

DISTRICT 22, AREA 93
INTERVIEW WITH BLACKIE K. (On-line version)
APRIL 6, 2009

(Edited for the internet to assure anonymity. As such, some continuity present in the original audio recording may have been altered or deleted.)

Disclaimer: This is an archival recording for Alcoholics Anonymous internal use only. This is the story of Blackie K. as told to Jim L. Also present is Gary M., and this was recorded on April 6, 2009 in Santa Maria, California. None of this recording is for use by the general press or media.

Blackie: No, where were we?

Jim: We were talking about Armistice Day of 1950 when it was your sobriety date.

Blackie: It was known then as the eleventh month, eleventh day, eleventh hour, which it was. Later it was changed from Armistice Day to Veterans Day because World War II came along since, but I still call it Armistice Day. You know why.

Jim: You were in the First World War?

Blackie: My armistice was alcohol.

Jim: OK, OK. You are a little young to have been in the First World War, that's right.

Blackie: Huh?

Jim: I said you were a little young to have been in the First World War, that's right.

Blackie: That's right. I was born in 1917.

Jim: You are the same age as my mother. She was born in '17.

Blackie: She is still living?

Jim: Yes, she is.

Blackie: Good. Mine lived to be a hundred and three.

Jim: Well, God willing so will mine.

Blackie: Good.

Jim: So how did your armistice come about?

Blackie: How did what?

Jim: Your armistice come about?

Blackie: Oh, well, I started going to AA in 1946 in Phoenix. There were people that wanted me to go, but I didn't want to go. And this went on for a while. This fellow I worked with...I was selling books, and I did for many years. His name was Joe. And Joe I recognized as a drunk.

I never got in jail. I never had any blackouts at that time. But Joe could see the trouble I was having with my marriage and other... finances and so on and so forth, and he used to be in psycho wards periodically and jails what have you, and I was getting very curious because 10 months had gone by and he hadn't had a drink. We worked together selling books.

He came by my house about 6:30 one night, and I asked him, "Joe, how come you haven't had a drink for so many months? How long has it been, 10 months? How come?"

"I joined AA."

Well, this was 1946, and I'd been an avid reader since I was 5 years old, and I hadn't read about AA. I said, "What the hell's AA?"

Well, he told me about AA. In fact he told me a lot more than I wanted to know at that time, 'cause he wound up saying, "Why don't you try it yourself?"

"Nah!"

I'd already told my wife a couple of times... I had two children by my second marriage... I had 2 children by that marriage, 5 and 7... that I was going to quit drinking. So another night came and I was out all night drinking, another woman involved... there always was. I had just as great an addiction for sex as I always had... strange sex, that is... that I did for alcohol. And so I get back in the house, and I throw in my hat and said, "I'll go to AA." She says, "Go!"

They had one meeting in Phoenix at that time. They met at the women's club behind the Westward Ho Hotel. Speaking of Westward Ho, that came out OK until they hired a black fellow to meet the trains in those days and the buses, 'cause they had a lot of tourist business, and instead of saying "Great Western Hotel", he'd say, "Great Western Ho House". So they fired him.

So we had a meeting there, and while I was there, the second meeting started on the mezzanine of the Westward Ho. I went for 6 months and didn't drink. Went once a week. I met the (*elected official*) of Maricopa County, which impressed the hell out of me. Maricopa County is Phoenix. I met a doctor, Doc H., and that impressed me. I met 2 crack reporters from the _____, Alice and Dick S., and they impressed me, or I wouldn't have gone 6 months.

And so, after 6 months, well I quit going to meetings and I drifted off drinking again. I drank for 2 years, and had an affair with the collector on that route. Colliers used to have a magazine and book club collector who would come around once a month and collect from us. So, this gal was the collector. Her husband was the state manager of the deal. She and I had an affair. And so, I got to feeling so bad about the guilt and so on and so forth, I picked up and left and went to Denver.

