meeting. Chuck and I

had three other meetings during which we talked about the transition and it was foremost in our minds that two things occur. One, that Jimmy not be hurt or offended by the transition or how it was done, and that was a precondition of the discussions that he and I had about my willingness to become temporarily employed with the WSO. I suggested to him that I would be willing to do this for a 90 day period and we brought to the BOD meeting a contract for 90 days. During the period of time that immediately followed this BOD meeting Jimmy and I had a number of conversations, unfortunately there was one period of time that we didn't talk and it was a critical period of time and it unfortunately set the tenor for later events although Jimmy and I always maintained a close personal relationship. At no time did he and I have any conflict or confrontation. In one of my visits to his house in that following month I implored him that he should do two things to benefit the fellowship. One is that he should write about the history of N.A., particularly it's beginning, and that he should consent to traveling across the country to speak to the fellowship at meetings. I ventured to suggest to him that I believed the BOD would find money in its budget to finance that when he was willing to do that. He said he would give consideration to both ideas. He might be inclined to do them both but he was going to relax at that time and wasn't going to do anything. He said he really wasn't well enough to travel anywhere.

**NA:** What was that period of time?

**Bob:** That's going to take longer to explain than is really helpful, other to say that when the board finished it's meeting on Saturday, they gave me the keys and left. I came in the next day to begin to figure out what it is I had gotten myself into. And I found piles of orders all over the office, could have been 20 or 30 piles. There were money orders, checks and cash attached to these by paper clip or staple and my experience of non-profit organizations and business generally is you just don't do that. So I collected all of the papers and put them on one desk and decided Monday morning, the next day, I was going to start working on these things. And I rearranged one of the desks 'cause I decided that was where I was going to work. On Monday morning I came in and I was there for a while, went to the post office which was a mile away. And while I was at the post office Jimmy came in. I hadn't told Jimmy that I was going to rearrange or do things differently and he came in and spoke to Jody and said something to the effect like, "I guess the son of a bitches don't want me here anymore 'cause they've already taken over." and just in that split thing without me thinking in advance I should talk to Jimmy in more detail and with Jimmy getting quickly offended by the fact that this had occurred without him being a part of he concluded I believe that we were just giving him the boot. But like I say, I talked to him several times that week. We were getting mail from him all the time, we were getting phone calls from people for Jimmy and we always had a good relationship. If we had something to deliver or I had something that I wanted to ask questions about, I'd call him. He was never unwilling to be of help.

**NA:** Was Jimmy a big hugger?

**Bob:** I don't know how he was with other people because I didn't see him that often with other people. But hugging was not a custom of the fellowship on the west coast at the time. That was something that they learned from the folks in the east.

**NA:** Oh, is that right? So, he was a hand hugger.

**Bob:** (laughing) he did hug some people I believe but don't recall seeing a lot of people on the west coast hugging at that time.

**NA:** I don't think they do yet, still today.

**Bob:** They're learning. The next questions here, "Was there no way to include him in this transitional process?" I think there could have been a better transition if Chuck and I had met with Jimmy and explained things differently than occurred during the meeting with him. Unfortunately at that time there was still the uncertainty, that the BOD hadn't met yet and made a decision, because the conference had asked that this be done, it wasn't a requirement on the BOD, and when the motion was worded I was helpful in putting together those words because there was clearly the responsibility residing with the BOD, not the conference. The conference could wish all it wants, but the BOD had the responsibility and Chuck was leery of, although I felt he was certain the board was going to adopt it, he didn't want to make a decision saying, "Jimmy, this is what the board has decided", because the board hadn't decided at that

time.

**NA:** Well that's basically all that the conference can do of the office's request, ask that they do something, it's still not mandatory that they fulfill it.

**Bob:** No, I wouldn't say that's the case. At that particular time there was no provision in the office bylaws that required adherence to decisions by the WSC. And we would have to check the WSO bylaws but I believe that at least on two occasions I know we attempted to put that language in the bylaws of the WSO to require that for instructions from the WSC the board is mandated to comply. Could be that I am mistaken on that, but I could be mistaken on this... Well, we left off with the transition. "We understand there were far too many keys to the office available and with no idea who had them, one of the sad stories about this time is for Jimmy to find the locks changed and not know in advance that this was going to happen. Was this a decision of the WSO board or simply an oversight?" The board did instruct that the locks be changed and that only 4 copies of the keys be given out. They did not include Jimmy. It was not stated in the discussion or in the motion who was to explain to any or all of the other key holders who had keys or not. It is possible Jimmy had tried the key he had and it didn't work but the lock wasn't changed for about a week which was after Jimmy had stopped coming in every day anyway, so I don't know that he ever had that experience.