I worked there a few months and became a sales manager for Colliers in Denver and then got fired over something that happened concerning money that didn't belong to me. Went back on the road and went down to Silver City, New Mexico. A lot of those guys they didn't draft because of the copper mining. Book sales were good. That's where I got called for the draft.

I drank a lot in Silver City. Bars were closed on Sunday, but across the ditch, they called it, was a whorehouse. And you could get booze over there on Sunday. That's the only place I didn't go...show you how important my booze was to me at this time...that's the only time I didn't use the whorehouse for what it was! I went there to drink only!

So, anyway, I settled down in Grover City, not Grover City, I mean Silver City, for a year. I came back to California, still selling books. Left my wife in Fresno, and ran off with some woman down to...her name is Marjory. She was the wife of a fellow book salesman. We were off down to Tucson, Arizona. And I eventually...she dumped me and went back to California. I moved back into Phoenix, and the old romance with the collector's wife started again, and I got drunk.

I went back to AA for 9 months, but the last 6 weeks of it, I didn't attend meetings, so of course I got drunk. Anyhow, I was still drinking, and I left my wife, and I went with this collector. She left her husband. That was a sad thing. He was a sick man. He had empyema, which was an offshoot of tuberculosis. He had to pump out that lung about once a day. About a month after she left him, the cops got a hold of her. They found him in a little trailer park, a little trailer you pull, stone dead with 5 empty bottles of rubbing alcohol around the bed. So if you feel bad about that, you have to have another drink.

So, my wife was still there; we were supporting her, which I didn't do for the first one. This, of course, with her help. So we skipped to the San Francisco branch, the Northern California branch. Oh, it was '48. Anyway, on February 6th of '49, I'd lost another car; I'd had 5 cars repossessed. And scurvy guy that I was, I managed to get another one on phony references or one thing or another. And I had another repossessed one at Ft. Bragg. I took a bus up there to sell books. I got up there and I never got any further away from the hotel than 2 bars across the street. And that's the first time I thought about committing suicide. I was gonna...the mess I'd made out of my first marriage...the messes I'd made out of my marriages and my kids. The first one I abandoned when he was 5 months old in his mother's womb, never seen that kid 'til he was 19. That's another part of my story. Today we've become so close! I'll show you something about that later.

(At a later date, Blackie told Jim L. that he had abandoned his pregnant wife and sent her back to her mother. After Blackie's son, Jim K., graduated from high school, he went into the Air Force. After he was discharged, he went to work for Hughes in St. Louis and while there he contacted Blackie's brother in Dodge City, Kansas, through whom he found Blackie. Father and son communicated thereafter via audiocassette tapes and became very close. Jim K. wrote poetry celebrating Blackie's sobriety. Jim K. is still happily married and is now retired.)

And so, after 3 days of drinking in the hotel in Ft. Bragg, I called AA, and 60% of the group came to see me. There was only 5 members. 3 of them came to see me. We worked in Ft. Bragg, and I was sober there for 2 weeks. We used to make damn good money between us. And so we take a bus over to Eureka, and check into the old Vance Hotel right across the street from the AA club.

I made my first AA call on somebody who didn't ask for it. Want to hear that?

Jim: Yes.

Blackie: We come in about 4 o'clock in the afternoon into the Club, and the phone rang, and some woman was calling about her neighbor needed AA. I said, "Well, it don't work that way." I told her to get him to call. We went out to eat and the address kept running through my mind. Something was dragging me. We went out and knocked on the door. Here's a guy who knocks on doors all day long selling books, and I'm shaking! A woman come to the door. Her name was Dorothy, Dorothy S. I said, "Was it her husband?" She said, "Yes, come in."

He came out of the bathroom. He'd cut himself all over trying to shave. He set down like this. I said, "I don't know whether this applies to you or not, but I want to tell you my story." And I told him my story. And I repeated again, "I don't know whether this applies to you or not." I could just see him deflate. "I think it did", he says. Never had another drink! Surprised the hell out of me!