**NA:** It's been rumored that that's what happened.

**Bob:** It's a good romantic story in terms of conflict. I don't know the fact of that or not. "The office was in a major disarray when you came on board, checks missing or misplaced, literature orders not filled, general disorder and lack of business practices. Is that an accurate picture of what shape the WSO was in?" The office was in some disarray in that sense to my standards of business practice. In terms of how Jimmy looked at how the office was to be managed, it was not in disarray. So it is not really fair to Jimmy to say, unless you are accusing him of not being able to manage properly that it was in disarray. There were checks all over the place at the time, and it took me until Thursday to get all the checks in the bank. 4 days. And I don't know, I have it written in here someplace, probably \$13,000.00 in money laying around the office. Some in cash. Not very much, you know, a few dollars here, a few dollars there. Mostly in money orders and checks, and some of them quite old. About literature orders not filled, well all the orders laying with checks on them were not filled, and some of those were quite old. And we did our best to quickly fill them, but we didn't have all the literature, which was the problem. Why they were still there at this time. About lack of business practices. My business practices were different and of course made a change. But any person who comes in to manage an organization is going to change things. "You began a series of letters on a regular basis for a while reporting on what was being done, how long did you do this?" I began those about 14 days after I started work, and I called them the Newline. And the intent of that was to begin to inform the fellowship of what was going on in the office. To begin to remove the mystique and remove the barrier of lack of information. And as far as I know the Newline as a publication is still being published. I used to have at the end of that a section that I kind of reserved to me to comment on things that I was concerned about that might not more specifically pertain to printing or something else. I included that as a feature of the Newline until I left. "Why did it stop?" My part stopped when I left. Otherwise I believe the Newline is still continuing. "One of your first major concerns was about the fellowships tax status and you hired a consultant to recommend solutions." Okay, we'll take this question in parts, because it's not valid in the way it's originally worded. "One of our first major concern's was about the fellowship's tax status." Yes, that is correct. At the time there was a number which was purported to be the tax exempt number for the office pasted all over the walls of the office and on every telephone. And on the Sunday that I came in I removed all those numbers. That number in the eye of the internal revenue service pertains just to that business or activity that is going to report all the money that is handled through the use of that number. So if that number were legitimate and were being used in Florida, the office had an obligation to include the money that went to the account in Florida in the tax return of the WSO. An impossible situation. I did my best over the following months to put an end to that practice. It took us a long time to find a consultant, a tax consultant. From my prior experiences with nonprofit organizations, I was fairly closely knowledgeable of the tax responsibilities of nonprofit organizations and I was familiar with the fact that as I understood N.A. as a whole at the time, it was not complying with tax

law. The office was complying with tax law.

**NA:** As in sales tax.

**Bob:** No, not sales tax. It wasn't doing that.

**NA:** (laughing) it wasn't doing that?

**Bob:** We solved that problem soon thereafter. But as far as the internal revenue service was concerned, the office made an annual report, and I believe it was accurate. I don't have any reason to doubt that. But as to the other use of that number for people outside of the office. That was not appropriate, that was not included. So in that sense, the office tax return was incorrect because of the use of others outside the office. We did not find, and I honestly looked all the time through every person I knew who knew law or taxes to find a person who could help us with this matter. It was only in 1987, 4 years later that we actually finally found an attorney who understood as much tax law as I did. And this man was bright. We hired him to prepare for the BOD and the fellowship if necessary the options that existed in tax law for the fellowship as a whole in order to satisfy its responsibilities across the fellowship. Among the last things that occurred while I was still employed, his final reports were made available to me and I transcribed his legalese into a packet of information that I left with the board at the office in hope that they would carry on. I don't know what ever came of that. But it was, the attorney had done a very good job. He made no recommendations, he had digested the law and explained it in ways that we could then use. The recommendations had to come from us understanding what the law was and choose them.

**NA:** Us being the fellowship or the office?

**Bob:** The conference. The BOD and the office couldn't make that decision about what to do. The best it could do was present the options to the conference and make its suggestions. The conference had to make its decisions. I don't know if they've ever gone that far. "These discussions continued for years. Do you feel that the right decisions have been made after all your efforts?" I don't know what's been done, so I don't know the answer to that. The next question is, "Were the difficulties with the first printing settled to your satisfaction?" Well, I was not involved with the first printing.

**NA:** That's when Jimmy was office manager?

**Bob:** Yes.

**NA:** And it took a year to get it printed.

**Bob:** Well, in the material that I've been collecting for writing about my part in the history of N.A. And what I can gather of the factual information about the early parts of the history of N.A., this occupies about 25 pages. What I can tell you about the first printing was that the Literature Committee left the conference in 1982 after the book had been adopted by the fellowship, with the requirement to prepare a final draft of the Basic Text to give to the office that the office would then work from. The conference was told by the Literature Committee that there were some minor corrections and errors that needed to be fixed before it was turned over to the office for publication.

**NA:** The Literature Committee said that?

**Bob:** That was explained on the floor of the conference and after the conference by Page, so they went back with that responsibility. Some months later the office asked about this and was told by the Literature Committee that they had not finished the work, but they expected to finish it soon. A letter was written by the Literature Committee chairperson, Page, on September 15, that at that time gave the office what the Literature Committee thought were its ownership rights and copyrights to the book, and from best we can determine at that time transmitted the actual copy they wanted to the office to work from. So the first, what, may, June, July, August to the middle of Sept. Was a delay caused by the Literature Committee.

**NA:** A five month delay.

**Bob:** The office then actually had gone ahead before they had received that and decided on the printer. And as soon as they got the copy they started doing the typesetting. Jimmy went in, apparently on a regular basis, to proofread the typesetting against the original that the Literature Committee had sent. And sometime he found the language in the 4th and 9th traditions that he felt was not correct Narcotics Anonymous philosophy and he set about trying to do something about it. He called the chairperson of the BOT and



explained the problem, he called the chairperson, it was Chuck S. And he called Bob R. Who was chairperson of the WSC and I believe that he talked to Phil P. Who was the chair of the BOD, but that would have been an easy conversation. They had a meeting the very night that he called Chuck S. And Bob R. And after some discussion all the others agreed that there was a problem. That this language would be inconsistent with what they understood to be the philosophy of Narcotics Anonymous, and after looking at several options of how to fix the situation, they elected essentially to just delete the language in its entirety. In the 4th tradition language it was about a line and a quarter or a line and a half. In the 9th it was a bit longer if I remember. I don't remember the words. And they then went about on their merry way. It was alleged to me that each of them signed the original. I've never seen that so I don't know that to be the case but it was some months later before this was actually discovered, which a lot of people in the fellowship won't know until they hear this or read this.

**NA:** After it was published.

**Bob:** No, no, no, after the decision was made that they had decided to do it. It was not known. It just wasn't, they didn't run out and tell everybody that they decided to do this. It was known before the book was published. They made the decision in November of 1982. Well, at the same time of this going on while Jimmy was coming in doing the proof reading, the printer, and it was a poor choice of printer, it was a one man print shop.

**NA:** Was he in the fellowship?

**Bob:** He should have been. And that became the issue at hand. It was a big business deal, it really was. We're talking about what could have been tens of thousands of dollars they, he apparently agreed to a very specific sum, I don't have the copy of the contract here, but I have a copy of it, and he rightly could have received and did receive advance payments. He had to pay the typesetter as a subcontractor as they went along, so he got over the period of 5 month about \$15,000.00 in advance payments, but by January, he was too far behind. He had had the manuscript since September something, the end of September, the beginning of October, and in January the thing wasn't even done. The BOD was concerned about the delay but at their December meeting didn't even talk about the change in the plans. I don't know if they knew. I should say I don't know if Jimmy told them or if Phil P. Told them or Bob R. Told them. It doesn't appear in the minutes that it had been discussed. They met in December, and they were concerned about the delay in the printer, not the language. In January when they had their first meeting, their concern again was the delay in the printing as opposed to anything else. But there was some discussion in the change of the language. They elected apparently in January to go have a confrontation with the printer. They went down and determined the guy was leaving town. They collected up all the stuff they thought belonged to N.A. And took it back to the office. They had the fortune of accidentally coming into contact with a person who had the ingenuity and skill to put the book together. A woman named Jeannie. And after about a month's time, into the middle of February, actually February 21 they finally gave her the ok to do it. So between February 21 and April 27th, she got the book produced. When it had taken the literature in the office all those other months of slow time. There were 5,000 copies of the book printed at the same time by Dale Pettit Litho company in Sun Valley. And they put 2,500 covers, plus or minus a few, on the books that were red and another 2,000 of the blue. So they ended up picking up these books at the company that put the covers on in Jimmy's truck on April 27, they drove to the WSC and gave and sold out books.

**NA:** So that's the first edition?

**Bob:** So the question here, "Were the difficulties with the first printing settled to your satisfaction?" I wasn't involved in at that time, but it was done eventually. "Soon after this the problem with the 4th and 9th traditions were an issue. Can you tell us about these times?" Well, eventually Page learned of the 4th and 9th change. He was chair of the Literature Committee (LC). And I certainly wouldn't have talked to him at that time 'cause it was between conferences. I'm sure he went ballistic. And I'm sure that all the people who were closely associated with the book and with Page went ballistic. And they proceeded to do their best to do something about it. First of all they attempted to tell the office, "Either you print it the way it was approved by the conference, or don't print it." and they threatened legal action and there were telephone calls and letter writing. And the BOD eventually decided to ignore the threats and went ahead

published the book with the changes that had been made. At the conference, because of the controversy, the fellowship was up to the eyeballs with anger and they voted to instruct that this book be reprinted and the language put back in and it was. The second edition came out with the language reinstated. No mention was ever made of what to do with the other 5,000 books. The presumption was essentially "We needed books, so we're going to use it, even if though it's different than what we approved." The following year in 1984 at the end of the conference, Chuck G. rose to make a motion, he was then chair of the BOD still. A voting member of the conference. He rose and said, "I think that Jimmy was right, and I think we ought to ask the fellowship in a group conscience manner. And propose that a letter be sent to every voting region and every voting delegate giving them a chance to have all the information and have them send back there answer which way they were going to vote, to include or not include." The conference adopted that proposal. Bo S. Wrote the position paper that said it should remain as it is in the second edition and Chuck gates wrote the language for changing it back to the way the first edition language read, which was without the language. Bo was a member of the board of trustee's at the time. And he of course had been so responsible for the Basic Text anyway that people would have naturally gone to him for that. The letters were sent out. The letters were received and the vote was in favor of returning it to the way Jimmy had suggested it should be.

**NA:** The letters were to regions or groups?

**Bob:** They were to voting participants. So it went to all the RSR's that were then on record, and to the trustees, and the BOD in person and the conference voting participants. And that's how that vote occurred.

**NA:** Do you remember what the vote was?

**Bob:** Oh, I don't remember precisely. There was a report later written about it some years later after I left. I remember there were 38 votes in favor of returning the language to the way Jimmy had suggested it should be. And there was a less number, it was a 2/3 vote, close to 2/3 in favor of the changes. The interesting thing was that the matter never came up again of the floor of the conference in succeeding years. No one ever proposed that they should change it back. So there's always been the mystique about the fact that someone changed the language of the Basic Text, but motions never came back in '85 and '86 and '87 to reinstate the language as it was originally approved by the fellowship.