That was not my first 12-step call. The first 12-step call was taken with my first sponsor, Ted P., I mean Ted H., up the old psycho ward we used to have behind general hospital. And he asked me to go up there the first week I was sober. And I thought what the hell can I tell alcoholics, suffering alcoholics. I'd been sober a week! Well, I never said a damn word. I just listened. But it helped. It wasn't long before I'm haunting that place looking for alkie to talk to! And I met a lot of them, a lot of them.

I met Judge Lyons up there, that had brought AA to San Luis. We became close friends. I met him back in Number 6, which is a locked ward, a locked room with nothing in there but a toilet. No handle on the toilet. You push your finger back in a slot to flush it so they couldn't break the handle off and hurt themselves. And we're sitting on a pallet on the floor and talking, and the Judge came up there. He came up there quite often. They'd hold court up there on some guys. 9 times out of 10 they sent them to Camarillo in those days. And the old judge got AA started.

The fellow we were talking to was named Wayne. I don't know if you should use his last name or not.

Jim: It will be in the printed part, but this doesn't go to anybody outside of AA.

Blackie: Right. Wayne H., H. family. And they had lots of money and lots of property in Paso Robles, and they were waiting for Wayne to turn around and sober up and turn over a couple of million dollars of property. But he couldn't sober up. He'd been in AA 3 months though. Back in those days they had an idea that if they get a guy in and getting working in AA right quick, he'd probably stay sober forever. Didn't work. But he...they had done that to him. And the last thing the judge said to Wayne, "Why don't you stay sober and come on back to AA?" The Judge was not AA, but that's what he said. Wayne said nothing to him, and he left. Then I said to him, "Why don't you come back to AA?" I had a hard time getting out the "why", but they had made him treasurer and secretary for 3 months. And he got drunk and spent the treasury, and he was ashamed to go back. And I said, "Well, how much was it?" "Seven dollars."

Gary: That's enough to die over!

Blackie: That's pride, alcoholic pride!

So, I made quite a few friends out of that old psycho ward. There was a retired Navy cook. He was a bachelor, and every time I would go to Paso Robles selling books, he'd want me to come by his house and have lunch. Which I would. He stayed sober, too.

And then we had a guy named Dempsey, and he had a house over there. He was an old bachelor. It was like the Alano Club. All the AA's used to hang out there.

And then we had a place like that in Atascadero. This guy and his wife—she's still living. Her name is Dorothy. And Dorothy was married to a drunk that I had worked with and couldn't do any good with. They had 5 kids.

Jim: This is Morro Bay Dorothy.

Blackie: Hah?

Jim: This is Morro Bay Dorothy.

Blackie: Yeah. So the guy in AA came over from Bakersfield. He had quite a business. His name was K. I can't think of K's first name, can you?

Jim, Gary: Ron?...Van?...Val?

Blackie: Val. Val K. He ran a house out there, a big house, oh due west of the hospital, past the hospital, on old Camino Real. He made the front porch into an office in front of the house. You stepped through the office into a great big living room, a big table. And you could always find 2 or 3 AA's who had stopped in. That was really a fantastic Alano Club.

(Phone rings; recording stops and restarts.)

Gary: ...warranty on your automobile.

Blackie: Yeah, that's right, on the phone.

Jim: We were talking about the Alano Club, Val and Dorothy's place.

Blackie: Val K. had more guts in AA that I had ever seen. He married a woman with 5 children. And they just got along great. But he died. I forget how many years they were together.

Jim: 12 or 14.

Blackie: And then she married Wally. And Wally died last year.

Gary: She married Bob C. before that.

Blackie: Hah?

Gary: Bob C. before that.

Blackie: Oh, that's right. I forgot. Bob C. and I were very close. Bob C. and I sold...I went and sold automobiles when I was 49 years of age and, let's see, 16 years sober. And at that time, we

finally had 5 AA's working at that *automobile* agency. And I had *the owner* come to me more than once and ask me if I had another AA salesman that they wanted to put to work. They liked them.

So, it was during that time of course that they started Melody Group.

Jim: Tell me more about that, about the starting of Melody.