**NA:** So the motion to find out what everybody wants to do is all they actually had. It was never actually a motion to fulfill what was voted on. Is that what you are saying?

**Bob:** No, I'm saying that after this vote by mail had been taken, motions were not in subsequent conferences advanced by regions or individuals who were able to make motions that they should reinstate the language of the second printing which was the language that was approved originally by the conference.

**NA:** I see, it was like a surrender of sorts.

**Bob:** Well that's what it seemed to me. But ever since then there's been the people beating the bushes about the fact they changed the language when all this time there's always been the opportunity to change it back. And the people who have screamed and moaned and cried haven't followed the legitimate course of changing it. It kind of puts it into a matter of suspect motives in my opinion. Okay, where are we at in your questions here? Okay. "Funding began to change rapidly with the production of the text. How did that cause difficulties, or did it?" It didn't cause any difficulties at all. The more books were sold, the more income was produced, the more things the office could do the office should've been doing all along.

**NA:** Stockpiling?

**Bob:** Services. Over the years a vast amount of money that came from the Basic Text sales was invested in translations and group activities to help groups all across the world and it didn't cause a problem until I'm sure much later, after I left. "The office took over the secretarial position of the WSC in what year? Did this add difficulties at the WSO?" In 1983 the conference had its own secretary. A girl named Carol K. And she and I worked very closely together during the year she was secretary. At the conference the following year, she was one of the people who helped type the minutes of the conference as we did the conference. We had brought along whatever staff we had and computers to work on and did the bulk of the work. This was still at the retail clerk's union hall in Santa Monica on the 8th floor. We did the

majority of the work. After that conference was over the only real duty that the secretary of the conference did was very, very minimal. We had assumed from '84 and beyond all the tasks that the secretary would have done. The official transformation didn't take place until several years later, but we had already long since been doing the work.

**NA:** So, was it an official motion then?

**Bob:** Yeah. I always tried to encourage that because what had occurred is that the conference in '84 elected the woman that I had as my secretary in the office, as an employee, they elected her the assistant secretary to the conference and the system they were following at that time was that the person would serve two years and then step up and serve two years. So in two years this lady would be a voting member of the conference and I wasn't in favor of that, and the BOD wasn't in favor of that, so we eventually encouraged the conference to see the wisdom of changing and dropping the role of the secretary from an officer position in the conference. There was I believe no opposition to that change when it was voted on. Ok, "WSC Passed motions to edit the text. What were the reasons of this to be delayed for three years?" it was an interesting deal and would take a couple of days for me to explain. There was a motion advanced I think it was in '85. The way the motion was worded it gave authority to the WSO to have this book edited, and after the conference was over, the literature chairperson and I had over a period of time a long series of discussions. It was '85 so it would have been Suzanne. Suzanne was from new jersey, and I recall explaining to her on several occasions that we didn't really want this job. This was the responsibility of the LC and not us. We worked out an agreement that when we got around to doing it we would hire somebody if they would help us find the person and help in this selection process. So, it was probably the fall of '85 before we got into the selection process. And it took us about 6 months for them to find somebody that they were satisfied with. Because the office BOD and the staff were going to take on the task of us editing the book. That was just out of the question at the time. So the committee found a member from Texas, I believe, we advertised in the Newline, it was reported in the fellowship reports, we asked people who wanted to volunteer for this task as a paid person to do it to send resumes and they did that and it took months to settle down. They finally then gave us a person's name and we drafted a contract, the person used, and they started over again on their search. The person had done no work when they used. They had just been selected. We searched again, and I think in the summer of '86, which would be a year and a few months after the motion was originally adopted, they gave us another person, and we contracted with that person, and they spend about 5 months working on it for us. Michael L. Was then chair of literature, and they had periodic contact. How much I don't know, but I'm going to presume it was probably weekly contact. Mike was a very diligent person and wouldn't have let something like that lapse. When the work was done it was given to the literature review committee (LRC), which was a subcommittee of the LC. The LRC then spent probably four or five months because the editing would have been done say November or December of 1986 and the LRC then spent months working on it which would have been till about the time of the conference. When they were probably finished with it they then gave it to us to print. And we sent it off to the printer and I remember writing a letter in September of 1987 to mike who was the chair person saying I really don't believe we should publish this book. I believe we should send it back out to the fellowship for review for a year. I had not read the book. I had not compared the changes, but knowing how particular I felt the fellowship had been and wanted to be over its Basic Text, I felt we should have it go out for a year's review. The LC decided to ignore my suggestion and instruct the press to print. So we printed and the books became available October and all hell broke loose. The fourth edition. So that's what took so long. The part the office had to do was two parts, provide the language for the editor to work from, and then to print it when the committee was finished with it. And it was in the beginning of that process that the biggest mistake was made. That was that I did not foresee that there would be a problem in the retyping of the Basic Text for the use by the editor. And it was in that retyping that portions of it were omitted. It was sheer accident. I didn't force a word for word reading of what was typed to what may have been printed. And in that way what occurred is that the person who was typing would read across this line and they would see the word "solutions" here and they might have gotten distracted, or they turned their head, and they came back and they saw "solutions" another line down, and that's where they typed. So they missed the words in between. And that occurs.

I'm a typist from way back when and I know that occurs with me all the time, and you have to be careful. You have to go back and check. And we didn't proof read it, and that was the error. What the editor had was missing language that no one appeared to have noticed was missing. And then when the LC then later worked on it, they didn't go back and check it apparently. The LRC. They didn't go back and check it apparently. I'm going to assume that when they noticed changes, if they noticed them at all, they assumed that the editor had intended it, so may not have questioned it. Now, it don't know if they actually found those or not. I've never asked. But when they were satisfied this is the way we want the book to read they gave it to us. I said I had reservations. They said print it. So we printed it. And when it came time for the truth to come out we assigned a task of staff to read it word for word. And that's when the enormity of the oversight had become apparent. I wrote a special report, as soon as I found out, to the fellowship and at the conference explained what had happened. Apologized for being poor enough as a manager to have not prevented this. Every time we printed a pamphlet or something, I would always proof read it myself before we printed it. And there were a couple of occasions when things got that far before it was found, but usually the staff was excellent in preventing all those things. We had a woman on the staff named Jenny and she was just, I'll use the word overbearingly meticulous about accuracy. So it was a surprise and very embarrassing.

**NA:** We made a motion at the show me region that they laminate the just for today reading, and it was approved by our region and brought to the conference. A year and a half later it was finally taken care of and I got one of the first editions of the laminated "Just for Today" and...

**Bob:** There was a mistake in it.

**NA:** Yeah. I had to call the WSO and tell them.

**Bob:** Yeah. I really felt stupid about that one too. I couldn't believe we had made such a fundamental mistake. "How was the decision to hire an outside editor for the "it works how and why" project reached?" That was begun in 1984 at the beginning of the year. The LC had in November of '83 had a workshop in San Diego and they had worked on what then was available on steps and traditions and I had gone to that workshop and assisted in the workshop. Bob R. And I went together and sat in some of the same committees. Bob B. Was there, Bud K., Michael L., and other people who later became responsible for a lot of the stuff. There existed in the language of the LC at the time words that permitted the LC to use a wide variety of resources. It was their belief that that range of resources included the ability to hire people to help them with the work. The LC asked the WSO if we would consent and put up the money to hire someone to do the work that they wanted to have done. My position, at least my philosophy and I think the BOD echoed that philosophy was if a committee asked us to do something that was reasonable for us to do and seemed the correct thing to do then we would do it. A year later when the pi committee came to us and said "We'd like to make public service announcements. No the conference didn't tell us to, but we think it's a good idea. Will you do it?" We put up \$36,000.00 overnight to get PI video things made. People loved them. So these two examples have always been paralleled. When a committee came to us and said we wanted to do something that was reasonable and we had the money or could get them money, we'd do it. And that's how it was started. They came to us and said, "We want somebody to do this."

**NA:** They just didn't feel they were capable?

**Bob:** You would have to look at the literature resource material that was available at the time to make a good judgment about answering that question. There was so little material after the workshop in San Diego on the traditions that you could put three of the traditions language input on one page. Our recalling in the workshops, we followed the same process that the committee had used for years under Bo, that is to cut and paste, and in San Diego what the committee fundamentally did was put all the stuff that was there and cut it and put it in its proper order. Well, most of it was duplicate. And most of it was out of the Basic Text. On the language of the traditions, there was almost nothing that wasn't already in the Basic Text. The steps, there was a little bit more material, but it wasn't of the same kind of nature where you could cut and paste it. Some people had written eloquently about their understanding of a step, and other people had just taken quotes out of the Basic Text. They just weren't going to match. You just couldn't stick this in here someplace and have it read right. So something had to get done and the LC felt that

since the office was more financially stable now, perhaps this was a way they could get this done, as a draft for them to work from, rather than expecting the committee to come up with the draft material. That was what took place in getting that started and a quick search was made and a person was found to work on that and we negotiated a contract and signed the deal and they started work, and they met with the Board Of Trustees informally and had long discussions about the steps and long discussions about traditions. And I recall seeing the transcriptions of this. There were just dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens of pages. I think they altogether spent 25 days gathering input from around the country. People were brought in from across the country in the fellowship to sit and talk with the people who were going to do this and this was all transcribed. So they took the stuff to their home and began to work on it.

**NA:** This was the editor?

**Bob:** Well, yeah. It was the person that the committee had selected to, actually it was a joint committee between the trustee's, the office, the LC that selected this person. Well, the work that these folks were doing was great. In many respects it was very great. They had been able to take a whole lot of voices, a whole lot of information and put it into a single style, put it into a sequence that was comprehensible, put it into a readable level of language that kind of melded where someone who had provided input might have been a phd and talked above my head and averaged that into where the average addict could read it. However there were some concerns about the work that they were doing. And how they were working. We eventually began to feel that they weren't as receptive to our need to have them modify what they had written to satisfy our idiosyncrasies. I say our, I'm talking about the literature chairperson and the committee that included Sidney R. And Sally who were trustees and two people from the conference, the literature chairperson and the vice chairperson and one of the office directors. And that was the committee that worked with this writing and they were beginning to doubt whether these people were willing to make adjustments in what they were writing to accommodate their concerns, the committee's concerns, and that eventually lead to deadlock. They, in July of that year finally concluded that, listen, we're professionals, we know how to structure sentences, we know this and that, and you're going to work on this after we're done anyway, so why bother us. They, sensing our unhappiness, offered to terminate the contract at about a third of what the contract was for. And I think in august or September of that year they officially sent me a letter saying we've offered to terminate the contract for this amount and I went to the BOD after I'd talked with the committee and the committee had said, yeah, we think you ought to accept it, I wrote a letter and accepted the termination. Had they finished the work, I'm not sure there would have been any difference. The committee then took that material and worked on it themselves, which is what they were going to do anyway. And the committee worked on that, making substantial changes in it. The LRC made substantial changes in it and that was later published, and a lot of people like it, some didn't.