Blackie: Well, it started over a resentment! There was a fellow by the name of Art S., railroad engineer, big bluster type guy. And he and I clashed. And he and Ted P. clashed. And he and the other guys clashed. Paul R. Now, Paul R. worked as a griever for the railroad; he was the conductor, the business agent they called the griever. We all three of us had a guy named Andy C. we worked with as a new alcoholic. And they had held court on him. This Art S. showed up and claimed Andy was also a molester, a child molester. Wasn't true at all! But it went in the books that way, and he went to Camarillo that way! Camarillo State Hospital. And we knew after he came out, he'd have to register as one. So, Paul was quite a lawyer, too, as well as a griever. One day he came to the club and got me. Art was sitting over there in the engine, idling it, getting ready to drive it to Santa Barbara. So, we three of us went over and pulled him off that engine. And Paul had some papers all made out where the guy said he lied about the charges about Andy C. He said, "Now, if you don't sign this document, that you did lie, we're going to sue you for every dime you got." Well, he signed it. He was a phony bastard! And so that took care of that.

But shortly after that, why ah, we decided to start another group. No, there's one thing more. We started a club out at 2640 S. Board Street, an old house which we took over. We'd been meeting in the basement of a church and wanted our own place. And I was the ram's head on that thing. Of course, I got blamed for that because after we walked out and split the group, that left them paying \$40 a month, instead of paying \$8 a quarter to the church.

Gary: So that was Pioneer Group?

Blackie: Yeah. Wasn't any Pioneer Group, It was just the San Luis Obispo Group. They didn't name it Pioneer Group until after Melody named the group. Melody got named Melody because I wanted to see more harmony in the group. I looked in the dictionary and one of the synonyms for harmony was melody, the Melody Group.

So anyway, we had that first, well, what made us really sweat then at this house was that we regular members, we paid dues, had a key. So we met with the old group (*San Luis Obispo, aka Pioneer*), saying we didn't want to harm the old group, that we wanted to meet at an off night. OK, so those of us who had keys, it was designated on a Thursday night I think, and we met on Thursday night, and somebody had changed the locks! Well, that did it!

We rushed down to Ted P.'s house and had the meeting that night anyway. So that's how the group started.

Then they lost that place to meet, and met in the old Bank of America building for a while. And then met someplace else for a while, I forget where. And then in '63, well, take it back. It was a little before that. I don't remember what year, but in '63, when they were meeting there was when they incorporated into a club and changed the name to Pioneer Group, because Melody had a name, and Pioneer would distinguish between the two. And most of

the Melody members patronized the Alano Club after it got started. And there were twice as many people going to the two groups as there were to the one, so there was no harm done at all. A lot of people were going around saying that Blackie K.... was trying to break up the old group.

I'll say one more thing about Art, this engineer that we disliked so much. After my wife, Estelle died, and I was going with Jack W.'s ex-wife, Judy, up in Santa Cruz, on one weekend, I'd gotten a hold of an announcement for Oakland at a conference. In the meantime, Art S., this character had transferred from San Luis up to Dunsmuir, which is another division on the railroad. And he was on the program (*of the conference*). So "big me", I told Judy I'm going up to this meeting and stick out my hand and say I'm sorry and that I apologize for any hard words we had between us. Well, we went, and the way I told it then was a different version than I have today. I said, "You know, the son of a bitch died before we got there!" But I had my copy of that document we had him sign. And one day on the way to Lompoc, I stopped the car at B.'s house, and told him all about it—he was delegate to New York at that time; we had just split the 2 districts. I said, "Here, I want you to take this document and burn it. I don't want to carry it, that resentment any more." Which he did and that took care of that!

Now what do you want to know?

Jim: OK. You've given me a lot of information in just the short time that you've... Gary, have you got any questions?

Gary: Not about AA. But I've got one I want to ask him when we're done.

Jim: When we're done. OK, OK. You said that this whole time when you burnt that document was at the same time that we split the districts. That means when we split Santa Maria and south away from San Luis, well actually Nipomo and north. How did that come about that there was a split?

Blackie: I don't remember.