**NA:** 1987 I think...

**Bob:** Now, what occurred was a procedural nightmare that began to envelope the whole thing. The original publication of work on the steps and traditions was what came out of the San Diego meeting. The literature chairperson at the time felt obligated to publish that work, even if it was crap. And the committee thought it was awful, but the conference had been told they were going to do it in February of that year, so it was done. But, like I said, if you could find a copy of it, you would find that it was hardly worth considering publishing. That was the review form. So the way the committee structured procedure was, anytime you published it, it was approval form. And there was a debate on whether they should call this next one approval form or review form. And the committee elected to call it approval form. The white book. So the LC decided, or the review committee of the LC decided to publish this as an approval form. And because it was so substantially different from the review and input, it caused a lot of controversy, and it caused a lot of controversy because the fellowship did not fully understand how the work done by a writer had been used. Some people presumed that what they had written was what they were seeing, which wasn't the case. The committee had substantially altered the work that had been received from these folks. A lot of people assumed that what they were reading in the white version of this was what the people who had been contracted had actually written, word for word. That was not the case. The review committee had edited it and altered it, and revised it to meet what they believed should be in the book. But there was a

popular misconception that was put out by people who were opposed to having anyone paid to do work on the book that said this is tainted and we can't use it. That position was so strongly advanced that the fellowship in general said, well, if there is smoke there must be fire, so maybe there's something to this, and we'll just put it aside and not use it...and they voted it down in the conference. And I'm not saying that's wrong. I think that the emotionalism was dishonestly put forward in many respects and that the motivations behind some of the people involved wasn't as much what was in the language or the procedure, but they weren't in charge of what was going on and they wanted it done differently. So they went back to the drawing boards, but the way that the motion was handled when they went back to the conference, which would have been 1985, there was no action to change the language of the committee guidelines that allowed them to use work prepared by others that were paid to do it, in N.A. Literature, that provision in the guidelines was retained. The LRC decided that they wanted to try again. So they came back to us and said, well, what we'll do is we will take all this material we have on steps and we will workshop it and we will add more and get more and rewrite, we'll start from scratch on the steps. But on the traditions let's take what we've already got and hire someone to help us with that, so in the summer of 1985 a separate contract was generated with someone the committee had found, saying organize this material on the traditions, and this was done. I think in the long run this was helpful. But again the material was never used or intended to be used directly from the person who wrote it, it went back to the LRC and they butchered it up. The fire over the idea of using a paid person just kept growing, and it became eventually to some aware people that the person involved was not an N.A. Member and that became more or less a sacrilegious decision in the minds of a lot of people. You couldn't allow a non-member to have anything to do with the generation of literature for the fellowship. So that doomed essentially the material that came out of the second contract. Before it ever had a fair chance of any detail work by the LC. So that was the story of all that. I've not read what came as a result of all the years of work on the book on steps and traditions, so I'm no judge to determine whether or not any of what was done in those early years is still included in it. No idea. So the question of "Was the money wasted?" You can take any side of that you want. Whether or not we ever got any use out of that material, I think a lot of people did. We had produced I think 5,000 copies of the steps in the white publication, we sold all of them. They were used by people all over the world. So, it's a matter of whether you like that publication, or not, to whether or not it was wasted. Now, as it turned out, you take the money that we charged for that, which was like around \$5.00 times the 5,000 copies and that's \$25,000 income. That was a little less, by about \$12,000.00 than it cost to do that. So the loss to the fellowship, if you want to say it was a loss, it wasn't very much at all. There's a question here about "The guide to service generated out of the select committee was printed. Were very many of these actually sold?" There were a number of editions of that, I think about 5, and along the way, I think there's one or two editions of that draft that didn't sell very well. We tended to make two or three thousand copies of these things and only service junkies would really buy them. Committees didn't want to get involved in that because it was more hassle than productive and they were more interested in recovery than in this structural stuff that they don't normally otherwise get involved in. I don't know how many were actually sold.

**NA:** I want to ask what I read in the new awakenings about the price of the Basic Text and about getting the office on its feet...is that .. Do you think that the book price should still be going up or should it be going down?

**Bob:** Well, people have told me from time to time that the office or somebody, the conference, or the LC had said that they would have the price artificially high for a period of time and then reduce it. I've never found anything from the LC or the office that ever said that. I know people have made that statement to me for ten years or more, I've never seen anything similar. During the time that I was with the WSO the question of that occurring never arose seriously. There were discussion from time to time about the pricing of the Basic Text, but there was never any substantial percentage of the BOD who felt that should occur. It's a matter of something that's both easy to understand and hard to accept. It's easy to understand we have a fellowship in India, average wage for the membership in India is probably what amounts to in American money, maybe \$60.00 a year. Maybe \$70.00 a year. Very few of them read English. The only way that they are going to get literature is if someone else translates it for them and provides it for them.

The same with most of the other languages. The French could have done their own, Germans would have done their own, Spanish over a long period of time could have done their own, Portuguese, maybe. Most of the others, not. We had a number of discussions on the issue of literature in non-English languages with that double-a company, and their position was that they refused to get involved in translations. They said to people in different languages, you want to take our book and translate it, you do that, but let us know, send us copies and protect the rights. Well, they made a couple of mistakes in doing that. What they learned from that mistake was, in some places people translated it differently than what their English language version would convey. For instance, in German, when they just let the Germans do whatever they wanted to do, the translation comes across in German as though your recovery isn't really a higher power thing, it's me, I can do this. Rational recovery. So what they now have learned over the years, was that was a mistake. Because the translations they went through were done by people young in recovery and there was never any assurance of the level of understanding, spiritually, of the people involved, and there was never any assurance of the level of understanding of any of the languages involved by the people in the translations. We fell into that trap once. We had a member from Canada translate some stuff into French, and we printed it the way he wrote it for us in the translation. The people back home in Canada refused to use it because it was so poorly written. They said, "What idiot wrote this?" and what we learned was that the guy's grasp of both languages was inadequate, so from that it became real clear, that if N.A. Was going to maintain consistency in its spiritual message from the English to other languages, that was going to have to be done under the management of world services. The other part of that that makes it really understandable is that if you understand the world's economy and the world's populations. There are only probably a half dozen, maybe 18 countries in the world with a standard of living is adequate to sustain this kind of duty. Of translation, production, printing, and distribution from local economy. And where this is easily understood is this is the same problem that religious organizations have faced through the centuries. That's why Christian missionaries are sent all over the world from the developed countries, the rich countries, where they can afford to do this. America being the bastion of all of this kind of work. The same is true with relief efforts. I mean, if you want to stop starvation in Somalia, you get America to do it. You can see were this is leading maybe. It became really then a conflict, do we put this burden financially on a member of N.A. Or do we find another way to do this. There really is no way. We can't go out and borrow money from the government or go out and ask for donations from the world to translate this. It became the understanding of the people in world services that world services had the duty of protecting the spiritual integrity of the translation, and then, realistically, to get the translations in the hands of other people we had to print it for them. You can't do that unless you charge enough money from American members to sustain those costs. And that's the basic issue. Now, if, and I used to make that explanation at the WSC on the two occasions when a motion came up to reduce the price of the Basic Text. I'm not a member. I'm not likely to go out and be susceptible to using drugs. But there are thousands of people in other countries where we have no material in that language and no meetings, and those people are just going to continue to die if you reduce the price of the book, because we are not going to have the money to provide these services. And it really was never my decision, but I'm the one who got up and made that argument and I would still make that argument today. As tough as it is for an average N.A. Member when he comes back in the fellowship whose lost every bit of money he's got, whose unemployed, he's in treatment and doesn't think straight, for him to pay \$8.80 or \$9.00 for a Basic Text ain't easy. I've never said it was easy but the chances are pretty good that within a year or two that person is going to have a job, and that person is going to be in a better position to pay \$8.00 for a book, or \$9.00, or \$10.00 and that's the issue as it's always been argued at world services regarding the price of the Basic Text, regardless of what might have been said by someone back in 1982 when this was all going on.

**NA:** There was a motion by our region sent to the conference this year in Atlanta to put it before the conference that the soft cover Basic Text be available for \$5.00 and our REST was talked to on the sidelines about the motion and he decided that he wouldn't present the motion. So, the money issue has not gone away.

**Bob:** And it probably won't. See, the approach that I've always had with that is that these are issues that the

Board Of Trustees are responsible for not the office. Because these are spiritual matters, they're not business matters. The office always got put in the position of having to do it because the trustees never had enough balls to do their job as the spiritual guidance of the fellowship.

**NA:** Just like the HIV issue. Look how many years it took them to respond to that issue.

**Bob:** Have they? I didn't know they did.

**NA:** They came out with a position letter or whatever they call it, basically saying it's an outside issue. I remember calling the office in 1987...

**Bob:** See, if this is my only criticism i'll level against anyBODY in the fellowship, is that the trustees as a group have consistently, for the 14 years that I had fairly close observation, refused to take a leadership role in addressing the issues of the fellowship at the fellowship level. If Missouri wants to talk about reducing the cost of the Basic Text, it should be the task of the trustees to visit enough places to address the issue so the issue can be discussed openly wherever it needs to be discussed. Now, if the fellowship in Missouri wants to make that decision that the cost should change and these other consequences result from it, then I can understand it being put forward again. But the fellowship has never been given the opportunity to see all sides of the issue. They see this from the perspective of our guy's coming out of treatment and ain't got any money, why in the hell should we pay all this goddamn money for the book. I don't know if I answered this question, "What would you like to have the fellowship know, one important thing. . . what would that be?" There is too much energy devoted to divisiveness rather than constructive or building of the fellowship and meeting the needs of addicts. There's too much suspicion by those who are not in authority or responsible positions of those who are in authority and responsible positions and that distrust carries with it so much energy and so much time that's lost in carrying the message to other addicts. So if I were to leave anything as thoughts about the fellowship, it needs, from the highest level to the lowest level to get out of this adversarial relationship over who's in charge and what's being done, and work together in finding solutions to the problems that really do exist and get about carrying the message of recovery to other people. The only substantial waste that I've seen in the fellowship in my association resides specifically in that area. About the time I was leaving the office in 1990, there was a growing problem with a fellow named Dave in the east.