Jim: OK. Did you start any other groups besides Melody?

Blackie: I don't think so. Not here. Elsewhere. I traveled, my wife and I traveled quite a lot selling books. We'd be gone 2 or 3 months at a time. We spent 5 or 6 months out of each year in Eureka for the first 10 years or so that I was sober. Good territory.

There was Stafford, Arizona. They were meeting in an Elks club. I often had a temptation to drink around there. So I went over to the main hotel because I'd gone to a hotel in San Luis and had gotten them to save a room for a meeting and moved in there. They stayed and got that group started. And then we went in to work in Williams, Arizona. The first day I went down to the police chief's office. "You got an AA group here?" Didn't have the big directories then. "Got which?" "An AA group—Alcoholics Anonymous." "Oh, year, yeah," he says. "My landlord is one. What a change in that son of a bitch!" Told me right where he lives. His name was Marshall. Well, in a few minutes, I'm in Marshall's kitchen drinking coffee. He was the only one there. But then he got a group and got it started.

I can't remember any more.

Jim: Before we started talking on the tape, you were talking about another Dorothy who hadn't gotten the credit that she needed.

Blackie: Hah?

Jim: Another Dorothy who hadn't gotten the credit that she needed?

Gary: P.

Blackie: Dorothy P. Ted P.'s wife.

Jim: Tell me about Dorothy, and why she should get the credit.

Blackie: She was a commercial cook in restaurants. She managed restaurants too. And she was just as big a drunk as Ted. In fact there was several people called on Ted and Dorothy, because Ted and Dorothy lived at the old hotel at the corner of ---the old San Luis Hotel, where you could still get a room for a dollar a night---corner of San Luis and Broad Street. I mean, beg pardon, the corner of Board Street and Higuera. They had a full bar and a full restaurant. Ted and Dorothy were periodics. They did most of their eating there too. But they were on a drunk when one of the newcomers, probably new by a few months, knew where they lived. And so there were several of us who went first; there were several of us in the course of a week who went to see Ted and Dorothy. They had a 2-bedroom duplex on Murray Street. And they'd been drunk...started before Thanksgiving. And they had so many empty bottles and cans, they'd moved out of one bedroom into the other. Ted used to make a joke out of this. They did have a partially eaten, cooked turkey on the drain board out there, and Ted says, "We couldn't honestly remember whether we started it for Thanksgiving or Christmas!" It was after Christmas we found them.

So, Dorothy didn't make much noise, but she was a tireless worker so far as AA was concerned. She done some 12-step work too.

While I think about it, I want to tell you about the expression of fellowship that could only apply to AA. We had a fellow named...that married Willie, what was his name?

Gary: Carl L.?

Blackie: Carl L. Carl L. had been a full colonel in the war, and after the war, he had owned a car dealership. At one time, he owned a construction company. Went through them all. Then he met this little gal, Willie, little doll. She was a widow, too. And they got married and had a hell of a good marriage. And later when he and I were both working at *an automobile dealership*, we had a sales meeting every morning at 8 o'clock. As I told you, there were 5 of us AA's. He and I were both in the restroom. They had twin urinals. That was the new place on Osos Road. We were both pissing. Carl looks over at me and says, "You know, sometimes it's good just to piss together!"

Jim: Sometimes....I've got to write that down...it's just good to piss together.

Gary: Who was it that always talked about that in her story? F. or...she left the turkey in the oven for like 3 weeks and it was all green? What the hell was her name? F., F., something? Can't

remember her name. I can see her face. Jeannie K.? She was red headed when she was younger.

Blackie: Give me her name again.

Gary: Her name was Jeannie K. or F. She left the turkey in the oven for like 3 weeks that turned green.

Blackie: No, I don't remember that one.

Gary: She was always telling that story at Melody. Jeannie something. I can't think of her last name.

Blackie: While I think about it, there was an obituary in the paper last week about an Al E. Do you remember him?

Gary: Yeah.

Blackie: I remember the name perfectly, but I can't remember him. Who was he?

Gary: He was a real weird guy, who was a teacher. He was so weird that nobody could ever figure out what the hell he was talking about. Albert E., yeah.

Blackie: Teacher in what category?

Gary: I don't know.

Blackie: High school? Grade school?

Gary: I don't remember. I think he was a retired professor or something.

Blackie: He died sober?

Gary: I guess he did. I hadn't seen him for years.

Blackie: I hadn't either, but the name stood out like that—E.

Gary: He was a real weird guy; he didn't have many friends. Too weird. It's like he would be talking and all of a sudden he would look up at the ceiling and scratch his head and it was like talking to a Martian or something. It was strange.

Jim: Over the years that you've been in AA, what would you say are the bigger changes that you've seen? How has it evolved? How was it different back then as opposed to today?

Blackie: Not much. Not much.

Jim: OK.

Blackie: More people, thank God.

Gary: Do you think that's because of the Traditions? Since we hammered those out?

Blackie: Yes. It's certainly been beneficial.

Jim: You came in when they were hammering them out.

Blackie: That's right, that's right.

Jim: Weren't they voted on in '55, or something like that?

Blackie: Something like that. And they'd done some reprinting on the Book. The fella visited my house named Jim B., who I became quite familiar with, and he was not in the original book. They didn't put him in until '55. I've got his book back there. Now, in my book, he wrote all the first and last names of all people...see, he was in and out of AA up until the book was finished. In fact he said there were only 6 people sober a full year when the book was finished! We talk about a hundred all the time who worked on it. There was! But only 6 of them were sober for one full year. And that's why his story was not in the Big Book (*first edition*). But it's in the book in '55. And I'll get that book for you right now.

(There's a break in the recording while Blackie goes to another room to get his copy of the 2nd edition of the Big Book.)

Blackie: She started in '53 (*Blackie is talking about his wife.*) And she did 12 of them, one for each month (*he means each year*) and she'd bind them in a book for '53. '54. '55, '56...and I had those for a long time.

Gary: I've got the one for '66. (*Given to him by Blackie in honor of Gary's AA sobriety year*)

Blackie: A while back, I realized I'm not going to live forever. So I started giving those books out. I try to give them to a guy the first year he's sober, match it up, you know. I've given them all away now, but one or two. The reason I haven't given those away yet is because I can't find anyone alive yet who started in '54.

Gary: I believe it was 1975 that Lois talked at the San Luis convention at the Al-Anon luncheon, and she said, "Bill came home one day and told me he wanted me to start the Family Group, and I threw a shoe at him!"

Blackie: Yeah, yeah.

Gary: I liked her a lot.

Blackie: Well, Estelle just worshiped Al-Anon, and her big moment, she sat next to Lois.

Gary: At the Al-Anon luncheon '75.

Blackie: Well, she sat next to her at the table in the meeting and read either the Steps or the Traditions. Oh boy, was she happy! She died the next year.

Jim: (To Gary) So, you have the '67 set.

Gary: '66.

(There is a gap in speaking while Blackie shows to Jim & Gary his copy of the Big Book, in which are written names of the original members of AA.)

Blackie: And these are also non-alcoholics who were so helpful.

Jim: Right. I don't know that name. Dr. Howard from New Jersey State Hospital. But of course I know Silkworth, I know Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Henry Williamson, Henrietta Seiberling, Sr. Ignatia...he has beautiful handwriting.

Blackie: That was Estelle.

Jim: Beautiful handwriting.

Blackie: Yup, she sure did. She copied it right out of Jim B.'s book. List of when they came in, when they died, first and last names.

Jim: Including his own.

Blackie: Yup.

Jim: And was that his brother?

Blackie: I don't know.

Jim: It's spelled the same. No, it isn't. This is B...., and this is B....

Blackie: And whether they came in at Akron, or whether they came in at New York.

Jim: This is beautiful. Let's see if there's ...there's Ebby!

Blackie: I listened to Ebby in person in 1960.

Jim: You know there are supposed to be 2 of his tapes down at Central Office. Both of them are gone.

Blackie: Of Ebby you mean.