**NA:** Grateful Dave.

**Bob:** He was, we were told printing an edition of the Basic Text and the discussions that were ensuing at that time were how to deal with this. And my advice to the people that I reported to was that you had a responsibility to deal with this legally. But if you deal with it primarily legally, you are going to spend an awful lot of money and you are not going to really accomplish a whole lot. You may enforce the copyright responsibilities that you have, which you do have a duty to do. But unless you go into the groups and the areas where this occurs and speak with authority about spiritual principles involved in this matter, you're not going to win and it's never going to go away. And I tried my best in the year 1990 to convince the Board Of Trustees, this is your job. This is not a WSO matter. It is your job to go and talk about spiritual principles involved in bootleg printing, printing material that is different than as the conference approved it, and if you can't find enough spiritual foundation to stop it, then it should continue. You should allow it. As we were concluding my remarks, I was reminded of the pulpit that I have been standing on from time to time about a different issue that I could leave some parting words about. Of the nearly 200 people who were involved in the WSC in 1983, about 80% of those people are still clean. About 20% of them are still in N.A., the rest are someplace else. And if you went through every year of all the leadership positions in the show-me region, and all the other places, you'd find a very similar statistic. That as people reach 5 years and 6 years, more than half of them leave the fellowship and go to some other thing. And that has always been an enormous detriment to the strength of the fellowship.

**NA:** What's the solution?

**Bob:** Well, the solution in my opinion is very simple. We spend a lot of time dealing with H&I, we spend a lot of time with pi and a lot of time with leadership, I mean with literature. You need a committee and a process involved with retention. Other organizations understand that they lose their membership after a period of time and a whole handbook needs to be developed from people who have dealt with this who



have seen it and understand it so that they can develop guidance on how you as a member can be confronted with a guy who you see at a meeting who come once a year to get his medallion and who maybe once or twice in between but you always see him at the A.A. Things you hear about. What do you do to explain to that person? What do you do to entice, to recruit that person to stay in N.A. Well, there are some very different opinions and very different answers to that. And I hear them all the time. The one I hear most is we have a responsibility to be there for the newcomer. But that doesn't cut it after 5 or 6 or 7 years for the person who feels that they're tired of giving and doesn't get anything. Well, it may be that they still need to give in order to get, but they kind of block that out. No one confronts them in a way that gets to them. There's a whole list of things that you can say to people to eventually press the right button. But we just don't have them as a ready reservoir for you to use against those people who head for the hills. So N.A. Needs to get involved seriously with retaining members beyond 5 years so you don't have this pyramid thing come so soon and with so few years. There is a small circle of people in N.A., a small pyramid of people in N.A. Who've been around 10 years or more, when there should be 5 or 6 times that many. And as long as they continue to do that, N.A. Will have certain form of immaturity that helps push these people away. They find the maturity in the calmness of other places and that's where they go. So as long as they're going, they're not retaining that and bringing that level of calmness and maturity here. It's a very essential thing, and in this journey that I am on now, it's about the only thing that I am actively promoting to my friends and acquaintances across the country.

**NA:** I've got a question that I've posed to publish, and that's a request from everyBODY how they think new items should be made available from the office. Like the literature rack, key tags, that kind of stuff. Like our regional service office will put together a newcomer packet. Now they're selling an outside enterprise's jewelry, that kind of stuff from our office. Were key tags around before you were there? Was that somebody's home group deciding they needed key tags and ...

**Bob:** Here's two different issues you're talking about. One is a philosophical issue and that's kind of the one you're seeing. Should we be doing this, should we not be doing this. The other issue you haven't talked about and you wouldn't necessarily address, and that's best illustrated by a problem that arose some time back, in the scheme of the powers we were dealing with at the WSO when I was there in the mid 1980's. One of the problems that we had put off dealing with until we had solved some of the other problems was the legal implications of members making money off of the fellowship. We had a fair number of people who make jewelry or clothing or clocks or bumper stickers or all kind of things that had the N.A. Logo on them. Those of us who have some concern about the legal responsibilities of N.A. Were concerned by these people doing these things, and we had at the time, I think they still use, an exceptionally bright attorney who handles nothing but trademark and copyright matters. There is generally a provision in the law from custom, not from legislation, if you don't use it, you lose it.

**NA:** Have you ever been interviewed for the N.A. Way or anything like that or is this your first interview?

**Bob:** Yeah, this is my first and last interview. There will never be another one. Like I said before I was reticent to have this done, or to do it, because I haven't in the three copies of this thing I've seen been pleased because of what I think is it facilitates the conflict and controversy in the fellowship, because it takes no responsibility for its content. And that's kind of like saying, it's okay to take and throw a gas bomb into a crowded room, because I'm not in the room, but anyone who's in the room will get to see this explosion so they know it's going to take place, and then they're going to have to fend for themselves. But that really isn't the way the world is supposed to work when it comes to responsibility. If I'm going to make this bomb, then I'm going to throw it in there, I'm going to be responsible for what occurs. And this publication doesn't seem to be doing this for what it allows to be printed in its pages.

New Awakenings thanks Bob again for the interview and for the most apropos reminder about the truthfulness of statements sometimes made in these pages.