Jim: Yeah.

Blackie: I may have one. I'll donate it if I have.

Jim: They'd like it.

Blackie: I think it was at the 1960 conference in Long Beach.

Now turn to the front. (*There is an inscription from Estelle to Blackie.*) Estelle gave me that book when I was 3 years sober, because I'd given every damn book away I had. And she didn't want me to give that away. So she wrote that in it.

Now, the next page.

Jim: Oh, here she has the names of who they are (*the authors of the stories in the Big Book*).

Blackie: He spent the night with us in Shell Beach.

Jim: Your wife did a wonderful job.

Blackie: Yes, you're right. She was married to a drunk worse than I was.

Jim: So, she was your second wife.

Blackie: No, she was my third wife.

Jim: Oh, OK.

Gary: And they call his sister, "Marrying Jo".

Jim: How many times has she been married?

Blackie: 14.

Jim: Fourteen!

Blackie: To 13 men.

Gary: One of them twice—slow learner!

Jim: Did she learn her lesson and not get married again?

Blackie: She led the meeting, and she said, "But AA really works. After I got sober in AA, I only got married once."

Jim: That's really good!

Gary: I remember when they revamped our poker room, upstairs, at the Alano Club, because she and Ralph were going to get married and then they never did. That's what I like best about Melody is that they had a poker room next door.

Blackie: Betty put up hundreds of pictures up in that room, and they took them all down and stored them someplace. They're stored up there someplace. She said she'd like to have had them back while she was still alive.

Gary: The one in the Alano Club, you mean, the poker room?

Blackie: Yeah.

Gary: Yeah, I remember there were a lot of pictures. Dogs playing cards and everything else. Those were hers. I didn't know that.

Jim: I've never been upstairs in that building.

Gary: I haven't been up there for years. There's a whole bunch of people living up there now.

Blackie: They're packed away. They're packed away someplace there. And I don't care about them now because I may not be around here long. But Betty kind of wanted them before she died.

No body made an effort to get them to her before that and she wasn't able to go after them herself. She had 8 operations in 8 years. And she had more goddamn cruel drugs than you can shake a stick at. There was Zyprexa, which is codeine. Cost \$997 for one prescription for 30 days.

Jim: Wow!

Blackie: And she was on at least a dozen heavy narcotics. The doctors had me convinced that she had to have them. And that was hard to do. She had 3 operations on her colon and each one of those doctors and a couple of others told me that they were causing her so much pain—the adhesions were—that she had to have something. That's why she spent her last 7 months in the Lompoc super clinic and rehab for \$200 a day. That's when I had to go around to the doctor...when they take you into the hospital today, then to, when they take you in he morning or afternoon, it makes no difference, and they keep you one night and discharge you the next day, they won't discharge you until afternoon, so they can charge out 2 days.

Now, Medicare says if you're in a regular hospital for 3 days, you can get sent out to one of these rehab clinics or what have you and Medicare will pay 100 days and \$129 a day plus all your medications. I figured it up and it cost me \$14,091. I told the doctor, "You knew that." I did to, but I forgot it. The guy turned red in the face and wouldn't say any more about it.

Jim: I'm going to remember that.

Blackie: Look it up in Medicare.

Jim: I will. I have the book next to my desk.

Gary: You know the Betty Mercury? The car. Cory just had it tuned up. And it runs smooth as can be. I told you he calls her Lucille.

Blackie: Lucille?

Gary: That's the name of his car, Lucille.

Blackie: I think that was Estelle's middle name.

Gary: I thought it was a transmission problem because it was going down the road and doing this. Spark plug! And wires. Changed all that and smooth.

Blackie: I bought that off an old boy who was 94 years old.

Gary: You thought that was old at the time, didn't you?

Blackie: Yeah. It was only 2 or 3 years old at the time. The car was a '91, 2 or 3 years old. His son was retired from the sheriff's department, and I had known him just barely. San Luis Sheriff's department. He had a job watching over Camp Roberts out there. So he drove around the camp at night. But it had a little mileage on it at the time. Had a high book of \$65 or low book of \$48. So the son and the old man's daughter had run the ad for it in the newspaper. I went to look at it in the trailer park. The ad was to the son-in-law's house, so I went over there, and he took me to introduce me to the old man and the car. And so, we talked for a while. The old man gave me the keys and told me to drive it. So I went by myself, and went over on the freeway and drove 4 or 5 miles and came on back. I got back to his house and I called his son and asked him, "What's the least you'll take for this?" He says, "\$4,000."

Well, I knew I was taking advantage of him. I was selling cars then, too. No, I'd retired by that time. I'd retired by 76, when Estelle died. But I was still keeping up with the car business. So I called his son-in-law, and told him he says \$4000, but it's worth more than that. "Take it, if that's what he says!" So, the old man and I go down to one of the banks that I had money in and I drew out cash for him and paid him off. Came back and he took his stuff out of it. I went home. Well, I found on the keys to the car, he'd left his mailbox key. So, I called his son-in-law and his daughter answered the phone. Boy, she ate my ass out about stealing the car. You know, I felt bad too about it. Anyway, I didn't tell her I would, but I drove over there and took him his keys back and took him a check for \$500, which brought it up to within \$200 of low book.

In the back end of the trunk—he had an old Studebaker stuck up in the carport...kind of a skinny carport, because the ass end of this car was out in the sun and it had all faded out. I had to get that all refinished, which cost me a couple of hundred dollars. So, I took that off and I sent him a check for \$500. I felt better.

Gary: I just bought a '91 Oldsmobile Cutlass Sierra, 38,000 miles, for \$1500.

Blackie: 1500? Man, you got it all right! Olds Cutlass?

Gary: The hardest thing to get used to is that you have to roll the window up and down.

Blackie: You remember my brother, Jerry? He's got these super-doper hotrods, you know. He's got a '36 Ford and it's got power windows, power door locks, just like the new cars do. Then he's got a '50 Olds Rocket, slant back. And of course, he's put air conditioning in it. Oh, shit, he could get a hundred grand for it, just like that. And they're both black. Here a couple of months ago, he was driving the Olds, and he keeps it spotless all the time. Every time he drives it, it gets back in the garage. He's got a 3-car garage and rents one across the way. And they were building on some corner where he had to stop, laying cement blocks. Jerry had to stop at the stop sign. And the guy stood up and looked at the Olds, and says, "Holy shit! That's beautiful!" Jerry takes a lot of pride in his cars.

Jim: Do you know someone else who has a lot of good cars? Do you know Guilio? Guilio is one of our friends. He has a scar right here on his nose, a circle, a circular scar. He's been around a couple of times. A younger guy. He's got some neat, old cars, classic cars.

Blackie: Jerry had a '63 Cadillac convertible that he sold on the internet for twenty-three five. A couple of weeks went by and a truck rolled up and the guy had a cashiers check for twenty-three five and away it went to Texas.

Gary: Did you ever see that monument they built there, I think it's in Amarillo? I think, it's like 13...

Blackie: That's just east of Amarillo.

Gary: 13 Cadillacs, angled like this in the field, all Cadillac convertibles.

Jim: It's just east of Amarillo.

Gary: It's still there, but it's so far off the road now that you can hardly see it because they rerouted the highway.

Jim: Right.

Blackie: They changed the highway a little bit.

Gary: I went through there a couple of years ago looking for it. Oh, there it is way the hell over there!

Blackie: All buried nose down.

Jim: Right. It's great. It's great.

Blackie: Jerry says that the '59 Cadillac, the one that had the atrocious big fins, you know, he was showing the picture of one in a car magazine, a real cherry one, sold for \$245,000!

Jim: There's a red one riding around in San Luis some place. I've seen it the last couple of months.

Gary: It's like that '57 Chevy 2 door.

Blackie: Are you retired?

Jim: Yes, I am.

Blackie: What did you do?

Jim: I was a radiation oncologist, a cancer specialist.

End of transcription as requested by Blackie.